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Chapter 1

By way of introduction, the author of the book of Revelation is none other than the Beloved Apostle, John. At this time, he was the last living apostle as that all of them had already been martyred for the gospel of Jesus Christ. According to church history all of the other apostles were martyred in the following ways. Andrew was crucified. Bartholomew was beaten and then crucified. James, the son of Alphaeus was stoned to death. James, the son of Zebedee was beheaded. Judas (not Iscariot) was stoned to death. Matthew was speared to death. Peter was crucified upside down. Philip was crucified. Simon was crucified. Thomas was speared to death. Matthias was stoned to death. Only John died a natural death.

However, tradition does tell us that one of the Roman Emperors tried to kill John by boiling him in oil before exiling him to the Isle of Patmos. This may sound a little rough, but I find a great deal of comfort in that thought, because God had a reason for preserving John's life for a future work that He had for him in writing this book that we are about to study.

The Lord also has a plan for you. So, the next time you feel that someone is trying to boil you in oil: just remember that until God is finished with you in this life, the next will have to wait! Trust me; I have been in the pot a couple of times myself!

Let's get started in our study. As we begin to look at the book of the Revelation, we must know that there are basically two views on how to interpret it. The first view of this book is called Spiritual. This view teaches that the entire book of the Revelation is nothing more than a big spiritual allegory. Those who hold this view believe that the book should not be taken literally and therefore does not have any prophetic or futuristic significance. Quite frankly this view is simply wrong. It's not even close. By the way, you will find as members of Borderland know already, that I tend to be pretty "frank" when teaching the Bible. As a matter of fact, if you stay faithful in this study with me, you will probably hear things that challenge you as well. My admonition to you is that you not get offended. 1 Corinthians 13:5 says that we should not be easily offended or provoked. To be so proves our own immaturity. Just go to the Bible and compare scripture with scripture. If you have questions, pray about it and if you desire to contact me, please feel free to do so.

You see, I believe that the entire Bible is to be taken literally, except in the areas where the text reveals that it should not. For example, in Revelation 6:12 it says, "*And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood.*" It is very obvious that John isn't quite sure what he saw and was trying to describe it the best he can, so it's not to be taken literally. Notice the words "*...black as sackcloth of hair...*" and "*...became as blood.*" That doesn't mean that the sun became sackcloth and the moon became blood. It just means that John didn't quite know how to describe it so he compared it to something he knew. Also, look at Revelation 8:8 where it says, "*And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood.*" Again, notice the words "*...as it were...*" that John used to describe the great mountain.

The second view of the Revelation is what I call the Historical or Literal view. This view states that everything in the book is to be taken literally as historic or prophetic in nature. In other words, when chapters 2 and 3 speak of the seven churches, it is to be taken literally in that there were seven churches that John wrote to in the area of Asia Minor. As a matter of fact, archaeological discoveries have confirmed this over the last 30 years. This is the correct view. Everything that it says either has happened or will happen some day. It is a book of prophecy.

Verse 1: *“The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants -- things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John,”* The word *“revelation”* means, apocalypse or unveiling. Many feel in error that this is a sealed Book that cannot ever be understood. That could not be farther from the truth. Pray tell me why God would preserve John through all that he went through for him to write a book that no one can understand? That simply does not make any sense!

Instead, it’s an effort on the part of the Devil himself to keep Christians from going to this book for understanding the past, present, and future. The book was written to show us what would come to pass, not to hide it from us. God wants us to understand the Bible, but many times we are too busy making excuses to not study it. Paul said to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:15 *“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”*

Verse 2: *“who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw.”* Notice that it says, *“to all things that he saw.”* How did John see all of this? Well, according to verse 10, he saw it all *“in the Spirit.”* Now this does not mean something crazy and off the wall. It just means that John was in the Spirit when he received this vision. Jesus told us in John 4:24 that *“God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”* In other words, if one is to worship God, he must first and foremost do it in the spirit.

Let’s talk about that just for a moment. The Bible teaches in Genesis that when God made man, He made him in His own image. Let’s look at Genesis 1:26 where it says, *“Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”* Did you notice the “Us” and the “Our” in that verse? Who was God talking to?

What is the image of God? Well, God is a Trinity. Some would deny that, but they didn’t get it from the Bible. Actually the Bible says that God is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. All three have different roles but they make up one God. Man is also a triune being because we were made in his image. We are Mind (Soul), Body, and Spirit. Another way to look at it is that the Father is to the mind (soul), the Son is to the body, and the Holy Spirit is to the spirit.

The spirit is what separates man from the animal kingdom. Genesis 2:7 says, *“And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”* This is only said to be done upon the creation of man.

Unlike the animal kingdom, man was given a spirit. This is one reason why the theory of evolution is such an affront to God. To except it is to reject the Biblical account of creation. To reject any part of the Bible puts the Creation on very dangerous ground with his Creator.

We must understand the concept of the trinity of man to understand exactly what happened in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve disobeyed by eating the forbidden fruit. The warning God gave Adam about this is found in Genesis 2:17 when He said, *“Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”*

So what happened when they ate the fruit? They DIED! They died spiritually and physically. They immediately died spiritually and they began to die physically. You see, originally man was supposed to live forever. But Adam’s sin brought physical and spiritual death to himself and to everyone after him. That would be you and me. We were born to die physically and we were both born dead spiritually.

That’s why the Bible says that we must be born again. Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3:3 that *“...except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”* Born again? Yes! Man’s spirit must be born again because it died in the Garden. You see, the Bible says that God used to come down in the cool of the day and commune with Adam and Eve, but once they disobeyed, that communion was broken. They fell out of fellowship with God because of their sinful choice to listen to the serpent (Satan) rather than God. That’s also our problem. We are tempted to do the same on a daily bases.

I’ve been told by people that if they would have been in the garden instead of Adam and Eve, they never would have eaten the fruit. That’s not so, because all of us take a bite of it daily through our disobedience!

Now that’s the bad news. What’s the good news? The Bible says that God came down into the Garden one day looking for Adam and Eve and he called out, “Where are you?” in Genesis 3:9. Of course, He knew exactly where they were and why they were there. By the way, He knows where you are today and exactly why you’re there as well.

Adam responded in Genesis 3:10, *“I heard you’re voice in the Garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.”* And God said in the next verse, *“Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?”* Of course, God knew they had and that’s why they were hiding. They were trying to cover their nakedness (sin). Oh, we do that too.

It’s also interesting that instead of taking the blame for their disobedience they had the nerve to blame God, the serpent, and each other. Adam said in Gen. 3:12, *“The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.”* Eve said in the next verse, *“The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”* Yes, we too blame others for our sins. I hear people say, “Oh, its society.” Others say, “It’s the way I was raised.” No, the Bible says that it is sin.

Well, how did God remedy the problem? The Bible says in Genesis 3:21 that “...*God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.*” Simply put, something had to die to cover their sin. It’s debatable, but I believe that this animal was a lamb.

I hope your listening, because this is the entire point that will radically change your life if you come to grips with it. Something innocent had to be sacrificed to cover the sins of the guilty. In the Garden of Eden, it was a little animal which I have every reason to believe it was a lamb. In the New Testament, it was Jesus Christ! Yes, Jesus Christ was the innocent sacrifice given to cover (forgive) our sins. John the Baptist knew this when he cried out in John 1:29, “*Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*” John 3:16 says, “*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*”

Verse 3: “*Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.*” There are three blessings associated with this book. The three blessings are for those who read it, those who hear it, and for those who keep those things which are written in it. We will discover that while the first two are quite simple, the third is not.

Let’s look at the first blessing that is for those who read this book. That sounds pretty simple, uh? Unfortunately, because so many feel that the book is a closed book and can never be understood by mere mortals, they do not even bother to read the book and therefore lose this first blessing. I have a hunch that many who are reading this article right now have never even read through this precious book. If you haven’t, do it as soon as you finish reading this article!

Did you notice something else about this first blessing? It doesn’t say, “Blessed is he who reads and understands this book.” Many times when I take a group on a study through this book, they do not quite understand everything that is in it. I know because I can see the glazed look in their eyes! It’s because their knowledge base of the Bible is limited. However, that’s no excuse for not reading it. Lord knows, that when I was in school, I read a lot of things that I didn’t understand! As a matter of fact, I was “glazed” most of the time! My encouragement to you is that you just read it and at the same time get into a church that teaches the Bible in such a way that you can understand it a little more each time you go through it. We’re all learning everyday. It just takes time and study.

I’ve found in ministry that many times the Lord doesn’t show us things because He knows that we are not ready for them. We are all in a growing process. Some of us are further along than others, but that’s okay; as long as we are all searching and trying to understand what God has for us. The Bible says that we grow from faith to faith and glory to glory. That means that we grow a little bit at a time. It doesn’t happen overnight. God knows when and how to reveal things to us as He knows that we are ready to receive them.

The second blessing is quite simple in that it only requires that we “*hear*” the words that are in this book. Of course, there is more to hearing than just being in the same room as the person who is speaking. You wives know exactly what I’m talking about!

Finally, the third blessing is just a little different in that it is not quite as simple as the first two or as easy to obtain as that it is only for those who “*keep those things which are written in this book.*” Now that implies more than reading and hearing. It implies obedience. The Bible says in James 1:22 that we are to be “*doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.*” As a matter of fact, it is by doing what God says that we know that we love God. John 14:21 says, “*He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me...*”

Sadly, I know many people, as I’m sure you do, who say they love God with their mouths and yet there is no proof of it in their lives. Unfortunately, they are only deceiving themselves. They have convinced themselves that they are something they are not. That’s why Jesus said in Matthew 7:21-23 “*Not everyone who says to Me 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'*” So, it’s not enough to just read and hear the Bible, but we must also do those things that are commanded in the Bible. God wants our life, not just our lip!

Notice the last part of that verse where it says, “*for the time is near.*” What does that mean? What time is near? Why did the Apostle John say that? First of all, I believe that it was said as an encouragement to the reader. In other words, we should seek to obtain the three blessings of reading, hearing, and keeping those things written in the Bible because the “*end is near*”. I don’t know about you, but that’s a pretty good motivator for me, especially as a student of Scripture who has his eyes on the Middle East right now. Even a novice Bible reader should know that it will all end in the same place that it all began.

I’ve often asked my congregation how they would live their lives today if they knew for sure that Jesus was going to come back tomorrow. What would they do differently? What things would they leave unsaid? I guarantee that kind of knowledge would change most of our schedules! I know that it would change mine.

However, the Bible teaches that we are to live our lives like Jesus could return at any moment. Who knows, He may come back today, tomorrow, or the day after tomorrow. No one knows for sure but the Father (Mark 13:32). The truth is that we do not know, but we should live in such a way that we are ready. Revelation 3:3 says, “*Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.*” Sadly, many will be caught by surprise. What about you?

The second reason that John may have said “*for the time is near*” was as an attempt to warn those who for whatever reason don’t find it necessary to read, hear, and to keep those things written in the Bible. It could have been John’s way of saying, “I’m warning you that the day is coming when it will be too late.”

Unfortunately, many Christians are going to be heartbroken when they stand before God on that final day because they failed to read, hear, and keep the Word of God. I see them every Sunday. They come, they sit, they listen, (some of them sleep) and they leave. They are just too

busy for God. God just doesn't know how busy and important they are. Their cell phones and whatever else is going to happen after the service are just too pressing. If the truth be known, they are just there to check the box on their "to do" list. You say, "Pastor, you're being harsh." No, my friend, I'm just being honest. No one knows the sheep better than the shepherd.

Can you imagine the day that we all stand before God? According to the Bible, the very first thing that we will see in Heaven, after the throne of God (Rev. 4:2), is our Risen Savior, Jesus Christ. Revelation 5:6 says, "*And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain...*" What will go through our minds at that moment? Sorrow? Pity? Regret? Maybe that is why Revelation 21:4 says, "*And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes...*" What are these tears for? It may be because for the first time, they are going to realize just how much Jesus suffered so that they could have eternal life. Maybe, it's because they are going to wish that they would've, could've, and should've, done more. Sadly, there are going to be many Christians with tears in their eyes on that day because they are simply going to be overwhelmed with the unfortunate reality of misplaced priorities. How about you? Where are your priorities right now? He hasn't come back yet; at least, not at the time of this writing.

I pray that we can all say as the Apostle Paul to his young disciple, Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:8, "*Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.*"

Verse 4: "*John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne;*" We can quickly determine from this verse that John is about to write to the seven churches which are in Asia. We will discuss each of these churches in detail as we get into chapters two and three. For now, just know that they were seven literal churches in Asia Minor.

Notice the second part of the verse that says, "*...Grace be unto you, and peace...*" I want to focus on that. Did you know that of the 27 books that make up the New Testament of our Bible, 17 of them began with this phrase? Also, if you carefully look at each time this happens; never is peace before grace. It's always grace and then peace. Why does grace always come before peace?

Well, first of all, we need to understand what grace is. Grace is God's unmerited favor. Some have used it as an acronym for "**G**od's **R**iches **A**t **C**hrist's **E**xpense." In other words, you can do nothing to earn it or deserve it. It is given by God as a free gift. The Bible says in Ephesians 2:8-9, "*For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.*" Grace is given, not earned. No Christian can ever boast that they did something that so impressed God that He saved them.

The reason that God must give grace is because we are all sinners. To sin means to miss the mark. It's an archery term. The archer pulls back his bow and he aims for the bull's-eye, but the arrow falls short; therefore he sins. So too, no matter how desperately we desire or try to hit the bull's-eye, we fall short as well. This is because we are sinners by our very nature. We

inherited that nature from our Grandparents, Adam and Eve. That's why the Bible says in Romans 3:23, "*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.*"

As such, we are deserving of punishment. The Bible calls that place Hell. Whoa! That's not good! No, it's not, but that's where grace comes in. The Bible says in Romans 5:8, "*But God commended his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*" In other words, God gave us grace, through His Son, Jesus Christ, so that we would not have to go to Hell because of our sin. Of course, the question of the day is, "What have you done about it?"

Romans 10:9-10 says, "*That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*" Did you see that? If you will call upon the name of the Lord, you can be saved. You can accept the grace, the unmerited favor that God has given to you through His Son, Jesus Christ. However, it is up to you to take the first step.

Here is the conclusion of the matter. Grace always comes before peace, because without grace there can be no peace. One person said it this way; "No Grace, No Peace. Know Grace, Know Peace." It is true. Once you come to understand this grace. Once you've come to rest and relax in this grace. Then you will have peace with God. One of Jesus' titles is the Prince of Peace.

Jesus said in John 14:27, "*Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*" Do you want peace? You can have it, but you must accept God's grace first. Come to Jesus today!

Notice v.4 where it says, "*John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne;*" John is writing this letter to seven churches which are in Asia Minor. Notice that there are seven of these churches that are going to be addressed. Surely, there were more than seven churches there, but God only chose to address seven of them.

Now, let's take a closer look at the number seven. The number seven is extremely important in the study of the Bible. As a matter of fact, the number seven is mentioned fifty-four times in the book of Revelation alone. What's the significance? The number seven is the number of completeness and perfection in the Bible. Thus, it is the number of God as that He is the only one that is complete and perfect.

The first mention of the number seven is in the very first book of the Bible when God created the world and all that is in it in six days and rested on the seventh or Sabbath. Sabbath means holy day. It's where we get the word "holiday". That's why God said in Exodus 20:8 that we are to, "*Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.*"

Our European culture sees everything in tens (decades), but the Jews see everything in sevens (heptads). Another great example of this is when God is speaking to the prophet Daniel in Daniel 9:24 and He speaks of seventy weeks of sevens or 490 years. The entire prophecy is based on the number seven. It's an awesome study.

What do you think the number of Satan is? It's six, because he falls short of being perfect and complete. In other words, he only wishes he was God! Satan, said in Isaiah 14:13-14, "...*I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.*" Notice that sin began with the first, "*I will*". Of course, Satan was sadly disappointed when God took him and one third of the angels that followed him and kicked them out of Heaven for their disobedience (Isa. 14:15; Rev. 12:4).

Here is something to think about. I'm not being dogmatic about this, but its food for thought. We've already established that the number seven is the number of completeness and perfection; thus God. We've also established that the number six is the number of Satan as that he falls short of being perfect and complete. What about the mark of the beast that is described in Revelation 13:18 where it says, "*Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666.*"

Now, if one of those sixes represents Satan, who do the other two represent? They may represent the Antichrist and the False Prophet mentioned in Revelation 13. That means that the first six is for Satan who falls short of being God. The second six is for the Antichrist who falls short of being Jesus. The third six is for the False Prophet who falls short of being the Holy Spirit. That is what is referred to as the satanic trinity.

Verses 4-5: "*John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne. And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.*" Last week we looked at the number seven and its significance in the Bible. This week I want to look at the rest of the verse and verse 5.

Notice the description of Jesus given in this verse: "*which is, and which was, and which is to come.*" He is past, present, and future. Before we were, he was, and after we are gone, He will still be! Jesus is omnipresent. That means that He is everywhere at all times.

Notice also that He is "*to come.*" Do you know that one day Jesus will take His true church out in what is called the rapture and then return seven years later to set up His kingdom on Earth? We will discuss this in detail when we get to chapter 4.

And then notice the "*seven spirits.*" Here we see the Holy Spirit of God, but with seven different characteristics. I believe that these are spoken of in Isaiah 11:2 where it says, "*And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.*" Do you see the seven characteristics of God? They are the Spirit of the Lord, wisdom, understanding, counsel, might,

knowledge, and fear. Of course, one cannot be dogmatic about this because it is not substantiated throughout the Bible.

Notice that verse 5 refers to Jesus as *"the faithful witness."* Not one time did our Lord neglect; not one time was He disobedient; not one time did He fail His Father. In every single instance throughout all of His life, He was and is the faithful witness. You and I fail and will continue to fail more times than we would like to admit, but the Bible offers a world of encouragement in 2 Timothy 2:13 when it says, *"If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself"*.

Notice also that He is the *"Firstborn from the Dead."* Now this does not mean that He was the first one to be raised from the dead. Many people were raised from the dead before Jesus. All throughout the Old Testament people were raised from the dead. In the New Testament both Lazarus (John 11) and the daughter of Jairus (Mark 5) were raised from the dead. The difference between them and Jesus is that they all died again. When Jesus came back to life, He never died again. That promise is also given to those of us who have placed our faith in Him as our Savior.

Notice also that Jesus is also called the *"Ruler over the kings of the earth."* One day, Jesus will ascend the throne of David and rule all the earth from Jerusalem. Many have wondered why the Jews had such a difficult time understanding why Jesus had come. It was because they wanted Him to rule over the kings of the earth by ridding them of the Romans and setting Himself up as their liberator and king. This is evidenced by the question that the disciples asked Him in Acts 1:6 when they said, *"Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"* Unfortunately, they could not grasp the fact that the purpose of Christ's first coming was to die.

They were looking at Scriptures like Isaiah 9:6-7 which says, *"For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom."* However they overlooked verses like Psalms 22:14 which says, *"I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted within me."*

Let's look at the last part of Revelation 1:5 where it says, *"To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood."* Now, at first glance that sounds very strange. It's very easy to understand that God loves us, but what about that blood stuff? We must understand something about the Bible. The New Testament is concealed in the Old Testament and the Old Testament is revealed in the New Testament. That means that it is impossible to fully understand one without the other.

A perfect example of this is found right here in this verse. I want to explain it so that you can see what I'm talking about. Many times, we pastors will say something from the pulpit, not realizing that not everyone really knows what we're talking about. Thus the blank looks!

In the Old Testament, the people were required to bring their sacrifices to the priest repeatedly (it could be a young bull, a sheep, a goat, a turtledove or even a pigeon) for the atonement (forgiveness or covering) of their sins. The priest would then take the one who brought the sacrifice and “*put his hand on the head of the burnt offering*” so that “*it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him*” (Leviticus 1:4). This signified that they were transferring their guilt and sin to the animal. In other words, the animal was going to die in their place.

The priest would then “*kill the bull before the LORD*” (Leviticus 1:5a). The method of killing was by cutting the throat while simultaneously collecting the blood into a container. After which “*the priests, Aaron's sons*” would “*bring the blood and sprinkle the blood all around on the altar that is by the door of the tabernacle of meeting*” (Leviticus 1:5b). The blood of the animal had to be shed in order for the one who sacrificed the animal to be forgiven.

Now, after looking at all of these things in the Old Testament; what can we learn about them in the New Testament? We will find that Jesus fulfilled them all. First, in the Old Testament, the sacrifice had to be brought to a priest. In the New Testament, we have no priest but Jesus. Paul said in 1 Timothy 2:5, “*For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.*”

Second, in the Old Testament, the sacrifice had to be made repeatedly for the forgiveness of sin. In the New Testament, the sacrifice only had to be made once by Jesus’ giving of Himself. The writer of Hebrews says in Hebrews 9:12, “*Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He (Jesus) entered the Most Holy Place **once for all**, having obtained eternal redemption.*”

Third, in the Old Testament, the one who brought the sacrifice placed his hand on the head of the soon to be sacrificed animal to symbolically transfer his sins to the animal and to identify himself with it. In the New Testament, Jesus is the sacrifice for us and we identify ourselves with Him not by the laying on of hands, but by faith. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:21, “*For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*”

Fourth, in the Old Testament, the sacrifice had to die and its’ blood had to be shed for forgiveness. In the New Testament, it speaks of Jesus in Hebrews 9:22 when it says that “*without the shedding of blood (Jesus’ blood) there is no remission (forgiveness)*” of sin. Jesus had to die and His blood had to be shed or there would be no possible way of forgiveness for us.

Fifth, in the Old Testament, the priest would then collect the blood and sprinkle it around the altar. In the New Testament, the writer of Hebrews 12:24 says, “*to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling (His blood) that speaks better things...*”

In conclusion, there is no need to make animal sacrifices anymore like they did in the Old Testament. We are under the New Testament. That word Testament can be better translated “covenant”. There is no need for an earthly priest to intercede on our behalf anymore. Jesus is

our priest. Jesus also became our sacrifice so that by faith in Him, our sins could be permanently forgiven.

Verses 6-7: *“And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.”* Notice first that God has *“...made us kings and priests unto God and his Father...”* We who have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord of our lives are kings and priests unto God. We are kings, because one day we will rule and reign with Christ.

We are told in Revelation 5:9-10, *“And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation. And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.”* Yes, one day God will allow us to rule with Him. The extent of our rule will be directly dependent upon our faithfulness in this life. Some of us who have been faithful will rule over much. While some of us who have been unfaithful will, unfortunately rule over very little. If God cannot trust us with little, then how can He trust us with much? Even our human employers can figure that one out. Jesus, when speaking to this subject said to the faithful servant said in Matthew 25:23, *“His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.”*

Notice also that we are priests unto God. We need no earthly priest to gain access to the Father. In Matthew 27:51 it says, *“And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent.”* This symbolized that an earthly High Priest was no necessary. Through Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection, we all have equal access to the very throne of God. Jesus is now our sole Intercessor. Paul said in 1 Timothy 2:5 said, *“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”* Jesus is our priest now. The veil of division separating us from God has been removed. Our response to that is, *“...to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”*

Notice in verse 7 that it says *“Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him...”* This is not referring to the rapture that occurs in 4:1 as that it will only be known to the saints that He will come for. (We will discuss this event in detail later.) This is speaking of the Second Coming that will occur in 19:11-16. This is when all of God’s enemies will see Him.

Notice the later part of verse 7 where it says, *“...and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.”* This is when all of those who rejected Jesus will see him. They will look upon Him who they pierced and wail. This is especially pertaining to the children of Israel. Zechariah 12:10 and 13:6 says, *“And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.”* *“And one will say to him, ‘What are these wounds between your arms?’ Then he will answer, ‘Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.’”* This is fulfilled literally in Revelation 19 at the Second Coming of Christ.

Why will they “mourn” when they see Him? They will finally realize the tragic mistake that they made. They had the Messiah walking in and among them and did not realize who He really was. John 1:10-11 says, “*He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not.*” How about you? What have done with Jesus?

Verse 8: “*I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,*” saith the Lord, “*who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.*” It cannot escape notice that Jesus uses the same description of Himself as God does of Himself back in verse 4 when He said, “*Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come.*” This is another proof text for the Trinity.

Verse 9: “*I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.*” In this verse, John gives two reasons why he was imprisoned on the island of Patmos: “*For the word of God*” and “*for the testimony of Jesus Christ.*” I can’t think of any better reason for a man to be imprisoned than that! Peter said in 1 Peter 2:20, “*For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God.*” It’s a whole lot better to go to jail for your faith than for your faults.

Verse 10: “*I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet.*” The Lord’s Day is Sunday. Two great things happened on Sunday. First, the resurrection of Jesus Christ happened on Sunday. It says in John 20:1, “*The **first day of the week** cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre.*” Second, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the Church occurred on Sunday in Acts 2:1-4. Some will say these verses in Acts don’t specifically mention that it was the first day of the week. No, they don’t, but Leviticus 23:15-16 does. The verse is speaking of the day of Pentecost when it says, “*And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed. Count fifty days **to the day after the seventh Sabbath**; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the LORD*”. The “*day after the seventh Sabbath*” is Sunday.

The Bible teaches that the early church always worshipped on Sunday. It says in Acts 20:7, “*And upon the **first day of the week**, when the disciples came together to break bread,...*” They were gathering for communion and Bible study on Sunday.

It also says, when speaking of when the offering was to be taken that it was to be done on Sunday. 1 Corinthians 16:2 says, “*Upon **the first day of the week** let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him...*” Clearly, the early church worshipped on Sunday. Now, I know that there are those within the church today who are convinced that we must all worship only on the Sabbath or Saturday. I’m not here to knock them in any way. However, I will go to Scripture on anyone who tries to put me back under the Old Testament Law. Jesus came and fulfilled the Law so that I would not have to. If I could have done it myself, Jesus would not have had to do it for me. When Jesus prayed in the garden, “*O my Father, if this cup may not*

pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done” (Matthew 26:42); what He was in essence saying was, “Father, if this is not the only way for man to be saved, don’t make me do this.” Of course, God’s answer was delivered in the form of a kiss (Matthew 26:48-49).

The Bible warns us in Galatians 5:1 to “*Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage*”. It goes on to say in verse 2, “*Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.*” We must choose whether we want to live under the Law and thus be judged by it, or accept the deliverance from the Law that comes by faith in Jesus Christ.

Verse 11: “*I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last,*” and, “*What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.*” Here are the instructions that are given to John. He is to write everything that he sees in a book and send it to seven churches in Asia.

Verse 12: “*Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands.*” We will find out later in v.20 that these seven golden lampstands represent each of the seven churches that are mentioned in v.11.

Verses 13-14: “*and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire;*” It’s interesting that we really do not have a detailed physical description of Jesus anywhere in the Bible or in history. We don’t know how tall he was. We don’t know if he had curly or straight hair. There are just no real details given on his physical appearance.

Something that I have found as I have traveled all over the world as a serviceman, missionary, and pastor is that we all want to portray him as looking like “us”. I’ve seen a black Jesus, a white Jesus, a Hispanic Jesus, and an Asian Jesus. However, in reality he was a Jewish Jesus and as such, looked like a Jew.

In Isaiah 53:2-3 we told that he was not out of the ordinary or above normal in his looks and appearance when it says, “*For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, And as a root out of dry ground. **He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, There is no beauty that we should desire Him.** He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; **He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.***” I’m humored many times when I see the pictures of Jesus with blue eyes and the perfectly manicured beard. It’s almost a “Glamour Shots” portrayal of him. That’s not what the Bible teaches about his appearance. He was a normal man to look upon.

Verses 15-16: “*His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.*” Brass in the Bible always represents judgment and that’s exactly what Jesus is going to bring with him at his Second Coming in Revelation 19.

Notice also that he *“had in His right hand seven stars.”* We are told in v.20 that these seven stars are the seven angels to each of the seven churches. The word angel means messenger. Since John was writing this letter to real churches, we can only assume that these angels are terrestrial (earthly) and not celestial (heavenly). After all, it was the earthly angels that were going to have to read the letters to their churches. So, the angels are the pastors of the seven churches. It feels pretty good to be reminded that I and my other pastor friends are referred to as angels in the Bible. I wish everyone thought of us that way!

And then finally, look at the last part of the verse that says, *“out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword.”* The sword is the Word of God. Hebrews 4:12 says, *“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”* Also, Paul when speaking to the Ephesian church in Ephesians 6:17 encouraged them to *“take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”*

If you study the history of the two edged sword, you will find that it was developed and mastered by the Romans. As a matter of fact, it is credited with the rapid rise of the Roman Empire. While Rome had many strengths, it is no doubt that the two edged was one of it's greatest. When other nations were still using a single edged sword that could only cut one direction in combat, the Romans had mastered the two edged sword that could cut in both directions. The Roman soldier was twice as lethal as their enemy on the battlefield. Their sword definitely gave them a great advantage.

Another interesting note is that the Word of God is compared to a two edged sword as we mentioned last week. As a two edged sword it represents the Word of God. Hebrews 4:12 says, *“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”* This verse shows us both the truth and the severity of the Word of God. If it is allowed to cut one way, it can be a surgical scalpel that the Master Physician uses to repair heal, remove, and restore. Ephesians 5:27 speaks of this process when it says, *“That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.”*

However, the Word of God may also cut another way and be an instrument of judgment. The Bible says that when Jesus returns for the second time in Revelation 19:15 that *“...out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.”* So, the Word of God can be both an instrument of healing and an instrument of judgment. It's entirely up to us which way it will cut in our lives. Which way is it cutting in your life?

Notice also in this verse that *“his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.”* I am reminded of Exodus 33:18-22 when Moses asked the Lord if he could see Him. God's response was, *“I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy. And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.”*

Can you imagine the brilliance of God? He told Moses that no man could look upon Him and live to tell about it. John 1:18 says, *“No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.”* In the end, Moses was only allowed to see God’s *“back parts”* (Ex 33:23), and yet we’re told in Exodus 34:29-35 that Moses’ skin was so bright after being exposed to God’s *“back parts”* that the people couldn’t even look at him. We are further told that Moses had to cover his face with a veil so that the people could even be in his presence. Can you imagine what would have happened if Moses had seen God’s face? He probably would have been vaporized!

You know that’s the way it should be. People should know when we’ve been in the presence of God. Acts 4:13 says, *“And they realized that they had been with Jesus.”* I’ll be honest, some of the nastiest, bitterest, and meanest people I know, claim to be Christians. They look like they’ve been baptized in lemon juice every time I see them! They are always mad about something or someone. If they really are the Christians they claim to be, it’s obvious that they have not been in God’s presence for quite some time. They are not giving off any glow that I can see. How about you? Do people know that you’re a Christian by your glow?

Verse 17: *“And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:”* When John sees the Lord Jesus, he falls at his feet as if dead. This is a proof text that this is Jesus speaking because He does not refuse John’s worship of Him. We also find later that John tried to do the same thing with an angel that refused John’s worship. It says in 19:10 *“And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, ...”* Notice that John received just the opposite response from this angel. He refused his worship of him.

Listen to me very closely; the first angel in history that sought to be worshiped was named Lucifer. It says of him in Isaiah 14:12-15 *“How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.”* Paul says of Lucifer in 2 Thessalonians 2:4, *“Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.”* Lucifer paid a very heavy price for seeking to be *“like the most High”* and desiring to be worshiped *“as God”*. A true angel of God will never accept worship from a mortal. If you find one that does; it is a demon. By the way, a demon is a fallen angel who chose to rebel with Lucifer and was kicked out of heaven with him when he decided he wanted God’s job. We see this event described in Revelation 12:7-9 where it says, *“And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.”*

We read more about Lucifer’s fall in Ezekiel 28:11-18 when it says, *“Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God...Thou art*

the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God;...Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee...and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub,...Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee.”

I am amazed at how willfully ignorant people can be on the clear teaching about angels and demons (fallen angels) in the Bible. Do you know how many false religions and cults have been started because someone said that an angel came and told them something? The Apostle Paul said in Galatians 1:6-8, *“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But 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.”*

That means that if an angel, heavenly or demonic, (it will be demonic) was to stand at the foot of your bed tonight and tell you something that is not in the Bible; don't you believe it because he is lying and he is accursed by God.

Verse 18: *“I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.”* Only Jesus could make this statement. He is the only one who lived, died, and rose again. It's called the gospel or good news. Sometimes we get confused about just what the gospel is. We start babbling about creation and the rise of the Antichrist in the last days. While all of that is interesting and true; the gospel is much simpler than that. It is simply the death, burial, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Yep, that's it! The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, *“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:”* That's the gospel. He died for our sins. He was buried. He rose again the third day. That's it!

We must be very careful not to add anything to that message either. We have a tendency to want to complicate the things of God. I think it makes us feel a little bit better about ourselves. However, in so doing we *“frustrate the grace of God”* (Galatians 2:21).

The Apostle Paul said that a person can be saved just by believing the gospel when he said in Romans 10:9-10, *“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”* To add anything to that is to put faith in something other than the gospel.

You may ask, “Do people really place their faith in other things besides the gospel for salvation?” Unfortunately, the answer is yes. I hear it all the time, “Well, if you want to be saved, you have to believe and be baptized.” I'm sorry, I don't even see the word “baptize” anywhere in those verses. If baptism was a requirement for salvation; Jesus lied to the poor thief on the cross when He said in Luke 23:43, *“Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”* No, there is no mention of water in that conversation.

I've heard others say, "If you want to be saved, you have to believe and keep the sacraments." Again, I'm sorry but that's not part of the gospel message either. As a matter of fact, it says in Ephesians 2:8-9, "*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.*" That means that nothing beyond simple faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ will save you.

What happens when someone puts their faith in the gospel plus something else? They've forfeited the gospel and are trusting in the "something else" to save them. One says, "It's faith plus baptism." They're trusting in their baptism to save them. One says, "It's faith plus sacraments." They're trusting in sacraments to save them. It's faith in the gospel plus nothing that saves. Put your faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and then find a church that teaches the simple gospel of Jesus Christ as the only requirement for salvation.

Verse 19: "*Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;*" This is called the outline verse of the book of Revelation. Unless you understand and apply this verse, the book will be very confusing to you. It says that the book is divided up into three parts: "*the things which thou hast seen*", "*the things which are*", and "*the things which shall be hereafter*". It's pretty straightforward and simple actually. People struggle with it because they can't wrap "their theology" around it, but it's true.

In a nutshell, the "*things which thou hast seen*" are found in chapter one as John describes Jesus. The "*things which are*" are the seven churches that are described in chapters two and three. And the "*things which shall be hereafter*" refer to chapter four and following. Next week, we'll take a little closer look at that.

I've heard all kinds of interpretations of the book of Revelation over the years. Some of them are fanciful and simply reflect ignorance. While others seem to be an honest attempt, but fall short. The Bible says in 2 Peter 1:19-20, "*We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.*" That means exactly what it says.

It only stands to reason that God put an outline verse there for our benefit. Let's use it. The book is pretty straightforward and simple actually. Unfortunately, some people struggle with it because they can't wrap "their theology" around it. I believe that if a person tells me what they believe about the book of Revelation; I can tell them what they believe in regards to the rest of the Bible. I.e. creation, the eternal security of the believer, works as compared to grace, the church, etc....

Let's take a look at each division. The "*things which thou hast seen*" are found in chapter one as John describes Jesus. In this chapter John describes Jesus as being the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the ending, and the first and the last (v.8). He describes Jesus as walking in the "*midst of the seven candlesticks*" which represent the seven churches that he is about to write to. The chapter describes exactly what John saw and what he was told to do.

The “*things which are*” are the seven churches that are described in chapters two and three. There are three things about these churches that need to be noted. First, these were literal churches. They actually existed in what is today called, Asia Minor. Second, each of the churches had characteristics that can be found in churches today. On the negative side, some churches today have left their first love, fallen into dead orthodoxy, begun to worship idols, and think they are rich and don’t need God anymore. While on the positive side, there are some who have not given in to these things, serving the Lord faithfully, and looking for His soon return. Third, each of the churches represent a time period in the life of the church beginning with it’s birth in Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost and ending with it’s rapture or taking out Revelation 4:1.

And then finally, the “*things which shall be hereafter*” refers to chapter four and following. Of course, it is going to be a horrible time to be alive on Earth. These final chapters of Revelation cover what is known as the time of the Tribulation. It is also referred to in the Bible as the Time of Jacob’s Trouble (Jeremiah 30:7) and Daniel’s Seventieth Week (Daniel 9:27). By whatever name, it’s going to be very bad for anyone left alive during that time. Hopefully, you’re a part of the church that will be taken in Revelation 4:1. If not, there is no better time to become a member than right now by asking Jesus to come into your live and save you (Romans 10:9-13).

Now, you may ask, “How do you know that Revelation 4:1 is when the Rapture of the church will take place and the horrible Tribulation will begin?” The answer is found in the word “*hereafter*” in v.19. The word means “after this”. The first time the word appears is in 1:19 and the next time the word appears is in 4:1. That means that at the conclusion of the church age (Chapters 2 and 3) which ends with the Church of Laodicea, the Rapture will take place and the Tribulation will begin.

Verse 20: “*The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.*” This is what I call the explanation verse. I have always believed that the best commentary on the Bible is the Bible itself and its true! When we find things in the Bible that don’t make sense, usually there is another verse that explains it. That’s the case here. We are told that the stars in the right hand of Jesus represent the messengers or pastors of each of the churches and the candlesticks represent the actual churches.

Now, let me take a moment to introduce chapter 2 and 3 where we see the seven churches. There are three things that we must first know about these churches before we proceed. First, they were literal churches in Asia Minor. Second, they represent a dispensation, time, or age of the church from the time of Christ to the present. Third, a little bit of each of them can still be found in churches today. I.e. some churches have left their first love, others have fallen into dead orthodoxy, and many have accepted the doctrines of men over the clear teachings of Scripture. We will discover these three things as we go through chapters 2 and 3 together.

Another thing to note about these churches is that their names are very important. Each name correlates to the age or time in which it represents. Ephesus means Desirable. It

represents the apostolic church of the 1st Century. Smyrna means Myrrh. It represents the persecuted church of 2nd and 3rd centuries. Pergamos means Marriage. It represents the compromising church that started around 345 A.D. under the leadership of the Emperor Constantine when he created the first church-state relationship by establishing not only political Rome but also a spiritual one. Thyatira means Continual Sacrifice. It represents the church of the Dark Ages. Sardis means Remnant. It represents the church of the Protestant Reformation. Philadelphia means Brotherly Love. It represents the true church or the revival church. Laodicea means People's Rights or Rule. It represents the lukewarm church of the last days in which we live.

Another interesting parallel is the relationship between each of these seven letters and the seven Kingdom Parables found in Matthew 13. These parallels will be mentioned in some of the churches. It's a great study to do on your own.

Another point that I want to cover briefly is some background on the church. The church began with Jesus. He said in Matthew 16:18, *"And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."* Understand that when Jesus said this, it was brand new! There was no such thing as a church in Jesus' day; only synagogues, the temple, and the Tabernacle in the Old Testament.

The church upon this Earth will end at the rapture at the end of the church age. That will happen in Revelation 4:1. When the rapture does happen, I really don't think that the world for the most part will realize it, because so much of the organized church will still be here. That sounds weird until you realize that there must be a distinction made between what many refer to as the organism and the organization.

The Bible tells us that the church has within it both wise and foolish virgins (Matt. 25:1-13), faithful and lazy servants (Matt. 25:14-30), and wheat and tares (Matt. 13:24-30). The wise virgins, the faithful servants, and the wheat all represent the true church of Jesus Christ which is the organism or Body of Christ. The foolish virgins, the lazy servants, and tares all represent the false church which is the organization.

The organization is man-made. It is of the world; while the organism is the true body of Christ made up of the redeemed. When the Lord returns for His church, He is only going to receive the wise, the faithful, and the wheat. He will leave behind foolish, the lazy, and tares. The organism will be taken and the organization will be left. Which one do you belong to?

Chapter 2

Verse 1: *“Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;”* This is the letter to the church of Ephesus. The word Ephesus means “desired one.” It represents the Apostolic Church of the first and second centuries.

Now again, remember that these churches represent a certain period in church history. Ephesus is the church of the 1st Century apostles; you and I are not living in this church, but in the age of the Laodicean church. We are the “last-days” church that is expecting the return of our Lord in Revelation 4:1.

Notice that this letter is addressed *“Unto the angel...”* Who is this angel? We are told who he is in 1:20 where it said, *“The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.”* The angel is the pastor or messenger unto the church of Ephesus.

As we study further, we will find that every church, no matter how corrupt, has true pastors in them. God will not leave His sheep without true pastors to shepherd them. In addition to that, God will always protect his messengers. Notice that the verse says, *“the seven stars (pastors or messengers) which thou sawest in my hand.”* God protects those who faithfully serve and represent Him. I pity those who lift their hand against God’s servants. They are actually fighting against God Himself.

How many times have you heard someone speak evil against a pastor? Oh, I know that you hear it all of the time if you are involved in the life of a church. Those who do so are defying God and bringing judgment upon themselves. Some will say, “Well, you don’t know how bad our pastor is.” “You don’t know what he has done.” Let me ask you this, “Who made you judge and jury against God’s anointed?” God can *“set up”* and God can *“put down”* (Daniel 5:19). You just leave that responsibility to Him. He doesn’t need your help.

A prime example in the Bible that all of us would do well to follow is found in 1 Samuel 24 when David had the opportunity of a lifetime to end his years of running from King Saul. David and his men were hiding in the caves of En-gedi and King Saul decided that he had to use the bathroom in one of the caves. Guess which cave he chose? Yes, the very cave in which David and his men were hiding!

David’s men encouraged David to go ahead and take advantage of the opportunity to kill Saul. So David got close enough to Saul to cut off just a small piece of his robe. After Saul had left the cave, David fell under tremendous conviction that he had even thought enough of himself to reach out and touch the Lord’s anointed. He said in 1 Sam 24:10, *“Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the LORD had delivered thee to day into mine hand in the cave: and some bade me kill thee: but mine eye spared thee; and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord; for he is the LORD's anointed.”*

Yet today, how many people will reach out and touch or speak against “*the LORD’s anointed*” without even batting an eye. They are on dangerous ground and I would advise you to keep no company with them. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 5:11-13, “*But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is **called a brother** be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; **with such an one no not to eat...therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.***” That verse is telling you and I not to keep company with a “*brother*” that among other things is a railer. A railer is someone who runs his mouth and speaks evil of other people. You are to have no part with them. As a matter of fact, you should not even eat with them. Maybe that railer is you? Repent before your next meal!

Notice that it says that Jesus is walking in “*the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.*” We’ve already established by looking at Revelation 1:20 that the seven candlesticks represent the seven churches spoken of here chapters 2 and 3. It is interesting to note that in the very first church that represents the birth of the church, Jesus is walking in the midst of it. However, by the time we arrive at the last church at the end of chapter 3 we see that Jesus is trying to get back in! Notice what it says in Revelation 3:20, “*Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.*” What a sad commentary on that church.

In the age in which you and I live; which I believe to be the last days church of Laodicea; you don’t have to visit many churches to figure out that Jesus is not in the midst of them. George Barna, founder of Barna Research, gives a staggering statistic in his latest evaluation of the church today. He estimates that six out of ten people who are sitting in churches throughout the United States on any given Sunday morning are lost! That means that they have no real relationship with Jesus Christ. They are faithful to the church, etc..., but they do not really know Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

We have lived to see the day when the divinity of Jesus is denied. There are groups of so called Christians out there that deny that Jesus Christ is God incarnate. That means that they do not believe that Jesus is God in the flesh. We have lived to see a day when his virgin birth is questioned. I got news for you, if Jesus was not born of a virgin; he is in need of a Savior himself. I don’t think so! Jesus was born of a virgin and to deny that is to simply deny your own possibility of salvation.

We have lived to see a day when the church is scoffed at, ignored, and passed up by the masses. How many people are there in San Benito? 25,000? How many of them are in a church on any given Sunday morning? Just by personal observation and my knowledge of the other churches, I would guess around 2000 to 2500. Oh, I’m sure that there are more than that on the church rolls, but I’m talking about actual attendance. Of course, I’m only speaking of churches in San Benito. I’m sure that there are some who go to churches in other communities. I must confess that that bothers me a little bit, but be that as it may; the majority of the churches in our community are half empty every Sunday.

We have lived to see a day when Jesus’ Second Coming is ridiculed and hirelings are in pulpits across America telling them what they want to hear and how to get rich! Paul warned us

in 1 Timothy 6:6 to withdraw ourselves from any man that preaches godliness as a means of getting rich. Instead of crying for lost souls that are doomed for Hell, much of the church is crying, "Make us healthy, wealthy, and wise!"

I constantly hear on the TV that we are in the midst of a great revival. I find no scriptural support for that. As a matter of fact, I find the opposite. Jesus said in Matthew 24:12, "*And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.*" Paul said in II Thessalonians 2:3, "*Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;*"

We are in the midst of what the Bible calls the great apostasy. There is no revival from apostasy in the Bible, only judgment. The organized church is not going to "get back to God." Instead, they are drifting more and more every day further away from Him. Are you going with them?

Verses 2-3: "*I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.*" Notice the compliments paid to this church. The first is their "*patience.*" I believe that the patience spoken of here is in regards to their waiting for Jesus' promised return. He spoke of this return in John 14:2-3 when He said, "*In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*" Also, the last words spoken to them by the angels as Jesus was taken up into Heaven in Acts 1:11 was, "*...Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.*" This church was patiently waiting for the return of Christ.

Of course, they had no idea when that return would be. Maybe the disciples hung around the Mount of Olives where Jesus had ascended for a few hours or days. They simply did not know, but the early church definitely lived in the expectancy of the return of Jesus. Some even believed that Jesus would return before the death of John the Apostle because of what Jesus said in the Gospel of John to Peter in regards to his question about John. John 21:20-23 says, "*Peter seeing him (John) saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me. Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?*" Of course, John did die and Jesus had still not returned to the dismay of many. (Just as a side note, I do believe that what Jesus said in John 21 was fulfilled in that John did see the return of Christ when he wrote the book of Revelation.)

So, here we are today patiently still waiting for Christ's return just as the church of Ephesus. That's called living in expectancy. Here is another way to look at it. What if I told you that my family and I were coming over to your house tomorrow night at 7:00 p.m. for dinner? What would you do? How would you prepare? You would surely clean the house just a

little bit. I'm sure that you would also put things out of sight that you might think "the preacher" would question. I.e. questionable magazines, movies, CDs, etc...

Now, that's what you would do if you knew that I was coming. What would you do if I knocked on your door unannounced? Hmm...maybe you wouldn't answer it at all? Close the blinds and be real quite? Maybe you would yell, "Just a minute", while running wildly around the house trying to tidy on the fly? Why would you do that? It's simple, you were not ready or expecting me.

Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 5:2, "*For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.*" In other words, Jesus is going to come at a time when you least expect Him. Jesus said in Matthew 24:43-44, "*But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.*"

The conclusion of the matter is that you and I need to live in expectancy. Jesus could return at any moment. It will unannounced and unexpected. The question is, "What will you be doing when He comes?" Will you be ready or surprised?

Let's take a closer look at the first compliment paid to this church where it says, "*I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:*" The Lord starts out this letter to the Church of Ephesus by giving them some compliments. He first compliments them on the fact that they do not "*bear them which are evil*". The early church had something that I refer to as "purging power."

In other words, the early church was so real and the Holy Spirit was so active that it was impossible for evil or sin to be present in the church without opposition. When evil came into the church, it was quickly spotted and removed. The people of this church were "for real" in their relationship with the Lord.

There is no better example of this than Ananias and Sapphira in the book of Acts. It says in Acts 5:1 that there was "*a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession,...*" and decided to give a portion of the money they made to the church. There was nothing wrong with that. The problem was that they decided to lie about it. It says in v.2 that they "*...kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet.*" That means that they deliberately misrepresented themselves to Peter. Instead of being honest about withholding a portion of the profit for themselves, they pretended to be giving it all. If they had just been honest and upfront about it, it would have been no big deal. After all, they were only expected to give a tenth (tithe) of the profit to the Lord. However, they decided to be hypocritical and God killed them for it.

But, as we study through these churches we will see that they slowly lost this "purging power" because of their compromise with the world. This compromise has led to cold dead churches filled with cold dead people. Today, the church is filled with these types. As a matter

of fact, the word hypocrite comes from a Greek word which means to “play a part, pretend, or to act”. There are many in the church today that are playing a part, pretending, and acting like Christians. When in reality, they have no relationship with Christ at all.

Another example is found in Matthew when Jesus told the Parable of the Mustard Seed. Matthew 13:31-32 says, *“Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.”*

In this parable we see three reasons why the church has lost its purging power. First, we see it in the unnatural growth of the mustard seed. A mustard seed plant does not become a tree as that it is an herb. The church today has grown so large because it is largely made up of unsaved people who are fooling everyone but God.

Second, we see that because of this unnatural growth the birds of the air come and nest in its branches. They have made themselves at home! Unfortunately, the birds spoke of here are symbolic of evil. They don’t belong, but they are allowed to stay and actually feel quiet comfortable because there are so many like them in the tree (church). The bottom line is that evil could not thrive in the first century church because of the anointing and purity that was so present through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Third, we see the leaven. Leaven in the Scripture is always a type of evil. Leaven is what we call yeast today. When just a little bit of it is placed in anything, it spreads. Jesus compares it to sin in Matthew 16:6 when He said, *“Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.”* Paul warned in 1 Corinthians 5:6, *“Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?”* Unfortunately, the last days Church of Laodicea does not receive this compliment because it has lost its “purging power.”

Verse 4: *“Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.”* Here is the first thing that is said negative about this early church. They had left their first love. Now, you would think that of all the churches of the seven that are described in chapters 2 and 3 that this one would be the last to leave their first love. After all, many of them may have walked with Christ or had at least been witnesses to His life. Some of them might have even seen the crucifixion and witnessed the resurrection. It’s hard to believe that they could be accused of this.

The lesson for you and I today is that we can leave our first love. We can lose the zeal of it, the devotion of it, the excitement of it; if we are not careful. As a pastor, I see it all the time. I see people come to know the Lord, get plugged into the church, start faithfully attending services; and then just as quickly as they came, their gone. What happened? The answer can only be one of two things. Either they were never really “saved” from the start, or they have simply left their first love.

How can you know if you’ve left your first love? It is simple. If you have ever been any closer to God than you are right now, you’ve left your first love. So, what is the cure? It’s found

in the next verse where it says, “**Remember** therefore from whence thou art fallen, and **repent**, and **do the first works**; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.” There it is! There is a three step process for restoring your first love. I like to say it this way. To restore your first love you must remember, repent, and return. Let’s take a closer look at each step.

The first step is to remember from where you have fallen. Remember when you first gave your heart to Jesus? Remember the feelings of love, joy, and peace that flooded over you? Remember getting to church an hour early just to be there? Remember thinking, "Oh, there is so much for me to learn?" The first step is to remember, and once you’ve done this, you go to step two.

The second step is to repent. To repent means to feel remorse, contrition, or self-reproach for what one has done or failed to do. In short, tell God you’re sorry. Turn away from your sin. Turn away from whatever it was that caused you to leave you’re first love.

There is a process in the Bible that we would all do well to learn in regards to repentance and forgiveness. Repentance must come before forgiveness can be given. Yes, God wants to forgive you of your sins, but you must repent of them first. We see this process in Luke 17:3-4 when Jesus said, “*Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.*” So the process is as follows: the Lord rebukes, we remember, we repent, and he forgives.

So, first you must remember. Secondly, you must repent. And thirdly, you must go back and “*do the first works.*” In other words, do what you were doing before you left your first love. Remember? Were you going to church? Go back! Were you fellowship with brothers and sisters in the Lord? Go back! Were you praying? Go back! Were you being faithful? Go back! Go back and do what you were doing when you left your first love and you will find it right where you left it! The Bible says in Isaiah 1:18-20, “*Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.*”

Verse 5: “*Remember* therefore from whence thou art fallen, and **repent**, and **do the first works**; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.” Last week we discussed the fact that sometimes we do leave our first love. We stray away from the things of God for one reason or another, but we also learned that it’s never too late to come back. The way to do that is threefold. First, you must remember from where you have fallen. Remember when you first gave your heart to Jesus, the feelings of love, joy, and peace that flooded over you?

Second you must repent. Tell God you’re sorry. Turn away from your sin. There is a process in the Bible that we would all do well to learn. Luke 17:1-4 says, “*Then said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him, through whom they*

come! It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones. Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him."

What we see here is that repentance must come before forgiveness can be given. Now this passage is speaking specifically of our relationship with our brother or sister, but it is also speaking of our relationship with the Lord. The process is as follows: God rebukes us, we remember, we repent, and God forgives. So then, it must be argued that repentance is the requirement for forgiveness. Without repentance there can be no forgiveness.

As a pastor, I've had conflict in my church. I've had people do and say things that they should not have done or said. When they are confronted with it, they choose to either repent or go into denial. It's within our very nature to deny our own sin. When God confronted Adam in the Garden after he and Eve had disobeyed His commandment to not eat of the Tree of Knowledge, he chose denial instead of repentance. God said in Gen 3:11-13, "*Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?*" Listen to what Adam said, "*The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.*" He had the audacity to blame God and the woman that God had given to him for his sin! Eve didn't do any better. God said to Eve, "*What is this that thou hast done?*" and she said, "*The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.*" She also refused to acknowledge her sin and blamed the serpent! Denial can never lead to forgiveness: only repentance.

It's the same thing in our relationship with God. Once we've done and said things that we should not have done and said; there must be repentance before forgiveness or the fellowship will be broken. Are there some things that you need to repent of to a brother, sister, or your church? Do it today so that forgiveness can be given and the relationship can be restored. And then finally, after remembrance and repentance, you must return and do your first works. Start going back to church, praying, fellowshiping with fellow Believers, etc...

Now, the question must be asked, "What if I don't return to my first love?" "What if I don't repent?" The answer is given in v.5, "*...or else I will come unto thee quickly and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.*"

That's pretty strong language from God Himself. Usually when someone uses the words "or else", there is a threat forthcoming! God is saying to this church, "If you don't repent, I will remove your church." "If you do not repent quickly, I am going to remove your light." "You are going to lose your testimony." "I will write Ichabod (the glory has departed) over your doors."

You don't have to go very far to see the crippling effects of unrepentant sin. Towns all across America are filled with churches that are empty shells with no reality, no joy, no enthusiasm, and no burden for the lost. Why? Because of unrepentant sin!

Verse 6: *“But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.* In these verses we see another compliment paid to this Church of Ephesus in that they hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans which God also hates. So the question is: Who were the Nicolaitans and what did they do that was so bad? Well, let’s start out by looking at their very name. The first part of the name “nico” comes from the Greek word which means “to conquer or enslave.” The second part of the name “laitans” comes from the Greek word meaning “people.” It’s from where we get the word “laity” today. Hence, their name means “to conquer or enslave the people.”

The Nicolaitans were a group who divided the laity from the clergy in an effort to re-establish the priesthood that was done away with by the sacrificial death of Jesus upon the cross. God hates this. Why is this so hated by God? We are told in Matthew 27:50-51, *“And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom....”* Notice that the veil in the temple was ripped from top to bottom upon Jesus’ death. Why? It signified that there was no longer a need for a priesthood after the order of Aaron. Remember that only the High Priest was allowed to go behind that veil once per year to make sacrifice for the sins of the people. That veil was really the only thing that separated the “laity” from the “clergy”. Upon Jesus’ death, it was once and for all removed. However, the Nicolaitans immediately set out to re-hang it and have been trying to do so ever since.

Jesus said in John 14:6, *“...I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me....”* He was saying that the people no longer would have a priest between them and God. Instead, He would be their High Priest. That’s why the Apostle Paul said to Timothy in 1 Timothy 2:5, *“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;”*

In effect, when Jesus died upon the cross, the priesthood was abolished and Jesus Himself became our High Priest. That’s why the writer of Hebrews says that Jesus is the *“mediator of the new covenant”* (Hebrews 12:24). Jesus is the Mediator. He is the “go between” between us and God now. If we want to get to the Father, we must go through Jesus!

Now many will nod their heads in approval with all that I’ve just said, but will turn around and go to another man or an idol as a means of reaching God. It should not be! This damnable doctrine was introduced by the Nicolaitans and was hated and still is hated by God to this day.

It is also interesting to note that here in the Church of Ephesus the works of the Nicolaitans are described as *“deeds”*. However, by the time we get to the Church of Pergamos in Revelation 2:15 that they are called *“doctrines”*. Deeds refer to a one time action that is carried out. While doctrines refer to a body of principles presented for acceptance or belief. In others words, what started out as deeds in the Church of Ephesus became full blown excepted doctrine by the time the Church of Pergamos came on the scene.

We are encouraged in Colossians 3:1, *“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.”* Why is Christ Jesus sitting at

the right hand of God? He is acting as our High Priest. He is making intercession for us to the Father. Hebrews 3:1 says, *“Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;”*

In conclusion, Jesus is our High Priest. He is the one we all must go to for salvation and no other. If we will but go to Him, He will go to the Father for us. Hebrews 7:25 says, *“Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.”* Jesus is the only way!

Verse 7: *“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.”* I remember when I was in Bible College, I had a teacher who used to tell us that the reason God gave us one mouth and two ears was so that we would listen twice as much as we talk. That is very true. What the Lord is saying is that we would all be wise to listen to both the compliments paid and the warnings given to this first Church of Ephesus. They were complimented for their great work, love, labor, patience, and because they hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans that we discussed last week. However, they were warned because they had left their first love. Yes, we would all be wise to take those compliments and warnings to heart.

If we do listen, we are told that God will give us the opportunity to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God. The first place the tree of life is mentioned in the Bible is in Genesis 2:9 where it says, *“And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.”* Adam was later told by God that he could eat of everything in the garden except the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:16-17). The implication is that he could have chosen to eat of the tree of life, but when given the option, choose not to do so.

Instead he chose to eat of the one tree God told him not to. Isn't that just like us? You tell a child to do a hundred things but one, he will chose the one. It's his rebellious nature that he inherited from you. You received it from your parents and they received it from theirs. It goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden. The Bible says in Isaiah says in Isaiah 30:9, *“That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the LORD:”*

What if Adam had chosen the tree of life first? He would have lived forever! But no, he chose to rebel and do exactly what God told him not to and ate of the tree of knowledge. It cost him paradise and his life. He and Eve were expelled from the garden because God did not want to allow them to turn and then take of the tree of life and live forever in their fallen sinful state. That's the first time we see the tree of life in the Bible, but not the last.

Where is the tree of life now? We were just told in Revelation 2:7 that it is no longer in the Garden of Eden but in the *“midst of the paradise of God.”* That's not the Garden of Eden, but Heaven. We are told this again in Revelation 22:1-2 where it says, *“And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were*

for the healing of the nations.” And then again in Revelation 22:14 it says, “Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.”

Today, we have the same choice set before us: death or life. Unfortunately, Adam’s rebellion has already infected us all for it was passed down to us. However, there is a way of escape. We can still take of the tree of life through Jesus Christ. Jesus said in John 11:25-26, “...I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. *Believest thou this?*” If you do, you’ll live forever!

Verse 8: *“And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive.”* Here we are introduced to the church of Smyrna. At this time Rome had mandated the worship of Caesar. The city of Smyrna had built a temple for the worship of Tiberius Caesar and every citizen in Smyrna had to burn an incense offering to Caesar and state publicly that he was the supreme Lord, under the penalty of death. After doing this, the citizen would receive an official certification that verified their pledge of loyalty and worship. Of course, the Christians and Jews in Smyrna couldn't say that Caesar was the Lord as that they knew he was not and that it would constitute idolatry. The Bible says in Exodus 20: 3-5, *“Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God...”*

As a result, Smyrna produced many martyrs. They were burned at the stake and killed by wild beasts. One of the most famous Christians in the 2nd century was Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna. He was the pastor of the church at this time. The Romans eventually burned him at the stake for refusing to worship Caesar. History tells us that the Roman authorities said, “Curse Christ and I will release you.” In response Polycarp said, “Eighty-six years I have served Him. He had never done me wrong. How then can I blaspheme my King who has saved me?” They then burned him at the stake.

The word “Smyrna” is directly descended from the Hebrew word “Myrrh.” Myrrh is a gum that comes from cutting the bark off a certain tree. Then it is crushed to yield its perfume-like aroma. This perfumed Myrrh is used for embalming. In this way, myrrh is symbolic of death. Remember the three gifts that the Magi brought to Jesus? They brought gold, frankincense, and myrrh. These three gifts were both symbolic and prophetic. Gold is a metal which is always associated in the Bible with kingly rule. Frankincense was the spice that was used by the priests in the temple. Myrrh was the spice that was used in embalming bodies for burial. By bringing gold, the Magi were proclaiming that Christ would be a king. By bringing frankincense, the Magi were proclaiming that Christ would be a priest. By bringing myrrh, the Magi were proclaiming that Christ would be put to death. Jesus was a prophet, priest and king! Exactly thirty-three years after He was born, arrested and convicted by an illegal trial, He was killed on a cross between two thieves.

This is also hinted at to this church when the title that Jesus Christ used to describe Himself was *"the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive."* The prophet Isaiah prophesied that one day again the Lord will receive some of these same gifts in Isaiah 60:6 where it says, *"All those from Sheba will come; they will bring gold and frankincense, and will bear good news of the praises of the Lord."* Notice that the gifts will not include myrrh this time. That's because He will never die again!

Notice the term *"first and the last."* Jesus had used this expression in chapter 1 when He said in 1:17, *"Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last."* He also called himself the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet in 1:8 when He said, *"I am the Alpha and the Omega."* There are a couple of fascinating things hidden in the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures in regards to this *"first and last"* title. Alpha in this sentence is the word "Alpha" spelled out. But the Omega is the singular letter Omega. It is a linguistic picture, indicating that the beginning has been completed, but the ending is still yet to be.

There is so much to learn while studying the Bible! I encourage you to make sure that you are in a Bible teaching church this weekend as we celebrate the independence of our nation and the many blessings that God has given to us.

Verse 9: *"I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan."* I want to take a look at a few things in this verse. First, notice that the Lord says that He knows their works, tribulation, and poverty. Many people believe that they live in poverty today. But the word Jesus uses here means to be completely destitute and having nothing at all. Can you imagine being a Christian in a time and place that you couldn't get a job because of your faith in Christ? A place where your property and belongings were confiscated because you had decided to follow Jesus? This was an everyday reality to the Christians in Smyrna. Thank God we live in a nation where we are free to worship God without fear of persecution.

Notice that Jesus doesn't tell them the lie that we so often hear in the church today. "Oh, if only you had a little more faith brother, or repented of that sin, then you'd be healthy, wealthy, and wise!" On the contrary, Jesus said in Matthew 8:20, *"Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."* Those who propagate this false message would do well to read 1 Tim 6:3-5 where Paul said, *"If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but dotting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, **supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.**"* Did you see that? We need to withdraw from anyone who teaches that godliness is a means of gain or getting rich.

Instead, it goes on to say in 1 Timothy 6:6-11, *"**But godliness with contentment is great gain.** For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they*

have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.” Godliness with contentment is great gain.

On another note, it’s interesting that they felt they were poor and Jesus had to remind them that they were rich. Later we will see in the last days Church of Laodicea (that’s the one we’re living in right now) that they felt they were rich and Jesus will remind them that they are poor when He says in Revelation 3:17, *“Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.”*

Notice also that the Lord says that he knows the *“blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.”* The Apostle Paul said in Romans 2:28-29, *“For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.”* Jesus also had a confrontation with the Jews over this subject in John 8:37-44. The Jews spoke of here were those who had religion on the outside, but no heart for God on the inside. There are many of those running around the church today as well.

Verse 10: *“Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”* Jesus is telling this Church of Smyrna that they are about to suffer persecution. Paul said in 2 Timothy 3:12, *“Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”*

I guess the question should be, “Is it in God’s plan that Christians suffer?” The answer is, “Yes.” That cannot be denied. I often hear Christians say “Satan, we bind you in the name of Jesus!” But we must understand something. Just because you want to bind him does not automatically mean that God wants to bind him. Sometimes God does allow Satan to do things out of his sovereignty that we cannot stop. Jesus told the Church of Smyrna to be faithful unto death!

First, I think of the story of Job in the Old Testament. In Job 1:6-12 it says, *“Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them...And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side?...And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD.”* Did God allow Job to suffer? Yes.

Second, I think of Peter in the New Testament. Jesus said to Peter in Luke 22:31-32, *“...Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen*

your brethren." Notice that Jesus did not pray that Peter would be delivered from the "sifting" that was to come, but that his faith would not fail him when it was over.

Third, I also think of Paul the apostle said in 2 Corinthians 12:7-9, "*...there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.*"

Wouldn't it have been great if Job, Peter, and Paul could have all just have bound Satan and averted their suffering? Job would have never had such a horrible time by losing everything he owned, his children, and his bodily suffering. Peter could have avoided his three denials. Paul could have escaped the thorn in his flesh. But that was not in God's plan for their lives. James said in James 1:2-4, "*My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations (various trials); Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.*" God used their suffering to perfect them. Maturity in the faith comes with the realization that God often allows Satan to buffet us for His divine purposes.

Finally, notice that the Christians in Smyrna were promised that if they were faithful in their testing and persevered unto death that they would receive the crown of life. The Bible speaks of five crowns that can be received by all Christians based upon their faithfulness in this life. The first crown is the Imperishable Crown spoken of in 1 Corinthians 9:25. The second crown is the Crown of Rejoicing spoken of in 1 Thessalonians 2:19. The third crown is the Crown of Righteousness spoken of in 2 Timothy 4:8. The fourth crown is the Crown of Life spoken of here in Revelation 2:10 and in James 1:12. And the fifth crown is the Crown of Glory that is given to pastors spoken of in 1 Peter 5:4. And what will we do with them when we get them? Throw them at His feet (Revelation 4:4 and 11)!

Verse 11: "*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.*" When I was in Bible College, I had a teacher that used to tell us preacher boys that God gave us two ears and one mouth because we were meant to listen twice as much as we spoke." That's some pretty good advice. I wish more people would take it to heart. That's including, at times myself. In this verse we also come to the second promise of salvation to him who overcomes. He will not be hurt by the second death. The second death is spoke of again in Revelation 20:6 where it says, "*Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.*"

What is the second death? While all men, short of the rapture, will die a first time in this life: only those who have placed their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ will not suffer the second death which will occur after the Great White Throne judgment. This death will result in the one who has not placed their faith in Jesus Christ being cast into the Lake of Fire to never see or experience the presence of God again. It's been said that if a person is born once (physically) they will die twice (physically and spiritually). If a person is born twice (physically and spiritually) they will die once (physically). My physical birth happened on September 26, 1966. My spiritual birth took place while I was a nine year old boy attending a revival service in

Greenville, South Carolina. Those two births assure me that I will only die a physical death, but never a spiritual one. How about you? How many birthdays do you have?

Verse 12: *“And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges.”* Again, we must remember that the names of these churches have much to do with the situations they were in at the time. The first Church of Ephesus, had left its first love and thus its name meant "desirable" or "first love". The second Church of Smyrna, was under deadly persecution and thus its name meant Myrrh which was a spice used in the embalming process.

Now we come to the Church of Pergamos. This is where I want you to put your thinking caps on for a minute. We are going to break the word down. "Per" means "mixed or objectionable." "Gamos" means "marriage or wedded". For example, "polygamy" means "married to many" and monogamy means "married to one".

So Pergamos means "mixed or objectionable marriage." We will see as we read the letter that Jesus accuses Pergamos of compromise because it married the world. This is the church of compromise. It's the church that originated the phrase, "Why can't we all just love each other and get along?" I can't tell you how many times I've heard that statement. Yes, the Bible does teach that we are to love one another and *“If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men”* (Rom 12:18). However, the Bible also says in Amos 3:3, *“Can two walk together, except they be agreed?”*

As a pastor, I've been forced to make some decisions over the years in regards to who we chose to fellowship with. Many of them have been long, drawn-out, painful, and prayerful decisions. In the end, old relationships were broken and new ones were found. However all of them have been made based upon the clear teaching of the Word of God. There is not nearly as much "guess work" in the Bible as many would have you to believe!

So, the Church of Pergamos was the compromising church. It was the church that had "married" the world and God certainly saw that as "mixed or objectionable. I remember hearing one time that the boat is okay in the ocean as long as the ocean doesn't come into the boat. Unfortunately, that's the story with not only the Church of Pergamos, but also many churches today. Next week, we'll take a closer look at that sharp sword with two edges and how God intends to use it.

Notice the *“sharp sword with two edges.”* This sword with two edges was introduced to Revelation 1:16 where it said, *“And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.”* What is this sword? Is it a real man-made metal sword? No. It's the Word of God! Hebrews 4:12 says, *“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”*

We are also told in Ephesians 6:13-17, *“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand*

therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” Do you see it? The Sword is the Word of God (the Bible)!

Now that we know what the sword is; what is the Lord going to do with it? He is threatening to use it to judge those within the Church of Pergamos who were not willing to repent of their sin of compromise with the world. Yes, God will use the Word of God (the Bible) to judge mankind. This is seen in Revelation 19:15 where it says, *“And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.”* Also in Revelation 19:21 it says, *“And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.”*

I’ve heard some say that they don’t believe the Bible. Well, it really doesn’t matter whether you believe it or not. Your unbelief doesn’t make it any less true. Someone may say, “I don’t believe in gravity!” Fine, go and jump out of a three story window and let’s see what happens! Gravity doesn’t need your approval and neither does God! Trust me when I say that God is not up in Heaven waiting with baited breath for your endorsement! He didn’t ask you your opinion when He wrote it and He certainly will not ask you for your approval when uses it to judge you for your unbelief. The Bible says in Romans 3:4, *“God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.”*

It reminds me of the conversation between Job and God in the Old Testament. God had sat and listened to Job complain and question Him for quite some time and then he responded in Job 38:3-7, *“Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof; When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?”* God was putting Job in his place by reminding him that he was indeed a mere mortal and didn’t know quite as much as he thought he did. Romans 11:33 says, *“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!”*

Verse 13: *“I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.”* When Jesus mentions Satan’s throne, He may simply be referring to the worship of Esculapius that was so predominant in Pergamos. Esculapius was a god whose image was in the form of a serpent.

There was also a massive altar to Zeus on the hill that overlooked Pergamos. It was a huge chair that was over 50 feet high. In the 1880’s, an archaeologist discovered and removed the throne of Zeus from Pergamos, and today it is in a museum in East Berlin. That giant throne could also be what Jesus is mentioning. However, I believe that Jesus says what He means and

means what He says. Here in verse 13, he repeats, *“I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is ... among you, where Satan dwells.”*

I don't believe that Jesus is talking about Zeus worship or Esculapius worship, but that He is actually talking about the Devil himself. After all, the Devil is referred to as *“the god of this world (who) has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God”* in 2 Corinthians 4:4 and the *“prince of the power of the air”* in Ephesians 2:2.

Could Satan himself have been the demonic force that ruled over Pergamos? After all, Pergamos was the governmental seat of the province of Asia. It was where the Roman Proconsul had his headquarters. It also became the center of the official religion of the worship of Roman emperors. It stands to reason that Jesus is saying exactly what He means: in those days, the throne of Satan was in Pergamos.

I wonder where Satan has set up shop in our day? Washington, D.C.? Moscow? Can you imagine trying to be a Christian and having church in the same city where Satan lived? We know that Satan is not omnipresent, so he must be somewhere at all times.

Notice, *“And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.”* Although they were frequently under attack to the point of death, the church at Pergamos had done well in regards to not denying the name and the faith of Christ. Make no mistake; Christianity is about faith in Christ. It's not about just believing in God. Almost everyone believes in God. We read in James 2:19, *“You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.”*

A saving faith is faith in the atoning blood and resurrection of our Great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. The church at Pergamos had not denied this, even through the martyrdom of some in their church, like Antipas. Antipas was a man in the church at Pergamos who was martyred for his faith in Christ. Though the facts have been clouded in history, Tertullian legend claims that he was a local dentist who was killed for not submitting to Caesar worship. They sealed him inside of a hollow brass bull and heated it white-hot. However Antipas was martyred, Jesus calls Him *“My witness”* and *“My faithful one.”*

What a great thing for Jesus to call you! If you were to die today, what words do you think Jesus would use to describe you? Would He call you a witness or a wimp? Would He call you *“My faithful one,”* or *“My slothful one?”* Each of us should be living for this blessed compliment from the Lord Jesus.

Verses 14-15: *“But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.”* Balaam is an interesting character in the Old Testament. And in the New Testament, he is never spoken well of. 2 Peter

refers to *"the way of Balaam,"* Jude speaks of *"the error of Balaam,"* and here we read of *"the teaching of Balaam"*.

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In Numbers 22-24, we see this guy Balaam who had a strange relationship with God. The Israelites were camped in the plains of Moab and after seeing what they had done to the Amorites, Balak sent for a prophet named Balaam to curse them. Balaam asked the Lord about it, and God said, "Don't curse the Israelites, for they are blessed."

But then Balak sent more guys and money and in Numbers 22:18, *"And Balaam answered and said unto the servants of Balak, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the LORD my God, to do less or more."* God had already said no, but he went and asked Him again, which was his first mistake, and the Lord angrily allowed Balaam to compromise and go. However, he was to only speak what God told him to.

When he finally gets there (after the famous incident with his donkey), again he says in Numbers 22:38, *"And Balaam said unto Balak, Lo, I am come unto thee: have I now any power at all to say any thing? the word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak."* And every time he opened his mouth, he couldn't curse the Israelites, but pronounced blessing upon them instead.

And then we are told in Numbers 24:10-11, *"And Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam, and he smote his hands together: and Balak said unto Balaam, I called thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast altogether blessed them these three times. Therefore now flee thou to thy place: I thought to promote thee unto great honour; but, lo, the LORD hath kept thee back from honour."*

But then Balaam came up with an idea. He couldn't curse God's people if God wouldn't let him, but he could help Balak bring God's curse upon them by getting them to sin. So, he told Balak, "Look, if you have your prettiest women camp out by the Israelite camp, then they'll fall in love, intermarry, fall into idolatry, and then the Lord will have curse them."

Amazing, isn't it? That someone who can have spiritual gifts and say spiritual things, can be sucked into sin so easily by compromise and greed? So the teaching of Balaam entailed intermarrying with the world and its ways in the church at Pergamos that had caused the church to fall into idolatry and immorality. Of course, it's very prevalent today as well.

Notice also, *"Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate."* The other thing that Jesus had against them was that they had some among them who held to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Remember in the church of Ephesus it said in verse 6 *"But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate."* Now it says, *"Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate."* In other words, their deeds had turned into accepted doctrine by this time.

The word "Nicolaitans" comes from the Greek word "NEE-kos," which means "victory or to conquer," and "Lah-OS" means "people." The word means "to conquer the people." The Nicolaitans were teachers who were ruling the people instead of serving the people. Jesus hates this because He called His ministers to be servants of the people not Lords over them. He tells His true servants to be the lowest in the church, not the highest. Some in the Pergamos church had bought into the deception of having a clergy that was high and lifted up. They were placing mediators between themselves and God, much like the Church of Rome continues to practice to this day. We will take a deeper look next week.

Now "hate" is very strong word coming from the mouth of God. He hates the doctrine that these Nicolaitans introduced into the church. He hates it because He has called His ministers to be servants of the people not Lords over them. Peter said in 1 Peter 5:1-3, *"The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock."* God, speaking through the apostles, tells His true servants to be the lowest in the church, not the highest. Jesus said in Mark 10:44, *"And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all."*

However, some in the Church of Pergamos had bought into the deception of having a clergy that was high and lifted up. They were placing mediators between themselves and God. That is precisely what Jesus came to eliminate. They had a priesthood through the entire Old Testament and Jesus came to abolish it. The Bible says in Matthew 27:50-51, *"Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent."* That ripping of the veil in the temple meant that we no longer need a human priest to act as mediator or intercessor between us and God any more. Jesus is now our High Priest. Through His death, burial, and resurrection, we all have equal access to the very throne of God. Paul reminds us of this when he said in 1 Timothy 2:5 said, *"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."*

Verse 16: *"Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth."* In this verse, Jesus is telling them to repent of these heretical doctrines that have crept into the church. Repent means to *"change your way of thinking regarding these things - turn and go the other way."* Then there's the proverbial *"or else."* Make no mistake about it. God will judge the world with the Word of God. (That's the book I'm quoting from right now.) Unfortunately many today are ignorant of the Bible. However, your ignorance on judgment day will not spare you. I really advise you to get into a church where the commandments of God are taught over the traditions of men!

Verse 17: *"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it."* Now we have the part of the letter where Jesus promises salvation to the over comer. And not only that, but He will give them some of the hidden manna to eat.

What is manna? In Exodus 16, the people of Israel were in their wilderness wandering, and complained that there was no food. Exodus 16:4 tells us, *"Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you...'"* So, they awoke to the next morning and it was all over the place. Exodus 16:14-15 says, *"When the layer of dew evaporated, behold, on the surface of the wilderness there was a fine flake-like thing, fine as the frost on the ground. When the sons of Israel saw it, they said to one another, 'What is it?' For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, 'It is the bread which the LORD has given you to eat.'"* In other words, God will be that "hidden manna" for us. This speaks of eternal life! Just as it sustained the children of Israel in the desert and gave them life, so too, we have life in Christ. Jesus said in John 6:48-51 *"I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."* So, He Himself is the hidden manna and eating of Him means life eternal. Jesus referred to this also in John 6:54-56 when He said, *"Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him."* Of course, he was speaking spiritually, not physically.

Notice in this verse that it says that those who overcome will also receive a "white stone" with a "new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." Without going into much detail; in the Old Testament when there was a decision of innocence or guilt, two stones would be placed in a bag: one white and the other black. The white was an indication of innocence and the black, an indication of guilt. There are many that feel these stones were the Urim and the Thummim. We see them referred to in Numbers 27:21 where it says, *"And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him after the judgment of Urim before the LORD: at his word shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he, and all the children of Israel with him, even all the congregation."* They are also referred to in Deuteronomy 33:8, Ezra 2:63, Nehemiah 7:65, Exodus 28:30 and Leviticus 8:8. Do your own study. So in giving you a white stone, Jesus could be saying, "you're innocent, I have made you not guilty."

There is also another historical white stone. It was a piece of pure white marble that was given to the winners of the first Olympics as a trophy. One day Jesus will also declare us to be winners. But what about this new name carved on it? One day Jesus will give me a name that only he and I know. This new name is also referred to in Revelation 3:12 where it says, *"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."*

Can you imagine getting a name that only you and God knows? How many Dwayne's are there in this world? How many John's? Mateo's? I'm sure that there are literally thousands. However, this promise says that one day when we get to Heaven, God is going to give those of us who have accepted His Son, a new name that only He and the person He gives it to knows. I remember when I was just boy out in the neighborhood playing with my friends and my

Grandmother would yell out, “Herbert Dwayne Spearman!” You probably have memories like that too. She did that to distinguish me from all others. So too, our Heavenly Father is going to give us a name to distinguish us from all others!

Verse 18: *“And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass;”*. First, notice *“These things saith the Son of God.”* This is the only letter that begins this way. I think that this speaks to the seriousness of this letter. Also, notice it says, *“who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass.”* Brass speaks of judgment in the Bible.

Verse 19: *“I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.”* However, even with the above verse in mind, God still finds much good within this church even though as a whole it had departed from the faith by falling headlong into ritualism, formalism, and paganism. There were still some who had remained faithful to the Word of God and He even compliments them on their works, love, service, faith, and patience.

Verse 20: *“Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, ecause thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.”* Notice, *“Nevertheless I have a few things against thee.”* Now here comes the reason for the eyes like a flame and the feet of brass. What did the Lord have against them? It is spelled out in the rest of the verse when He says, *“because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.”*

Who is or was Jezebel? She is found in the Old Testament as the wife of King Ahab. From Scripture we know that she was not a Jew, but a Zidonian who did not know the God of Israel. Instead she worshipped a pagan god named Baal. We are further told that after her marriage to King Ahab she aggressively sought out to destroy all of the prophets of God in Israel. She had a very famous encounter with one of them by the name of Elijah.

She and King Ahab both despised him because he spoke out against them. Once he told King Ahab who had just had a man killed to selfishly take his vineyard in I Kings 21:19 *“...Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine.”* And to his wicked wife Jezebel he said in verse 23 of the same chapter, *“...’The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.’* Not exactly a way to win friends and influence people!

However, Jezebel’s greatest sin was that she tried to wipe out the prophets of God in Israel because they refused to worship her pagan god, Baal. So, Jezebel here in the book of Revelation is symbolic and typical of the evil queen Jezebel in the Old Testament.

Yet, why is God here comparing the Church of Thyatira to her? This church was guilty of the same sin. It attempted, and succeeded to a great degree, to turn the hearts of the people from the true and living God unto its pagan idols. And those who refused to go along and spoke

out against her, like Elijah, she simply killed! Bear in mind, that this church represents the Dark Ages in history.

I believe that this woman is referred to in two other portions of Scripture. First, she is referred to in Matthew 13:33 where the Bible says, *“Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.”* Second, she is referred to in type in Revelation 17:1-7 where John says that he saw *“woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.”* Jezebel, in the Bible represents the Great Harlot of the last days.

Verse 21: *“And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent.”* God is saying that at some point he gave her time to repent of her fornication. Now bear in mind that this church represents the church age from 500 AD to 1500 AD. It was toward the end of this time that God raised up men like John Knox, John Calvin, Zwingli, and Martin Luther to confront the established church with her sins: namely, the Church of Rome. It was called the Protestant Reformation.

These men began reading the Bible for themselves instead of trusting the clergy of the church to do it for them. It culminated with Martin Luther in 1517 when he openly challenged the Church of Rome to show them the heresy that they were teaching as God’s Word. Instead of responding with repentance, the Church of Rome responded in arrogance and attempted to destroy all of those who had begun to read the Bible for themselves.

Verses 22-23: *“Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.”* Notice that this is spoken in the future tense. It has not happened yet, but it will. There will come a day when we see the judgment that she will bring upon herself for her refusal to repent when it was offered. We see this judgment played out in chapter 18 of this book when God makes a public spectacle of this church in the Tribulation.

Verse 24: *“But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden.”* Jesus, in His mercy now tells those who have not bought into this woman's doctrine (Balaamism & Nicolaitanism) of immorality and idolatry, that He has nothing else negative to say.

Verses 25-27: *“But that which ye have already hold fast till I come. And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.”* Here Jesus now tells the faithful to hold fast. To hold fast means to be patient and stand strong.

Paul spoke similar words in 1 Corinthians 15:1-2 when he said, *“Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you*

stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you -- unless you believed in vain." We are told to hold fast to the Word of God: the gospel as it was delivered to us until the day Jesus comes back! If we hold fast, God promises to give us the same authority that His Father had given to Him over the nations.

We read about this authority that will be given to the faithful in 1 Corinthians 6:2 where it says, *"Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?"* Again, the Bible says in Daniel 7:18, *"But the saints of the Highest One will receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, for all ages to come."* Do you want to have authority? Be faithful to the Word of God!

Verses 28-29: *"And I will give him the morning star. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."* Finally, the promise of salvation to the over comer is that he will be given *"the morning star."* What is the morning star? Again, no need to speculate, for the Bible explains itself in Revelation 22:16 when it says, *"I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright morning star."* Yes, to him who overcomes, he will receive Jesus Christ for eternity.

If I had to summarize the church of Thyatira, it would be to not give into the spirit of compromise. There are so many in the churches today who are trying to twist the Bible to suit them instead of God. I believe that this is done for two reasons: First, political ambition from the pulpit and, second, Scriptural ignorance in the pews. Men in the pulpits are not correctly dividing the Word of God to the people. Instead, we hear philosophies of men, humor, and short stories. The result is that millions of Christians are sitting in church Sunday after Sunday clueless about the true issues of homosexuality, abortion, and separation because no one is teaching them. Therefore, my desire each time I am in the pulpit is to teach what Paul called the *"whole council of God"* in Acts 20:27 whether it's popular or not. If you've been reading this article for any length of time, you know that to be true. As a preacher, I'm not out to win any popularity contests. Sometimes, I feel the need to remind myself that they killed Jesus. He told his disciples in John 15:20, *"Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you..."*

Chapter 3

Verse 1: *“And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.”* This letter to the church of Sardis is typically, symbolically, and historically dealing with the church of the Reformation. The time in history is around 1500 AD.

First, notice *“the seven Spirits of God”* that are mentioned. While I know of no one who can dogmatically say exactly what this verse means; there is a clue found in Isaiah 11:2 where it says, *“And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD;”* In this verse we see seven possible manifestations of the Holy Spirit (this is just an observation) of God. There is the *“spirit of the Lord,” “the spirit of wisdom,” “the spirit of understanding,” “the spirit of council,” “the spirit of might,” “the spirit of knowledge,”* and the spirit *“of the fear of the LORD.”* Second, notice also in this verse that there is the suggestion that even in the Reformation there was an incompleteness to it. The next verse goes into more detail.

Verse 2: *“Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.”* That word *“perfect”* means complete. There is no doubt that as great as the Reformation was; and not one of us does not admire and respect the Reformation. This is the Reformation that was led by such great men as Martin Luther, John Calvin and Wycliff, and John Knox.

But, with all of the glory of the Reformation, the Holy Spirit still says in verse 1 *“thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.”* And here in verse 2, *“I have not found thy works perfect (complete) complete before God.”* Why does God say that? I believe that there was not a complete break from the Church of Rome. There were so many things brought over from the Roman Church in the way of practice and doctrine. Some of these include the doctrines of baptismal regeneration and transubstantiation at the Lord’s Table.

Verse 3: *“Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.”* Notice that it says, *“remember therefore how thou hast received and heard; hold fast, and repent.”* Remember what? This may be referring to what the early Protestants heard under Martin Luther and the verse that kindled the flame within him to do something about the blatant false teachings of the Roman Church. The verse that changed his life was Romans 1:17 which says, *“For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, the just shall live by faith.”* It was upon reading that verse, that Luther realized for the first time that his eternal salvation was secure and not dependant upon his own good works or the Church. It altered his life and started the Protestant Reformation.

Also, notice that he tells them to *“hold fast and repent.”* Hold fast to what? The truth of Scripture. Repent of what? They needed to repent of the two charges that he had made against them in vv.1-2, *“that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead”* and *“I have not found thy works perfect before God.”*

Verse 4: *"Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments..."* This speaks of the genuine believers who had stuck to the Word of God as their guide and not the doctrines of men during this terrible time in history. However, the same applies to you and I today; too many people are listening to men and are not reading their Bibles. It is great to have a pastor and teacher in your life, but ultimately you are responsible for what you believe. Ignorance is no excuse.

Verses 5-6: *"He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."* Look at the *"white raiment"* mentioned. This speaks of the righteousness that we will have in Christ.

Notice also, *"I will not blot out his name out of the book of life."* This verse has confused many who have questioned the doctrine eternal security. In other words, once saved, always saved. Moses said in Exodus 32:32-33, *"Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin--; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written. And the LORD said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book."* First, we know in the Bible that there are obviously more books than just the Lamb's Book of Life because we are told in Revelation 20:12, *"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."* Notice that the word *"books"* is in the plural form. That's more than one!

Second, assuming the verse is referring to the Book of Life, I believe that Moses was being facetious in his statement. He knew that God would not do it. It's kind of like when we say something like, "I'd bet my life on it!" You don't really mean that, do you? Of course not! Nowhere in the Bible does it ever say that anyone's name has been removed from the Book of Life! Jesus said in John 10:28-29, *"And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."* Oh, by the way, the word *"never"* in the original Greek means NEVER! Hebrews 6:4-6 says that if it were possible for someone to lose their salvation; Jesus Christ would have to be crucified again for them to be resaved. That is not going to happen. Hebrews 10:10 says, *"...we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."*

Now we come to the Church of Philadelphia. This church brings us to another period in the history of the church. This is the church of the great missionary movement. It is during this time of the church age that we have the birth of modern missions.

Verse 7: *"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;"* The name Philadelphia like the others has a very significant meaning, "Brotherly Love." We have noticed that in every one of these letters, all seven of them; John has given a characteristic of Jesus. This letter is no exception. First, notice that the One who speaks is *"holy"* and *"true."* Jesus is the Holy One of Israel and He is true. In John

14:6, He said, “...*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.* Second, notice that he also has the “*key of David.*” Jesus was the promised one that would come and sit upon the throne of David. Third, notice also, “*he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;*” When God prepares the way, He opens the doors. However, when He shuts the door, you best not try to enter. Jesus is the Master over every situation.

Verse 8: “*I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.*” Now, these are very complementary things that He is saying about this church. He knows their works and knows that they have kept His Word and not denied His name. That’s quite a compliment.

Verse 9: “*Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.*” Notice “*the synagogue of Satan*” mentioned here in this verse. This is a tremendous statement. The average church member sometimes has the idea that anything that has religion connected with it, any kind of a church, it matters not what kind it may be or who may be the head of it, or what they believe, if it’s a church, if it’s religious, then it’s naturally good. That’s not so! And your naïve to think so!

There are people and organizations today that call themselves Christians and they simply are not. They say that they believe the Bible and so forth, and yet they really do not. Many a cult has fooled the ignorant. I’m convinced that the Devil has pulled the wool over the average church member’s eyes. The Bible says in Hosea 4:6, “*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge*” and it is true!

Verse 10: “*Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.*” Now this verse is very clear that this church will run right into the rapture. Notice the promise, “*I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world.*” In other words, the true body of Christ will be lifted out before the hour of trial comes upon this world.

What is the rapture? It means to be transported from one place to another. 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18 says, “*For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*”

This verse is a promise to Believers that they will be kept from the “*hour of temptation*” that will come upon this earth by an event called the Rapture. Understand that the next prophetic event to take place in Bible prophecy is the Rapture of the Church and it will be followed by the “*hour of temptation,*” or what is better known as the Tribulation. The Tribulation is a seven year period that commences after the Rapture and concludes with the

Second Coming of Christ. If you have never read Tim LaHaye's "Left Behind" series, I would encourage you to do so. He did an excellent job of laying out the events that will shortly come upon this world in perfect chronological order. Of course, the characters are fictional, but the Scripture is not. In my opinion, he did a great job.

What is the rapture? The word means "to be transported from one place to another." 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18 says, "*For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*" In other words, the true body of Christ, every born-again Believer, regardless of denominational affiliation, will be lifted out before the "*hour of temptation*" comes upon this world.

Unfortunately, many teachers confuse the Rapture with the Second Coming. Of course, some of them, like me, unintentionally just get tongue tied at times. However, as stated earlier, the Rapture takes place before the Tribulation and the Second Coming takes place after the Tribulation. Scripturally, the Rapture occurs in Revelation 4:1 and the Second Coming occurs seven years later in Revelation 19:11.

However, even though most agree that there will be a Rapture, there is some disagreement as to the timing of it. There are basically three views. The Pre-Tribulational view says that the Church will be removed prior to the Tribulation. The Mid-Tribulational view says that the Church is removed in the middle of the Tribulation. Finally, the Post-Tribulational view says that the Church will be removed at the end of the Tribulation.

I am in support of the Pre-Tribulational view and here are three among many quick reasons as to why. First, the word "Church" is mentioned 32 times in Revelation chapters 1 through 4, but it is not mentioned again until chapter 19 at the Second Coming. That must be because the Church is not present on this Earth from chapters 5 through 18 during the Tribulation. Simply logic would conclude that.

The second reason is because of verses like the one we're studying right now here in Revelation 3:10 which promises "*I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth*" and 1 Thessalonians 5:9 which says, "*For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.*" Jesus also said in Luke 21:36 "*Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.*" The only way that you or I will be found worthy is through a relationship with Jesus Christ.

The third reason is given in 2 Corinthians 5:20 where it says that "*we are ambassadors of Christ*". No country has ever declared war on another country without first bringing home their ambassadors. One day God is going to declare war upon this Earth, but first He will take His ambassadors home via the Rapture. We are His ambassadors!

Verse 11: *“Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.”* This verse speaks of the rapture of the church that we spoke about last week. For those of us who are looking and prepared for this event, we are encouraged to *“hold that fast which thou hast.”* In other words, we are to diligently and faithfully occupy in the work that He has given us until He returns to take us home.

I’m reminded of two missionaries that had spent their entire lives on the mission field and they were finally coming home. They just happened to be on the same boat as the Queen of England. Upon arrival the Queen was greeted by thousands, with music, and applauds and the husband said to his wife, “You know we’ve spent our entire lives serving the Lord, and come home to nothing. This lady has done nothing, but was born into it.” The wife said, “But, we’re not home yet!” And that is so true! This world is not our home. We should always remember that and live like that. Jesus said in Matthew 6:19-21 *“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”*

Also, notice at the end of v.11 it says, *“that no man take thy crown.”* What crown? The Bible speaks of five crowns that are available to Believers who have been faithful. They are the Imperishable Crown, the Crown of Rejoicing, the Crown of Righteousness, the Crown of Life, and the Crown of Glory. I believe that the one specifically being referred to here is the Crown of Righteousness which is going to be given to those *“who have loved His appearing.”* This crown is referred to in 2 Timothy 4:8.

Verse 12-13: *“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. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”* It is very significant to me that John now mentions the temple, the New Jerusalem, and the Holy City. That is where we are going to be after the rapture. We will get into that in chapter 21.

Now we come to the final Church of Laodicea. This is the final church in the dispensation of the church age. I believe that right now we are at the closing hour. I do not know when the Lord is coming and I would not even dare to take a guess. The Bible says that no man knows the day nor the hour, but we can certainly discern the signs and they point to a soon return of Christ.

Verse 14-15: *“And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.”* Now we see that immediately there is a rebuke given to this church for its complacency. Complacency by definition is “a feeling of quiet pleasure or security, often while unaware of some potential danger.” This is a perfect description of the vast majority in the church today. They are frolicking through life like they’ve got all of the time in the world. It is the proverbial church of

“whatever”. When was the last time you heard someone use that expression? I would guess that it was fairly recently.

God is not pleased that this church and those in it are neither cold nor hot. The middle ground between cold and hot is lukewarm. What a description of complacency. Have you ever ordered a nice lukewarm glass of tea? Of course not! How about a good tall lukewarm coke? I believe that’s referred to as “backwash” by my children!

Verse 16: *“So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.”* Last week we spoke of the “lukewarmness” of this church. They were neither on fire for God or cold for God: just lukewarm. And as a result of this complacency, God says, *“I will spue thee out of my mouth.”* I don’t think it needs much explanation, but the word “spue” means “vomit.” The members of this last day’s church make God sick.

Why is God so angry with them? Look in verse 17 where it says, *“Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:”* Notice what they say of themselves as compared to what God says about them. Do you see the disconnect? This church has gotten fat, lazy, and complacent. So too, the church in America has lost its purpose. It’s lost its focus! Just like this Church of Laodicea, the church of our day is content to see who can build the biggest steeples in town, have the prettiest sanctuaries, the prettiest parlor, while the world at their doorsteps is going to Hell. This perfectly describes the state of the church in America today. I hate to come off as being negative much of the time, but there is not much good said about this church. Just thank God that if you are “hot” for the Lord, you’re not a member of it!

Notice God’s take on them in the latter part of this verse. It’s amazing how God’s perspective can be so different from ours. You see, God sees the motivations and the intents of the heart. God sees the hypocrisy behind the big steeple and the padded pews. God knows when you’re just playing church or when you’re not.

Verse 18: *“I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.”* Now God tells them what they really need. You’ve heard it said that “It’s hard to give somebody something that they think they already have?” This church thinks they’ve got it all when in reality they have nothing.

Verse 19: *“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.”* God is asking this church to repent of this complacency or else He will chasten them. Hebrews 12:6 says *“For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.”* How does God chasten a church? I’m sure that He does it in many ways, but I feel His most effective way is just to let them die. Of course, you and I both know that there are plenty of dead churches around. If they aren’t dead yet, they are on life support!

Verse 20: *“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”* Do you remember back in the Church of Ephesus where Christ was? He was in the midst of the seven golden lampstands

which represents the churches. However, now at the conclusion of the church age he is on the outside trying to get back in. He's trying to get back in the church! The Lord is no longer walking in the midst of the church like He used to, but now he is on the outside, knocking. I constantly hear on the TV that we are in the midst of a great revival. I find no scriptural support for that. As a matter of fact, I find the opposite. Jesus said in Matthew 24:12 during the Olivet Discourse, "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." Also in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, "*Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;*" I believe that we are right in the middle of what the Bible calls the great falling away.

Verses 21-22: "*To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*" Here we see again the promises to the over comers and those who hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches. Many times we will all sit in a church service and nod our heads approvingly to what the Bible says and then get up and go do exactly the opposite. James warned us about this in James 1:22 when he said, "*But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.*" The true mark of a Believer is obedience, not church attendance.

Chapter 4

Now we come to chapter 4 which marks the third division of the book. Do you remember in 1:19 where John is told to *"Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter"*? The apostle is told to write three things. As we discussed in chapter 1, *"the things which thou hast seen"* were covered in chapter 1. *"The things which are"* were covered in chapters 2 and 3. And the things that *"shall be hereafter"* are chapters 4 and following.

Verse 1: *"After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter."* What I want us to notice are the words *"hereafter"* at the end of the verse. The words in the Greek are "meta" and "tauta." It is the same word used in 1:19. Chapter 4 begins with the rapture of the church which will occur *"after"* the church age. With this verse, the church age comes to a close.

This verse contains the blessed hope of every believer. The moment when we hear the shout of God, and the voice of the archangel, we will leave this world to rise and meet our Lord Jesus in the clouds. Who is going out in this rapture? The only ones that will make this event are those who are members of the true Church of God. Not necessarily everyone on the church rolls, but only those whose names are recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life. Paul referred to this book in Philippians 4:3 when he said *"And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life."* This book is referred to seven times in the book of Revelation.

Notice *"as it were a trumpet."* This is the same trumpet that Paul spoke of in 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 when he said, *"Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed -- in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."*

The Bible says that we are to live our lives like this event could happen at any moment. Imagine if we all lived like that? I think that it would eliminate a lot of problems that we have in the world and the church. Many are going to be caught by surprise when that trumpet sounds, but not those who are expecting it.

Notice that at the Rapture of the church, the Lord will say, *"Come up hither."* This is the Lord's invitation to His Bride, the Church. It is at that moment when our corruptible bodies will become incorruptible. Our mortal will put on immortality. It's when we are changed in a *"moment, in the twinkling of an eye."* This is the expected moment that causes song writers to write and preachers to preach.

Now I don't have any idea exactly how this event is going to happen or what kind of effect it will have on those who miss it, but I do know that going in it! Do you? If not, go to Romans 10:9-10 and just do what it says and you can know for sure too!

Verse 2: *“And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.”* Notice that John was immediately in the Spirit. The Bible says that the rapture will take place in less than a twinkling of an eye! Remember Enoch? The Bible says that, *“Enoch walked with God, and was not”* in Genesis 5:24. Enoch was a foreshadowing of the Rapture of the Church. Remember John is symbolically and typically the church.

I want to take a closer look at the symbolism in these stones. I believe that everything in God’s economy has a meaning and a purpose. Every word that He put in this God-breathed book was purposefully and methodically written. In order to fully understand what we are about to cover, we must take a look at Exodus 28:17-20 where it describes the breastplate of the High Priest and the order in which the twelve stones were to be placed. It says, *“And thou shalt set in it settings of stones, even four rows of stones: the first row shall be a sardius, a topaz, and a carbuncle: this shall be the first row. And the second row shall be an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond. And the third row a ligure, an agate, and an amethyst. And the fourth row a beryl, and an onyx, and a jasper: they shall be set in gold in their inclosings.”* Also read on your own Genesis 29:31-35 where it gives the names of the twelve sons of Jacob in their birth order and the significance of their names.

In these verses we find that that the last stone in the breastplate was a Jasper and the last son born to Jacob was Benjamin. The Sardius was the first stone in the breastplate and it belonged to the firstborn son, Reuben. The Emerald was the fourth stone in the breastplate and it belonged to Judah, the fourth born son of Jacob. These three stones give us a picture of both the Rapture and God.

For example, the Jasper was the stone of Benjamin, who was the least; the stone is clear, and his name means literally "Son of my right hand." Paul said in Romans 8:34 *“Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, **who is even at the right hand of God**, who also maketh intercession for us.”* The Sardius was the stone of Reuben, who was the eldest; the stone is blood red in color, and his name means "Great Intercessor." In addition to the Romans 8:34, Hebrews 7:25 says, *“Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth **to make intercession for them.**”* (Remember that it was also Reuben in Genesis 37 who tried to intercede for his brother Joseph when the others were trying to kill him.) And finally, the Emerald was the stone of Judah, from whom the Christ came. Jesus is referred to as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah in Revelation 5:5. The stone is green in color and was the wedding stone of old, and his name means "Praise & Honor." And that’s exactly what is going to happen in chapter 19 at the Marriage Supper when the Church is officially married to Christ.

What a remarkable book the Bible is. If anyone doesn’t believe that, it’s because they haven’t read it and studied it. Jesus said in Matthew 24:35 *“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.”* He also said in Matthew 5:18 *“For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.”* The Jews say that when the Messiah comes (bear in mind that for the most part they have rejected Jesus Christ as their Messiah and are still looking for another) He will not only

explain to them what the words in the Old Testament mean, but also what the spaces in between the words mean!

Verses 4-5: *“And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold. And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.”* Here we see the twenty-four elders who are *“sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.”* Who are these elders sitting upon these thrones? There are a couple of views on whom these twenty-four elders are. Some say they are literally the twelve sons of Jacob and the twelve apostles of the New Testament combined. While others say that they represent all of the redeemed from both the Old and the New Testament.

However, in essence, they are both right. The twenty-four elders represent all of the redeemed from both the Old and the New Testaments; the twelve patriarchs represent those from the Old Testament and the twelve apostles represent those from the New Testament. They are all of the followers of Jehovah God beginning from Adam in the Garden to the last saints who give their lives to Christ at the end of the Tribulation just before the Second Coming of Christ.

The first glimpse we get of something like this in the Bible is found in 1 Chronicles 24:3-4 when it says, *“And David distributed them, both Zadok of the sons of Eleazar, and Ahimelech of the sons of Ithamar, according to their offices in their service. And there were more chief men found of the sons of Eleazar than of the sons of Ithamar; and thus were they divided. Among the sons of Eleazar there were sixteen chief men of the house of their fathers, and eight among the sons of Ithamar according to the house of their fathers.”*

In these verses we see that David had appointed 24 elders to represent the entire Levitical priesthood which numbered around 38,000 at that time according to 1 Chronicles 23:3. Each of these elders was to represent a group of Levites who were to serve throughout the year for two weeks at a time in the Temple. This division also made it easier to meet with the Levites as they were representative of the entire group. This is probably why the number 24 represents governmental authority in the Bible.

We also know that just as there were priests in the Old Testament, so there are priests in the New Testament. The Bible tells us in Revelation 5:10 that God has made all of us who call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ *“kings and priests to our God;”* Also, another verse in Revelation 20:6 says, *“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”* Paul also said in 1 Corinthians 6:2-3, *“Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?”* Also, Jesus said in Luke 22:29-30, *“And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”*

Another way that we know these represent the Old Testament and New Testament saints is the way in which they are dressed. Verse 4 says that they are *“clothed in white raiment; and had on their heads crowns of gold.”* We know that the white robes speak of righteous because it says in Revelation 7:9, *“After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes...”*

Verses 6-9: *“Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back. The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle. The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!” Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever,”* Notice the four living creatures. It’s kind of wild to imagine what these guys must have looked like to John. Most say that these are cherubim whom Ezekiel also described in Ezekiel 10:15-20.

I believe that these living creatures also represent the attributes of God since they are in the midst of the throne where God is. Some also see the similarity between the four living creatures and the way Christ was portrayed in the Gospels. For example, in Matthew, Jesus is seen portrayed as the Lion of the tribe of Judah. The first living creature was like lion. In Mark, Jesus is seen portrayed as the Servant who became the sacrifice for sin (the calf being a sacrificial animal). The second living creature was like a calf. In Luke, Jesus is portrayed as the Son of Man. The third living creature had a face like a man. And finally, in John Jesus is portrayed as the Man from Heaven and the fourth creature was a flying eagle. Do you see the similarities?

Verses 10-11: *“The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.* Here is where we, the church, take off our crowns that were given to us at the Judgment Seat of Christ for our good works done in this life and cast them at His feet. Jesus said in John 15:5 *“I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.”* We can do nothing without Him!

Chapter 5

Verse 1: *“And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals.”* This is the first series of sevens that we see in the book. There are the seven seals, trumpets, and vials; all dealing with God’s judgment. Of course, the one sitting on the throne is God Himself.

Verses 2-3: *“And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.”* What is this scroll that is in the hands of God? It is the Title Deed to this earth. Why does He have it? The answer is that God gave dominion over the earth to man at creation, but man forfeited it to the Devil when he disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden. So now, it must be redeemed again just like man.

Under Jewish law, whenever you sold a piece of property, there was always a redemptive clause which allowed you or one of your kinsmen the opportunity to buy it back if the requirements for redemption were met. There were two deeds created: a closed one that was put away and an open one that was kept by the seller. Jesus is now going to begin to fulfill the requirements for the redemption of earth as each of the seals on the scroll are opened one at a time.

Verse 4: *“And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon.”* Here we see that John is weeping convulsively because no one is worthy to take the scroll out of the hand of God. There wasn’t even any one worthy to even look at it!

Verse 5: *“And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.”* Now we see one of the elders tell John that there is someone who is worthy and that is the Lion of the tribe of Judah and the Root of David. He is speaking of Jesus. Jesus is the Lion of the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:8-10). Jesus is the root of David as that he is the one that should come and sit upon the throne of David (2 Sam. 7:12-17). Luke 1:31-33 says, *“And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David.”*

In this verse, we are also re-introduced to the elders that we first saw back in 4:4. That’s when we saw them sitting upon their thrones around the throne of God and we discussed how they represent the redeemed of Old and New Testament. That includes you if you are a child of God.

Verse 6: *“And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.”* This Lamb is our Lord Jesus Christ. John the Baptist said in John 1:29 *“...Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”* I believe that, just like John, one of the very first things that we will see when

we arrive in Heaven is Jesus. We will see the Lamb that was slain, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Bright and Morning Star, and the Root of David.

You see, the first time that Jesus came to this earth, he came as a babe in a manger, riding upon a donkey, obedient and faithful unto death, even the death of a cross. He came to be a ransom for many, to pay yours and my sin debt. But, the next time He comes in chapter 19, He will come as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, the Bright and Morning Star, riding upon a white horse with a robe that says, “King of Kings and Lord of Lords” to rule forever! So, the elder tells John, “Don’t weep! Jesus is worthy to take the scroll and to loose the seals.”

Did you notice how Jesus will look in Heaven? John says that he saw “*a Lamb as it had been slain.*” In other words, Jesus will have the same scars that were placed upon him at His trial and crucifixion. Jesus in responding to Thomas’ doubts said... “*Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.*”

Verses 7-8: “*And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.*” Now Jesus, the Lamb that had been slain, takes the scroll from the hand of God, because He was the only one found worthy and the response of the elders and the four living creatures was to fall on their faces.

Also, notice that as Jesus takes the book out of the right hand of God, the four beasts and the twenty-four elders all fell down before the Lamb (Jesus). The subject that came to mind when I read this is the issue of falling down backward before the Lord that we see so much of today in churches. Is it biblical? I realize that this can be a very controversial subject. Be that as it may, I am a Bible teacher, so I’m not intimidated by controversy. Lord knows, there are many in the Valley who I’ve angered with my straightforward style of teaching. I was not sent here by God to entertain people and make friends. Instead, I was sent to simply teach the Bible simply and let the chips fall where they may. If that’s on top of you, then I suggest you get back to the Bible.

The problem today is that we have started doing many things in the church that simply are not found anywhere in the Bible. Please understand something, once the standard is removed, there is nothing by which to question the results. If you say it’s this way and I say it’s another; who knows for sure? Neither of us have a standard to go by.

However, we do have a standard: the Bible. If it’s in there, by all means, let’s do it. But, if it’s not, you’re out on thin ice. Speaking of thin ice, the entire supposed “slain in the Spirit” movement is way out on the ice. This movement teaches that one can be so overwhelmed with the Spirit of God that it causes them to fall backward. Of course, catchers with blankets are conveniently provided in case mama’s dress hikes up too high. Of course, I wouldn’t know, but it’s probably hard to be modest when you’re falling down backward.

There is not one place in Scripture where a Believer falls any way but forward in God's presence. Some have used the example of those who fell backward when they came to arrest Jesus as justification. However, we must remember that they were heathens coming to kill the Son of God!

Now, the whole concept may sound humorous to you as I'm sure that it is for many who see it for the first time, but to me it is far from it. 1 Timothy 4:1 says, "*Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.*" We are in the latter times and the Bible clearly says that there will be a great falling away from the faith at that time. This falling away will be the result of "apostasy". Apostasy means to "defect or revolt". In this case, defect or revolt from clear biblical teaching.

I heard a pastor say the other day that we are in the midst of a great revival. Look around. You cannot honestly look at the state of the Christian church in America and come to that conclusion. If so, you are delusional. The mark of all great revivals in the past has been a return to clear, concise teaching of the Word of God from the pulpits and repentance from sin in the pews. This is not happening.

Instead, what we are seeing is a "revival" based on unbiblical spiritual experiences like being "slain in the Spirit" and "holy laughter". It is based on teachings that tickle the ears and deceive the soul. "Name it and claim it", "blab it and grab it", is the motto of the church today. "Health and wealth is what God wants for you." Oh, really? Jesus never taught that. Instead, Jesus said in Matthew 8:20, "*The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.*" He also said in Matthew 16:24, "*If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.*" Most are being taught self-indulgence and not self-denial.

Paul warned us in 2 Timothy 3:1-5 "*This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God...*" Look around my friend.

Verse 9: "*And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;*" This is a new song that all of the redeemed and the hosts of heaven will sing unto the Lord as we bow before Him. Talking about a Kodak moment! I can't wait!

Verse 10: "*And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.*" We will be made kings and priests unto God. Revelation 20:6 says, "*Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.*" That's an awesome thought!

Verse 11: *“And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;”* Sometimes the devil will tell you that you are the only one walking this narrow path, not so! Got your calculators? It’s incalculable! 10K x 10k is about a million, plus thousands or thousands! That’s a lot of people in Heaven. I’m sure that there is going to be people there that you didn’t expect and they’ll be some not there that you did expect. Hopefully, no one will be shocked to see you there as well!

Verse 12: *“Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.”* Notice the loud voices. There is going to be a lot of shouting in heaven. That will be a shock to some folks! When you read things like Psalm 150 where it talks about praising God with the loud cymbals, and the trumpets, the harps, and the stringed instruments: you must wonder where some churches choose rather to have their services quite as a church mouse. What is wrong with getting excited in church? We can act like fools over the Dallas Cowboys, the Texas Longhorns, and the Greyhounds, but not in church. “Oh brother, don’t get too excited.” Give me a break! I’m tired of dead religion. Why not be a fanatic for Jesus? I’ve said it before and I’ll say it again; a fanatic is someone is someone who loves something more than you do. How much do you love Jesus?

Notice that they are all shouting, *“worthy is the Lamb!”* They are not talking about organizations, denominations, Peter, or Mary. Only Jesus is worthy! It is only in Jesus that we live and move and have our being. The Bible says in Acts 17:26-28 *“And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.”* How about you? Do you live and move and have you being in Jesus Christ?

Verses 13-14: *“And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.”* One day, everyone will worship Jesus as King! It is not a matter of if, but when. For those of us who are saved, we get the pleasure of doing it here and there. For those who are lost, they will do it at the Great White Throne just before they are cast into the Lake of Fire. Paul tell us in Philippians 2:9-11 *“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*

Chapter 6

Verse 1: *“And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see.”* In 5:3 we were introduced to a seven-sealed scroll that *“no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open”, “or to look at”* and the scroll turned out to be the title deed to the earth that only Jesus Christ Himself was worthy to take. Now we are introduced to the first of seven seals. We will see that the first four of these seals contains what is commonly referred to as the four horsemen of the Apocalypse. They are the white horse, the red horse, the black horse, and the pale horse. Many have suggested that the Antichrist is the rider of all four of these horses as that through his unrighteous reign upon this earth, all of these things come to pass.

Verse 2: *“And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.”* Now, the first of those seals is opened and a judgment is poured out on Christ-rejecting mankind in the form of a rider on a white horse. This white horse is the Antichrist himself presenting himself as some great conqueror. This is obvious when one looks at the fact that he carries a bow and has *“a crown”* upon his head *“that was given to him.”*

Some have erroneously suggested that this is Jesus. No way! To be honest, some preachers need to stop what they are doing and get some theological education from a Bible-believing school. Trust me; they would be doing themselves and their congregations a great favor. A preacher’s job is to show people the way; not muddy the waters. I’m shocked at some of the things that I hear on Christian television, radio, and from church pulpits. It ought not to be that way! The Bible says in 2 Peter 1:20 that *“no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.”* In other words, it only has one meaning and if our views are different, then one or both of us is wrong because we can’t both be right.

Anyway, there’s no way this is Jesus for two reasons. First, His return is not until chapter 19 when He returns with great splendor with all the saints of Heaven to judge, rule, and reign and this first horseman is clearly not the Second Coming of Christ. Second, this first horseman has a bow and a crown *“which was given to him”*. The lack of arrows with the bow speaks to the fact that he is all show and has no authority except what God allows him to have. Also, his crown was not earned, but was given to him by Satan himself for only a short season as that his authority will be fleeting. The peace that he claims to bring will be short lived when the second seal is opened and the sense of false peace is taken from the earth.

Verses 3-4: *“And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see. And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.”* The second seal is opened and we are introduced to the red horse that was given permission to take peace from the earth so that the people will kill one another. He is also given a great sword with which to execute his plan. In the truest sense, all Hell will break loose upon the earth when this second seal and rider are released.

I, like most, believe that this second seal will not be opened until the mid-point of the seven years of Tribulation that will come upon the earth after the Church is raptured in 4:1. This period of time takes up chapters 6 through 18 in the book of Revelation. The first three and a half years will be peaceful while the Antichrist gains the world's trust and confidence. But, at the mid-point, he will break that trust and the covenant that he will make with the nation of Israel for their peace and protection, and it will truly be Hell on earth for all of those who are here to take part in it. I pray that's not you. However, in the end, that is your decision.

Verses 5-6: *“And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.”* The third seal is opened and we are introduced to the black horse of famine as evidenced by the pair of scales in his hands. The scales speak to the scarcity of food upon the earth during this time to come. There is no abundance and all must be carefully weighed so that there is no waste. If you were to follow the history of all wars; famine is the immediate result. The Antichrist will promise much, like any aspiring politician, to gain world acceptance and popularity, but in the end, he will deliver only famine, death, and judgment.

Not to get too far ahead of myself, but I believe that the *“oil and the wine”* referred to at the end of this verse is referring to the 144,000 which will be sealed in the next chapter. We will discuss that in detail then.

Verses 7-8: *“And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.”* The fourth seal is opened and we are introduced to the pale horse of death. Death is always and inevitably the result of wars and famines. As a result of this fourth horseman, a fourth of all those who dwell upon the earth will die by the sword and hunger.

Verse 9: *“And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:”* Who are these people referred to here? These are those who will come to know Christ during the Tribulation period and suffered a martyr's death at the hands of the Antichrist. They are commonly referred to as Tribulation Saints. They can't be the church because the church is in heaven around the throne (5:11-12). Remember that the only ones that are supernaturally protected during this time are the 144,000 Jews that will be sealed in the next chapter. All others will be subject to death.

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Now, I don't have time or the space to print out all of those verses, but I would encourage you to go and read it for yourself. In the meantime, notice 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10, "*Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.*" Did you notice, "*because they received not the love of the truth?*" That is in the past tense. In other words, they were given an opportunity, maybe many, prior to the Rapture of the Church and they walked away from them. This verse tells me that they (Tribulations Saints) will only be those who were never given an opportunity to accept Christ before the church was Raptured in Revelation 4:1. So, let me ask you a question, "Have you accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior? If not, why not? What are you waiting for? Do you not believe the Bible? My friend, if you miss the Rapture, you will not be given a second chance. Think about it.

Verse 10: "*And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?*" Now, these Tribulation Saints cry out for vengeance upon the Antichrist. Why? He is the cause of their death!

Verse 11: "*And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.*" They are told to just be patient a little while longer as that more of their fellow Tribulation Saints who are still alive on the earth suffer the same fate: martyrdom.

Verse 12-17: "*And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?*" Many believe that this cataclysmic event is going to be caused by what could be a giant meteor or asteroid striking the earth. According to Dr. Clark R. Chapman of the Southwest Research Institute before the Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics of the U.S. House of Representatives on May 21, 1998, "A more serious problem is the chance that a smaller asteroid or comet, about a mile wide, might hit. The best calculations are that such an impact could threaten the future of modern civilization. It could literally kill billions and send us back into the Dark Ages."

Chapter 7

Verse 1: *“And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.”* Here we see that God calls a time out between the sixth and the seventh seal. During this time God will seal the 144,000. This verse has caused a lot of confusion over the years because it says that there are *“four corners of the earth.”* As a result, for years men thought the earth was flat and not round. In 1609 Galileo constructed the first astronomical telescope, which he used to confirm the Copernican theory that the Earth did indeed rotate around the sun and that it was not flat when he discovered Jupiter and its moons. This was contrary to the teaching of the Holy Apostolic Catholic Church which taught that everything rotates around the Earth. They had come to this conclusion because of a misunderstanding of verses like Ecclesiastes 1:5 which says, *“The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose”* and Psalms. 93:1 which says, *“The LORD reigneth, he is clothed with majesty; the LORD is clothed with strength, wherewith he hath girded himself: the world also is stablished, that it cannot be moved.”*

How did the Catholic Church respond? They brought him before the Inquisition in Rome (1633) where he was made to renounce all his beliefs and writings supporting the Copernican theory. He lived under house arrest for the remainder of his life. It was not until October 1992, 350 years after Galileo's death, that Pope John Paul II admitted that errors had been made by the church in regards to Galileo. However, he refused to admit that the church was wrong to convict him of heresy. Of course, we know today that the earth is round and that the *“four corners of the earth”* refers to the four spheres: north, south, west, and east.

Verses 2-8: *“And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel. Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nephthalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.”* These 144,000 Jews are sealed on their foreheads. This seal will supernaturally protect them from all attempts on their lives and the judgments that are still yet to come. Now as to whether these 144,000 are reserved through the Tribulation or martyred is up for the debate.

Now, there are also some heretical opinions as to who these 144,000 are. Entire religious movements have been founded and built around this. Those most prominent include the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Seventh Day Adventists. The Jehovah's Witnesses teach that these are the most faithful among them. They are the ones that wake up every Saturday morning to knock on doors in an effort to convert ignorant Christians and the Non-Christians to their cause.

In return, they are rewarded with being one of the 144,000. Also, the Seventh Day Adventists teach that these are those who were found observing the Sabbath (going to church on Saturday) at the return of Christ. That's a big "NOT" on both counts. Both of these positions are preposterous and impossible to defend biblically. However, that never stopped William Miller (founder of the Adventists) or Charles Taze Russell (founder of the Jehovah's Witnesses).

I want everyone to understand that my heart is to simply teach the Bible simply. I will never knowingly write something that is misleading or wrong. Everything that I write has been evaluated and found to be true to the best of my knowledge. Now, I know that the truth can hurt sometimes; especially if you are on the other side of it. I just pray that God would use my articles to stimulate thought and change, if necessary. The Bible says in Hosea 4:6a *"My people perish for a lack of knowledge...."* I pray that not be the case with you.

Verses 9-10: *"After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."* These are the Tribulation Saints that we were introduced to back in chapter six when John saw them beneath the altar in heaven. These are those who will be killed in the Tribulation by the Antichrist for not receiving the Mark of the Beast. Now they are all standing before the throne of God clothed in white robes. We've already studied that these white robes are what is called the righteousness of the saints (Rev. 19:8).

Verses 11-12: *"And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen."* Notice their response. This reminds me of the time that Moses asked to see the face of God in Exodus 33:18-23 and 34:29-35. God's response to Moses was that he was not able, in his natural body, to behold the face of God. It would have killed him! So, God hides him in a cleft in a rock, covers him with His hand, and passed only his *"back parts"* before him. Later, when Moses came down off the mountain, he had a glow about him that was so strong that the people could not even look at him! He had been in the presence of God and everyone knew it. It should be the same way with us. People should know just by the glow on our faces that we have been in the presence of God. I'm tired of looking at supposedly born-again, Spirit filled, children of God, who look like they've been baptized in lemon juice. It ought not to be! We have been in the presence of God. Act like it.

Sometimes, I'll see a brother or a sister at the store and I'll say, "Hey, how are you doing today?" and their response is, "Well, I don't know. Life is hard and I'm barely making it." How sad! The Bible says that *"greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world"* (1 John 4:4), and *"I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me"* (Philippians 4:13). And lest we forget, it also says, *"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid"* (John 14:27). We need to get perspective. We are the saints of God. No one can take your peace, joy, and happiness from you; but we do tend to give it away at times. Don't let it happen to you. Stay away from the lemon juice. People are looking for answers and you've found HIM.

Our response to everything that comes at us in this life should be the same as these Tribulation Saints. Paul said in Romans 8:28 *“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”* Are you called according to His purpose? Are you living in His will? Are you a child of God? Rejoice! Shout with the Tribulation Saints, *“Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.”*

Verses 13-17: *“And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”* Notice that after all that these who gave their lives for the Lord in the Tribulation have gone through; they will now be comforted by the One they died for. They will be in the presence of God forever and He shall *“dwell among them”* and He will wipe *“every tear from their eyes.”*

The Bible says in Ezekiel 37:27-28 *“My tabernacle also shall be with them; indeed I will be their God, and they shall be My people. The nations also will know that I, the LORD, sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forevermore.””*

Chapter 8

Verse 1: *“And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.”* Why silence? Well, there are several scriptures that show us that silence many times comes before judgment. Zechariah 1:7 says, *“Be silent before the Lord GOD! For the day of the LORD is near”* and Habakkuk 2:20 says, *“But the LORD is in His holy temple. Let all the earth be silent before Him.”* I believe that this is a silence of anticipation of what is to come. It’s almost like they are holding their breath in Heaven.

Verse 2: *“And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.”* These trumpets are going to bring seven horrific judgments of God. First were the seals, now are the trumpets, and then will come the bowls. All of them will bring nothing but death and destruction to Earth.

Verses 3-5: *“And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand. And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings, and an earthquake.”* This altar with smoke and incense is modeled after the altar of incense we see in the tabernacle of the Old Testament in which the priests would use their censors to burn incense to the Lord.

The smoke represents the prayers of the saints. We see this in Revelation 5:8 where it says, *“And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.”* If you will remember that when we studied this in Chapter 5 that we learned that the prayers being answered are those of the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew 6:7-13. God’s kingdom is finally going to come to the earth!

Verses 6-7: *“And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound. The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.”* This was the cue for the first angel to sound his trumpet. It destroys a third of the earth, a third of the trees, and all of the green grass is burned. So we’re talking about worldwide destruction from hail and fire mixed with blood from the sky. What is this terrible thing that is going to happen to the Earth? Is it a nuclear war? Is it a devastating meteor shower? Frankly, I don’t believe it is wise to attempt to pin down a certain conjecture, because I know that God will judge the world in one of three methods:

First, God uses man to judge man like when He used Babylonians to judge the Israelites in 1 Chronicles 9:1 where it says, *“So all Israel were reckoned by genealogies; and, behold, they were written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah, who were carried away to Babylon for their transgression.”* Second, God uses natural phenomena like when He destroyed the earth with the flood during Noah’s day in Genesis 7:23 where it says, *“And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things,*

and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark.” Third, God uses supernatural methods like when the angel slew 185,000 Assyrians in one night in 2 Kings 19:35 where it says, *“And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the LORD went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses.”* So, I don't know exactly how God is going to rain hail and fire mixed with blood to burn up a third of the earth, trees, and green grass. But I do know that it will happen.

Verses 8-9: *“And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood; And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed.”* The second trumpet blast brings something like a mountain burning with fire thrown into the sea. If I had to explain this in natural terms, I would guess that this is describing an asteroid plummeting to earth, burning with fire as it enters the earth's atmosphere. It lands in the ocean, and utterly devastates the sea life by the impact and its chemical and mineral make-up.

Interestingly enough, it is estimated by space experts that there are 2,000 near-earth objects that could possibly pose a threat and only 200 of them have been discovered and cataloged so far. We have no idea if the other 1,800 pose an immediate threat or not. According to Dr. Bob Hawkes, a Canadian researcher, "A 10 km diameter asteroid entering at 30 km/s would have the energy equivalent to 15 billion times that of the Hiroshima nuclear bomb. The effects from a major (about 10 km in size) impact include: shock waves in the crust of the earth, tsunamis (tidal waves), firestorms over large portions of a continent, destruction of the ozone layer, atmosphere alteration (due to the huge amount of material ejected into the upper atmosphere), etc. and range in time scales from hours to thousands of years.” God could very well choose to use the natural phenomena of an asteroid to judge the world during the great tribulation.

Verses 10-11: *“And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.”* At the sounding of the third trumpet, a star named "Wormwood" falls from heaven. It somehow falls on a third of the rivers and springs, making them bitter - deadly to drink.

Actually, this was prophesied long before New Testament times, by the prophet Jeremiah. It says in Jeremiah 9:15 *“Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will feed them, even this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink.”* Then again it is mentioned in Jeremiah 23:15 where it says, *“Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts concerning the prophets; Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall: for from the prophets of Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land.”*

There is also something very interesting about this name wormwood. We need to do a word-study at this point. The name wormwood is an alternate name for a plant also known as

mugwort. Mugwort is a species of plant that contains thujone which is toxic in large doses. Finally, the name mugwort is the Ukrainian name for Chernobyl.

How many of you remember the April 26, 1986 nuclear meltdown of the nuclear power plant in the Ukrainian town of Chernobyl? Afterwards, huge amounts of radiation were released into the atmosphere throughout the northern hemisphere. This radiation was measured all over Europe, Canada, Japan, and even in the USA. Most of the population of the Northern hemisphere was exposed, in varying degrees, to radiation from this accident.

As an immediate result, 31 people died and about 140 people contracted radiation sickness. Plus, in the 10 years following the incident, there has been a radical increase in thyroid cancer in children living in the region. To make matters worse, the concrete structure that they encased the reactor in is only temporary and has already begun to deteriorate. Rainwater has gotten in through cracks in the roof, contaminating the water, and decomposing the container's support structure. Unless something is done, it is only a matter of time before it begins to leak and the area becomes lethal again. This is just speculation, but during the Great Tribulation, could God use Chernobyl to burn like a torch, contaminating a third of the waters, and causing many men to die? Maybe so, as we discussed last week, God can and has used three methods for bringing judgment: man, natural phenomena, and the supernatural.

Verses 12-13: *“And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise. And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!”* The fourth trumpet brings a judgment that brings a "brown-out" of natural light. This darkening could be atmospheric pollution from a nuclear war, volcanic eruption, or asteroid impact. It could also be a miraculous darkening of the sun, moon, and stars. God may just turn off the lights! He can turn'em on and I'm sure that He can turn'em off anytime He wants to.

Lastly, notice where it says, *“and I heard an angel flying through the midst.”* Although my favorite translation calls this an angel, it is better translated an "eagle". That brings to mind a trivia quiz. How many animals have spoken in the Bible? The serpent spoke in the garden when he said in Genesis 3:1, *“Yea, hath God said?”* Balaam's donkey spoke when she said in Numbers 22:28, *“What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times?”* And, here we have the eagle speaking as well.

Chapter 9

Verses 1-2: *“And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.”* At the sounding of the fifth trumpet, a star falls from heaven to earth. However, this is no ordinary star as that it is designated as *“him.”* I’m sure that your English is just as good as mine. *“Him”* is referring to a male. This star is the Devil. Yes, Satan himself.

Now, the Bible does speak of Satan being cast out of heaven in time past. We see that account in Isaiah 14:12-15 *“How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.”* Jesus says in Luke 10:18 that he was an eyewitness to this event when he said, *“I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.”*

However, based on this text in Revelation and others like the story of Job in Job 1:1-6, he apparently has access back into heaven. It says in Job, *“There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil...Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them.”*

That brings up the question, *“What did Satan do when he came before God? Further reading of the text shows us that a conversation transpired between him and God about Job. It says in Job 7-11 “And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered...From going to and fro in the earth...And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job...Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side?...But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.”* Satan is accusing Job of only loving God for what he can get out of the relationship.

He did the same thing to the Apostle Peter in the New Testament. In Luke 22:31-32, we see a conversation between Peter and Jesus, *“And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.”* In other words, Satan had went to God and asked for Peter by name just as he had done to Job so many years ago.

Now let me ask you this. Do you think Satan requests you by name? In my opinion, that depends. Are you living for God? Do you serve him and try to lead others to him? If so, it’s safe to say that you are pretty high on his list of targets! Why? You are an immediate threat to him. Unfortunately, most Christians don’t make that list because they are not a threat to the

Devil. As a matter of fact, it is sometimes hard to determine just what team their playing on. The Devil does not fear Christians like that.

In conclusion, let me share this illustration with you. When I was in the Marines Corps, they taught us that in a ground-fight, the first targets to take out were officers, automatic weapons, and communication. Why? They were the most dangerous to us! Satan ain't stupid either. If you're consistently getting in his face, he's going to try to take you out. That's when you turn to the Lord and trust Him with your life just as Job and Peter did.

Now, let's take a closer look at the bottomless pit that is mentioned in these verses. What is the bottomless pit? It is the Greek word, "abussos" which is sometimes translated "abyss." This pit is mentioned seven times in the book of Revelation. It is mentioned in 9:1, 2, 11; 11:7; 17:8 and 20:1-3.

The Abyss, or the bottomless pit, is a shaft. By its very definition, it should have an entrance from the surface of the earth that it is essentially a chimney from Hell. However, it has been and will be kept securely locked until this time in the book of Revelation when Satan is given the key. Of course, I'm sure that we could no more find it than we could find the entrance to the Garden of Eden because it also is securely locked (Gen. 3:24). The good news is that, for now, Jesus has the key and will continue to hold it until Revelation 9 when he gives it to Satan. This is also confirmed in Revelation 1:18 where Jesus says, *"I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."*

Another issue is how this pit can bottomless if it is in the center of the earth. The answer is simple: if you are in the center of the earth, there is no bottom. It is the one place that has no bottom: only top. Whatever direction you go, it's up, not down; thus no bottom.

Verse 3: *"And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power."* Here we see that out of this pit locusts will come upon the earth. Locusts in the Bible are always a type of judgment. However, the supernatural thing about these locusts is that they are not after the grass and vegetation which locust are known to thrive on, but they are after men. This must cause us to conclude that these are not the locusts that we would think of naturally, but that they are demonic in nature. This is proven in verse 11 of the same chapter when it says, *"And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon."* These locusts are demons and their leader is Satan.

Some would suggest that these demons that come up out of this pit are mentioned in the Old Testament; and I agree. The Bible speaks of an incident that occurred in Genesis 6:1-2 when it says, *"And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose."*

Something very unnatural occurred when these angels (I believe these to be fallen angels that rebelled with Satan in eternity past) came down and procreated with women. The results of their actions led to giants upon the earth and their being assigned to the pit. This is also

confirmed in Jude 6-7 where it says, *“And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.”* Their punishment is also alluded to in 2 Peter where it says, *“For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment.”*

Verses 4-11: *“And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads. And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man. And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them. And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men. And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions. And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle. And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months. And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon.”* Wow! That’ll give you goose bumps! Who is Abaddon and Apollyon? This is Satan and both words mean “destroyer”. Jesus spoke of this destroyer in John 10:10 when he said, *“The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”*

Notice also that this verse says, *“And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.”* No matter how bad men are harmed by the attacks of these demons, they will not be able die even though they want to. No matter what they do to themselves to put themselves out of their misery *“death will flee from them.”*

Notice also that *“they had tails like scorpions, and there were stings in their tail.”* I read years ago in a medical journal for missionaries while serving in Guatemala where scorpions are abundant that a scorpion bite is the most continuous and painful bite that a man can receive. But this bite will be even worse, because it will last for up to five months! This judgment will be inflicted upon all who are upon the earth at this time that do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. The only ones exempt are the 144,000 that were sealed in chapter 7.

Verse 12: *“One woe is past; and, behold, there come two woes more hereafter.”* So far, we’ve only seen one “woe.” This is referring to one of the three “woes” that were given by the angel in Rev. 8:13. It’s hard to believe that this is only the first one! There are two more still yet to come. Unimaginable!

Verses 13-15: *“And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the*

four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates. And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men.” Notice that God had prepared these angels “for the hour and day and month and year.” What a comforting thought. This is just a reminder to each of us that God is still in control. Nothing happens in the time in which you and I live or the time spoken of here that God does not know about and has not planned for. The Bible says in Acts 15:18 “Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.” Be rest assured that God knows everything and is in absolute control even when it doesn’t look or feel like it. When you think that things are out of control, just remember what the Psalmists wrote in Psalm 11:4a “The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORD’s throne is in heaven...” Amen!

Verses 16-19: *“Now the number of the army of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them. And thus I saw the horses in the vision: those who sat on them had breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue, and sulfur yellow; and the heads of the horses were like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and brimstone. By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed -- by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which came out of their mouths. For their power is in their mouth and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents, having heads; and with them they do harm.”* Now, with the sounding of the sixth trumpet, we see the second type of demon that will be released upon the earth. We are also told their exact number: 200,000,000 of them! Unlike the first demons, these are riding upon horseback and they have the power to invade the earth for thirteen months. During this time they will kill mankind with the “*fire and the smoke and the brimstone*” that comes out of their mouths.

Verses 20-21: *“But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.”* This speaks of those men who are still left alive on the earth after these judgments and will still not repent of their sins. Instead, they continue to worship the very demons that are killing them. What a sad statement about the hardness of the hearts of sinful men. And yet today, it’s the same thing. Men worship the very demons who are killing them.

You might say to yourself, “How do men worship demons today?” Well, some worship demons knowingly (I.e. witchcraft and Satan worship) and others worship them ignorantly. The second Commandment says in Exodus 20:4-5 “*You shall not make for yourself a carved image -- any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me,*” And yet, this commandment is clearly ignored in many churches in that they have statues lining the walls that people pray to. They are clearly and blatantly breaking this commandment.

The Apostle Paul goes on to say in 1 Corinthians 10:19-20 that they are in actuality worshipping demons when he says, “*What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything? Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to*

demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons.” Yes, that is what it says. If you are praying to, bowing down to, or paying homage to an idol; you are worshiping demons because behind every idol is a demon that is seeking your worship.

Need I remind you that the desire for worship is what got Lucifer (the Devil) kicked out of Heaven in the first place! Isaiah 14:12-14 says *“How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.’”*

Chapter 10

Verse 1: *“I saw still another mighty angel coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud. And a rainbow was on his head, his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire.”* Who is this angel? Most would say very readily that this angel is Jesus because of the description given of him with clouds (1:7), rainbows (4:3), face like the sun (1:16), and feet like pillars of fire (1:15). No doubt that a good argument could be made for that. However, my sticking point is that while Jesus did appear many times in the Old Testament as the “Angel of the Lord”, he has never appeared like that after His incarnation in the New Testament. Also, there are two Greek words for the word “another” found in the Bible. The first is “heteros” when means another of a different kind. And, like in the case here, the word “allos” which means another of the same kind. In other words, the same kind mentioned in the previous chapter. To say this is Jesus would mean that there is another Jesus or another like Jesus. That simply couldn’t be. There is only one Jesus.

Now Jesus did use this word “allos” in John 14:16 when he was speaking of the coming of the Holy Spirit. He said, *“...I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever.”* In that case, it would be correct in that the Holy Spirit is part of the Triune Godhead with Jesus. Bottom line, aside from the Greek lesson, this verse isn’t referring to Jesus in my opinion. It’s an angel. I will give you another proof of that when we get to v.6.

Verse 2: *“He had a little book open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land,”* Some see this little book as the same book that Jesus took back in 5:8 which leads to yet another point in favor of those who believe that this angel is indeed Jesus. Notice in this verse that this angel puts *“his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land,”* This point is interesting because we are told that the Antichrist will come up out of the sea (13:1) and the False Prophet will come up out of the earth (13:11). To me, this act demonstrates that God is still in total control.

Verse 3-4: *“and cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roars. When he cried out, seven thunders uttered their voices. Now when the seven thunders uttered their voices, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, “Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and do not write them.”* There has been much speculation as to what the “seven thunders uttered.” However, we simply do not know nor are we expected to as that John was told not to write what they said, but to *“seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and do not write them.”*

We do know that Daniel experienced the same thing when he was told in Daniel 8:26, *“And the vision of the evenings and mornings Which was told is true; Therefore seal up the vision, For it refers to many days in the future.”* This is also mentioned in further detail in Daniel 12:1-9.

However, in the end, there are obviously just some things that God does not feel that we should know and it is vain to even try to speculate. I’ve heard some preachers say some pretty “off-the-wall” things about this verse. I’m not going there!

Verses 5-7: *“The angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised up his hand to heaven and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it, that there should be delay no longer, but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets.”* To me this is another proof that this angel is not Jesus. Why would Jesus swear to his Father when he and the Father are one? In Genesis 22:15-17, it says that *“the Angel of the Lord (Jesus) called to Abraham”* and said, *“By Myself I have sworn”*. Also, it is reiterated in Hebrews 6:13, it says, *“For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself.”* If it was Jesus, he would have sworn by himself and not to another.

Notice that this angel says that there will be no more delay. This angel is declaring that the last three-and-a-half years of the Tribulation is about to unfold and that there will no longer be any delay. Please understand that it is not God’s will that any should perish. John 3:16 says, *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”* God wants everyone to be saved. Notice what it says in John 3:17, *“For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”* In other words, God did not send His Son into the world to condemn it, but to save it. 2 Peter 3:9 says that the *“Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”* If anyone goes into eternity without Christ; it’s of their own choosing.

Verses 8-10: *“Then the voice which I heard from heaven spoke to me again and said, “Go, take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the earth.” So I went to the angel and said to him, “Give me the little book.” And he said to me, “Take and eat it; and it will make your stomach bitter, but it will be as sweet as honey in your mouth.” Then I took the little book out of the angel’s hand and ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. But when I had eaten it, my stomach became bitter.”* Now John is told to do something a little strange. He is told to take this little book from the angel and eat it! This is the same thing that was commanded of Ezekiel when he took the book that I referred to earlier in verse 2 of this same chapter. The occasion is found in Ezekiel 2:8-3:3.

In much the same way as Ezekiel, the book that John ate had the same effect on him. John says that once he had eaten; it *“became bitter.”* I believe what is happening here is that as the Word of God is consumed, it is sweet to the taste. It proves that God is who He says He is and that everything that is written will come to pass. However, once the Word of God is consumed there is a realization that as the Word of God does come to pass; there will be great suffering on the earth and this explains the bitterness that results.

King Solomon spoke of this when he said in Ecclesiastes 1:18, *“For in much wisdom is much grief, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.”* It is wonderful to learn and gain wisdom from God’s Word, but with it comes sorrow. Luke 12:48 says, *“But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom*

much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.”

Verse 11: *“And he said to me, You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings.”* This verse seems to be a word of encouragement more to John than anything. He has just eaten the scroll and experienced the joy of “taking in” the Word of God. However, he has also just realized just how much worse it is going to get for those who are still living on the Earth during the last three-and-a-half years of the Tribulation and it was his responsibility to write the rest down for the world to read. Speaking the truth of God’s Word to a world that does not want to hear it can be discouraging for any preacher!

I’ll be dead honest with you; most people leave my church because they can not stomach the truth week after week. Why? Because their lives are in direct opposition to it! Oh, they have a million excuses. I listen to them all the time. But if the truth be known, they are simply unwilling to repent of their sin. Thus, they must seek out another church that will not remind them of it!

Chapter 11

Verses 1-2: *“Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, ‘Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there. But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles and they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months.’”*

It is interesting that as John is told to measure the temple that he was commanded to leave out the outer court *“for it has been given to the Gentiles.”* This is speaking of a new temple that is to be built one day in Jerusalem. The last one was destroyed by the armies of Rome in 70 A.D. when the Roman General Titus sacked the city and burned the temple to the ground. Many see the rebuilding of this temple as the “tool” that the Antichrist will use to bring about temporary peace to the Middle East during the Tribulation that will begin in Revelation 6.

Today, both the Jews and the Muslims claim Jerusalem to be their holiest site. Historically, the Muslims don’t have a leg to stand on in that debate, but that is for another paper at another time. In any event, the great struggle today is over who will rule Jerusalem. Some speculate, as do I, that the Antichrist will pursue a peace agreement between the Muslims and the Jews by allowing them to build the new Jewish Temple beside of the current Dome of the Rock mosque. Thus the need for the wall mentioned in this verse.

Verses 3-6: *“And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.” These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth. And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner. These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire.”* Notice the two witnesses mentioned in these verses. There are two questions that need to be answered at this point. First, why are there two of them? Second, who are they?

First, why are there two of them? The Bible tells us that judgment is only meted out by the mouth of two or three witnesses only. We are told in Deuteronomy 17:6, *“Whoever is deserving of death shall be put to death on the testimony of two or three witnesses; he shall not be put to death on the testimony of one witness.”* In the same book it says in chapter 19, verse 15, *“One witness shall not rise against a man concerning any iniquity or any sin that he commits; by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established.”*

In Genesis 18 we find the account of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. God first sent two angels to verify that things were as bad as he had heard. He said when speaking to Abraham in Genesis 18:21-22, *“I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to Me; and if not, I will know.” Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, but Abraham still stood before the LORD.”* The Lord could not put them to death on the testimony of only one witness. Make no mistake about it, God is about to judge the world here in the book of Revelation. That day is closer than I

think any of us would like to admit. So, the Bible makes it abundantly clear that judgment can only be meted out by the mouth of two or three witnesses.

So that's the answer to why there are two of them. The second question is, "Who are they? The answer has been the source of much speculation for many years. The first one is pretty much unanimously agreed upon as being Moses. However, the second one has caused even greater speculation.

Why Moses? He seems to be the one that everyone agrees upon the most. The answer lies in the text of 11:6b where it describes one of the witnesses as having the ability to turn water into blood and *"to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire."* Anyone who knows anything about the life of Moses will quickly identify these miracles with his ministry during the children of Israel's exodus from Egypt. Moses was told by God in Exodus 7:3, *"And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt."* One of those signs was the turning of the water into blood. In Exodus 4:9 *"And it shall be, if they do not believe even these two signs, or listen to your voice, that you shall take water from the river and pour it on the dry land. The water which you take from the river will become blood on the dry land."*

Another interesting thing is the circumstances regarding the end of Moses' life. The Bible says that God buried Moses himself, but Satan wanted his body. Jude 1:9 says, *"Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses..."* The question must be asked, "Why did the Devil want Moses' body?" Did he know something? Could it be that he knew God had a future use for it? I think so.

The second witness is where the disagreement comes in between many. I, like many, feel that there are only two possibilities: Elijah or Enoch. The reason they are considered is that, like Moses, their deaths or lack thereof is shrouded in mystery. Elijah was carried away in a chariot in 2 Kings 2:1-11 and the Bible says about Enoch in Genesis 5:24 that he *"walked with God; and he was not, for God took him."* In other words, neither of them ever tasted death.

However, if we go by the rule of hermeneutics (the science of interpretation) that were used in the case of Moses, we must go with Elijah as that Enoch never did any miracles at all during his earthly sojourn and Elijah did both miracles that are mentioned in verse 5 and 6a. He brought fire down from Heaven in 2 Kings 1:1-16 and he withheld rain from Heaven in 1 Kings 17:2.

There are also some verses in the Bible that clearly identify Elijah as one of the witnesses as well. Malachi 4:5-6 says, *"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse."* Also, in Matthew 11:13-14 it says, *"For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come."* Jesus also said in Matthew 17:11 *"Elijah truly shall first come, and restore all things."* That settles it for me.

Notice also in the verse that their ministry will be for only “*one thousand two hundred and sixty days.*” Keep in mind, that prophecies in the Bible are based on the 360-day Babylonian calendar instead of our 365¼-day Julian calendar. That equals exactly three-and-a-half years. That means that their ministry will be for the first half of the seven-year Tribulation and it will end at mid-point or at the time that the Antichrist breaks his seven-year covenant with the Nation of Israel according to Daniel 9:27.

Notice also that they are, “*clothed in sackcloth.*” We read many times in Scripture about people being clothed in sackcloth. Jonah 3:5 says “*So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.*” Sackcloth is a dark, coarse material made out of goat or camel hair. Not the ideal material to make a shirt or shorts out of! Thus it became the material to wear when mourning the loss of a loved one, or to demonstrate humility, repentance, or sorrow. The two witnesses are evidently greatly grieved by the evil and un-repentance in the world around them.

Another note on v.4, “*These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth.*” In the book of Zechariah we read of an angel who woke him up and showed him a vision (Zechariah 4:11-14). Dr. C.I. Scofield, in the Scofield Reference Bible says that these two olive trees spoken of here in Zechariah are Joshua and Zerubbabel, “whose witness in that day is the prototype of that of the two witnesses” during the Tribulation.

Another note on v.5, “*And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner.*” People will not like what they are preaching and will try to physically harm them. But when anyone goes after them, fire proceeds out of their mouths and devours them. Sometimes I wish that I could do that! There would be a lot of people with no eyebrows running around!

Another note on v.6, “*These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire.*” As we have discussed in previous weeks, this verse points to these two witnesses as being Moses and Elijah because they performed the same miracles during their earthly ministries.

Verses 7-12: “*When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves. And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth. Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.*”” While they will have a powerful ministry for a season, once that ministry is over, the beast will be allowed to kill them. After the beast overcomes them and kills them, their bodies are left to rot

in the streets of Jerusalem. This will be a time of rejoicing in the world. This is the only happiness mentioned on earth during the Tribulation.

In the eyes of the world, these two were bad guys. They preached against the world's behaviors and prophesied nothing but gloom and doom. They caused plagues and killed people with fire. So, at their death, there's going to be a party. It's not always very popular to be a preacher today either!

I'm reminded of what God told the prophet Jeremiah in Jeremiah 1:8 when he said, "*Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD.*" I had a dear pastor friend who passed away several years ago tell me one time, "You will know it's time to quit when you are afraid to tell them the truth." Gratefully, that time has not come for me and I pray that it never does.

Notice that it says that "*after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them. And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.*" Yes, the unthinkable happens; God resurrects them from the dead in front of everybody. After being dead for three-and-a-half days, they come back to life, stand up, and ascend into heaven. I'd like to be here to see the look on the "God-haters" of our days faces when that happens! I've got a few names in my head right now! They are mostly on the day-time talk shows and the nightly news programs. I'm convinced that most of them will be here to see this. Yes, that's sad, but true.

Verses 13-14: "*And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven. The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly.*" Notice that a tenth of Jerusalem will be destroyed and 7,000 people will die. But the strange thing is that the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven. Maybe this is the last great revival recorded in the Bible? After all, they did just see two dead men rise from the dead!

There is a pattern that I have seen both in Scripture and life. In times of distress, people turn to God and acknowledge him, but very few remain with Him when the distress is over. It happened to the Israelites when the Philistines would attack, they would then turn to God. But when the threat was over they would go back to their wicked ways. In the military, we referred to this as foxhole religion. When the World Trade Center was destroyed in 2002 many churches filled up including ours. Oh man, everybody was looking for God! But when the shock and fear subsided, so did many people's church attendance.

Many of us have and had friends that are nowhere to be found until something goes wrong in their life. Friends like that are a drain, you feel like you don't have a relationship with them, because they only show up when they need something from you. Well, God is looking for full-time friends. He is looking for people that will turn to Him in good times as well as bad.

Verses 15-17: *“And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.”* The prayers of the saints are now answered. These prayers are spoken of in Rev. 5:8 and 8:3-4 as well.

What are the prayers of the saints? Ultimately they are the prayer found in Matthew 6:9-10, *“Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.”* His kingdom will have definitely arrived and His “will” will definitely be done from that point forward!

Verses 18-19: *“And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth. And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.”* It can’t escape notice in this verse that it says that the “nations were angry”. Angry at who do you suppose? They are angry at God Himself. By this time in the Tribulation, they know full well where these judgments are coming from and they are mad at God for sending them. That’s quite amazing isn’t it?

We also see here in this verse the prediction that the time of judgment for the wicked and rewards for the saints is at hand. Please understand something before we continue. The wicked dead are judged at the Great White Throne Judgment in Revelation 20:12 where it says, *“And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.”* There are actually cults (those who deny the deity of Christ) that are looking forward to this judgment! How sad. It’s closer than they realize.

On the other hand, the saints will never be judged. Their judgment occurred on Mount Golgotha 2000 years ago when Jesus laid down His life as a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28). However, the saints will be rewarded according to their deeds done in this life. This is clearly spoken of in 1 Corinthians 3:12-15, *“Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is. If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.”*

Chapter 12

Verse 1: *And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:”* This twelfth chapter is often called the Personages Chapter as that it lists all of the characters of the Book of Revelation. It’s almost like an introduction to the cast of characters in a play.

This verse is made very easy to interpret because of Joseph’s dreams in the Old Testament. In Genesis 37 it tells us that Joseph had two dreams when he was seventeen years old. In the first dream, he and his brothers were binding sheaves in the field and his sheaf arose and stood upright. Then his brother’s sheaves bowed down to his. In the second dream, he saw the sun and the moon and eleven stars bowing down to him as well. In this particular dream, the sun and the moon represented his mother and father and the eleven stars, his eleven brothers. Of course, these dreams made his brothers hate him even more. In the end, we know that both of these dreams were literally fulfilled after his brothers had sold him into slavery and later bowed before him as the second in command in all of Egypt (Gen. 42:6, 44:14).

What does all of this mean? It means that the woman spoken of here in Revelation 12 is the nation of Israel! No, it’s not the church as has been suggested by many! If the v.1 doesn’t convince you, then v.2 should.

Verse 2: *“And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.”* This child spoken of here is none other than Jesus who was born a Jew of the tribe of Judah. Again, the woman spoken of here is the nation of Israel.

Verse 3: *“And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.”* The “great red dragon” mentioned here is Satan himself. However, what I want you to notice is the “seven heads and ten horns”. There are two other people in the book of Revelation who have seven heads and ten horns as well: the Antichrist and the False Prophet. In Revelation 13:1, when speaking of the Antichrist it says, *“And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.”* Also, in Revelation 17:3, we see that the Great Harlot also has seven heads and ten horns when it says, *“So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.”*

The first question is, “What are the seven heads?” The Bible makes this answer very easy for us. It says in Revelation 17:9, *“And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.”* The seven heads are seven mountains that the woman is sitting on. Most scholars would agree that this is speaking of the City of Rome because Rome is known as the City of Seven Hills. As a matter of fact, it was built on a network of seven hills. The Catholic Encyclopedia states: “It is within the city of Rome, called the city of seven hills, that the entire area of Vatican State proper is now confined” (The Catholic Encyclopedia, Thomas Nelson, 1976).

The second question is, “What are the ten crowns?” For that answer, we must go back into the Old Testament to a vision that God gave to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon around 606 B.C. that God used his servant Daniel to interpret. Daniel 2:31-33 says, “*Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay.*” Later, Daniel identifies the head of gold as Babylon; the breast and arms of silver as Media-Persia which would follow Babylon; the belly and thighs of brass as Greece; the legs of iron as Rome; and finally the ten toes on the feet made partly of iron and partly of clay as the Revived Roman Empire.

Later, in Daniel 7:1-10, Daniel had a similar vision when he saw four great beasts come up from the sea. “*The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings*”. This spoke of Babylon. “*And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear*”. This spoke of Media-Persia. “*After this I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard*”. This spoke of Greece. “*After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth*”. This spoke of Rome. And finally, when speaking of the fourth beast, it says that “*it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns.*” These little horns speak of the Revived Roman Empire.

Now, it doesn't take much knowledge of history to know that Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece and Rome have already come and gone. However, Rome has never risen again after its initial collapse around 476 A.D. So what are we waiting for today? We are looking and waiting for Rome to rise up out of the ashes in fulfillment of Daniel's two visions. Many see it as already fulfilled, or at least being fulfilled, in the nations of the European Community. If that truly be the case, our time indeed is very short because in both of Daniels visions the next thing to happen after the Revived Roman Empire is the appearance of the Antichrist, followed by the Great Tribulation, and the return of Christ. Are you ready for all of that? If not, today would be a great time to give your heart to Jesus.

Verse 4: “*And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.*” This verse speaks of two things. First, it speaks of an event that took place in time past when the Devil was kicked out of Heaven for his pride. This is rehearsed for us in Ezekiel 28:12-19 and Isaiah 14:11-15. Second, it speaks of when the Devil tried to destroy Jesus at His birth in Bethlehem at the hands of King Herod, when he tried to use the wise men to find the baby and then report back to him as to His location. This was so that he could supposedly go and worship Jesus as well (Matthew 2:8). Of course, this was a lie, because Herod had no intentions of worshipping Jesus, but to kill Him lest He be a threat to his throne (Matthew 2:12).

Verse 5: “*And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.*” This male Child is Jesus and He will rule the nations “*with a rod of iron*” some day. In Psalms 2:8, the Father told Him, “*Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth for Your possession.*” Also notice here in v.5 that it says, “*her Child was caught up to God and His*

throne.” This occurred in Acts 1 when Jesus was taken back up into heaven at the ascension from the Mount of Olives.

Verse 6: *“And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.”* This verse speaks of a yet future event when Israel will flee to a place that has been prepared by God for three-and-a-half years to hide from the Antichrist. Jesus mentioned this event while giving the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24. In vv.15-36, He specifically refers to this event in v.20 when He warns them, *“But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day.”* What flight is Jesus referring to? It’s their flight to the City of Petra, in modern day Jordan, where they will be safe for the remaining (3 ½ years) of the Tribulation period.

How do we know that they will flee to Petra? The Bible says so in Isaiah 16:1-4, *“Send ye the lamb to the ruler of the land from Sela (Petra) to the wilderness, unto the mount of the daughter of Zion. For it shall be, that, as a wandering bird cast out of the nest, so the daughters of Moab shall be at the fords of Arnon. Take counsel, execute judgment; make thy shadow as the night in the midst of the noonday; hide the outcasts; bewray not him that wandereth. Let mine outcasts dwell with thee, Moab; be thou a covert to them from the face of the spoiler: for the extortioner is at an end, the spoiler ceaseth, the oppressors are consumed out of the land.”*

Of course, the question begs to be asked, “Why Petra?” The answer lies in an event that happened between the Edomites (the descendants of Esau) and the Israelites (the descendants of Jacob) in Numbers 20:14-21. It took place while Israel was fleeing out of Egypt and they had requested permission to cross through Edom (also known as Petra or Sela), but the Edomites refused to grant them safe passage and actually threatened to kill them! As a matter of fact, the entire book of Obadiah deals with this very issue and announces even further judgment against Edom for their betrayal of Israel. Make no mistake about it, God will hold everyone accountable for how they treat the Jews. He told Abraham in Genesis 12:2-3, *“And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”*

Verses 7-9: *“And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.”* There are some things that I want you to take note of about these verses. First, these verses speak of an event that is still to take place in the future. Be careful not to confuse what it spoke of here with v.4 of the same chapter as that it speaks of an event that took place in time past when the Devil was kicked out of Heaven for his rebellion. This is spoken of in Ezekiel 28:12-19 and Isaiah 14:11-15.

What these verses show us here in vv.7-9 is that even though the Devil was thrown out of Heaven, he still apparently has access back into Heaven. This is also evidenced in the book of Job when it speaks of a time when the Devil approached God in Heaven and asked for permission to come against Job. Also, in the Gospel account of Luke, we are told of a

conversation that Jesus had with Peter when he said in Luke 22:31-32, “...*Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.*” No doubt, the Devil still has access back into Heaven and will continue to do so until these verses are fulfilled and he is ultimately and finally thrown out for good when God’s angels, under the direction of Michael the Archangel, will battle with the Devil’s angels.

Let me ask you this, “Why would the Devil want access back into Heaven?” The answer is to accuse you and me just like he did with Job. Of course, he also does it to request permission to get at us just like with Peter.

Verse 10: “*And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.*” Here the Devil is called the accuser of the brethren. The good news is that we have an advocate. Yes indeed, we have an intercessor who stands in the gap for us in our defense. His name is Jesus! He is our Great Intercessor. Paul writes in Romans 8:34, “*Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.*” Also in Hebrews 7:25 it says, “*Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.*” Isn’t it great to know that we have someone in Heaven interceding for us every time the Devil makes an accusation against us?

Verse 11: “*And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.*” This verse is speaking of those who die for their faith during the Tribulation period. They are commonly known as Tribulation Saints. As you may remember, we first saw them under the altar in Revelation 6:9-11. They certainly gave the ultimate sacrifice for their faith.

I want to just pause for a moment and ask you something. Do you understand what I am writing or is it totally over your head? Do you go to a church that teaches the Bible? Does your pastor spend a great deal of time opening the Bible to you on a regular basis? If you are a child of God who has been in the Word of God and the Church for years, all of this should be very elementary to you. If it is not, something is wrong! I’m not teaching something “off the wall” here. I would encourage you to get into a church that teaches the Bible this Sunday.

Verse 12: “*Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.*” This verse takes place at the mid-point of the Tribulation when the Devil is no longer allowed access back into Heaven as in time past. At this point, he knows that his time is short as that he only has three-and-a-half years to accomplish his destructive task.

Verses 13-14: “*And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child. And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a*

time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.” This verse is again referring to Israel’s flight to Petra for the latter three-and-a-half years of the Tribulation. We discussed this in v.6 of this same chapter.

Some have speculated about the *“two wings of a great eagle”* spoken of in v.14. They have suggested that since the eagle is the symbol of America; this could be speaking of our country coming to the aid of the Jews during this time and possibly airlifting them to the City of Petra to protect them from the Antichrist. After all, America is really the only country that has consistently stood by Israel since she became a nation in 1948. Could this be how God will deliver them? I don’t know, but I tend to doubt it as that the term *“eagle”* was also used 3500 years ago when God delivered the Israelites from the Egyptians. It says in Exodus 19:4, *“Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto myself.”* In either case, God will take care of His people in any way He chooses.

Verse 15: *“And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.”* All hell is going to break loose on the earth at this point because the Devil is going to throw everything he has at destroying the nation of Israel and the Jewish people. Anyone else during this time of future history that loses their life is simply the result of collateral damage.

This is foretold in the Old Testament book of Zechariah where it says, *“And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God.”* How many Jews will survive this onslaught? Two out of three of them will die, but the end result will be that one-third of them will finally acknowledge that Jesus is Lord.

Verses 16-17: *“And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth. And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”* Again, this verse is referring to Israel’s deliverance from the *“the dragon”* when he comes after her at the mid-point of the Tribulation.

Chapter 13

Verse 1-2: *“And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.”* In this chapter, we are formally introduced to the Antichrist. Understand that in the Holy Trinity we have the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. However, in what is called the satanic trinity we have Satan, Antichrist, and the False Prophet. We have already been introduced to Satan (the Dragon) in chapter 12.

He comes up out of the sea which represents the mass of humanity. This is the world leader that unsaved man has been looking for. All of those “backward” Christians are gone and the world is thinking that the Age of Aquarius has finally arrived.

Verse 3: *“And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.”* This verse has been very controversial. There are basically two views as to who or what this “deadly wound” is that was “mortally wounded” and “was healed.” The first view is that this represents the Roman Empire in that it collapsed and is “healed” and brought back to life through the revived Roman Empire in the last days. The second view is that this represents a man, the Antichrist, who was “mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed.” I feel strongly that Scripture supports the second view more. While the Roman Empire will certainly rise again in the form of the revived Roman Empire, this portion of Scripture is not dealing with this issue.

If the great Imitator of all times is to truly imitate the plan of God to a tee; then the death, burial and resurrection must be imitated as well. The Bible says in Zechariah 11:15-17, *“And the LORD said unto me, Take unto thee yet the instruments of a foolish shepherd. For, lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land, which shall not visit those that be cut off, neither shall seek the young one, nor heal that that is broken, nor feed that that standeth still: but he shall eat the flesh of the fat, and tear their claws in pieces. Woe to the idol shepherd that leaveth the flock! the sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened.”*

The bottom line is that the Antichrist is going to imitate the death and resurrection of Jesus to further deceive the nations of the earth to follow him. As a matter of fact, this verse says that after this miracle, *“all the world marveled and followed the beast.”* His following is only solidified. After all, who can stand against a man that can not die!?

Verse 4: *“And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?”* Notice that this verse says that the beast receives his authority from the Dragon who is Satan. We must understand that all power comes from either God or Satan. Unfortunately, there is a lot going on today in the world that gets attributed to God that God had nothing to do with.

In the Rio Grande Valley where I ministered for eleven years, there are tarot card readers on practically every corner that had deceived the community into thinking they're Christian by putting a picture of the Virgin Mary out in front of their establishments. That only proved two things: they were not only witches, but also idolaters. Revelation 21:8 says, "*But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.*" They may have fooled the simple, but they had not fooled God.

Verse 5: "*And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.*" In this verse, we are still dealing with the man of sin: the Antichrist. He is only being given power from God for "forty and two months" or three-and-a-half years. Notice that even the Devil's power is given to him from God Almighty.

Verse 6: "*And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.*" The Antichrist will openly blaspheme God by walking into the third rebuilt temple (the temple will be rebuilt in Jerusalem during the Tribulation) and claim to be God. He will attempt to take the glory of God just like he did in the past. The Bible tells us in Isaiah 14:12-15, "*How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.*" However, the Devil will never be equal to God; not then, now, or ever. He desires a position which no created being can attain.

Verse 7: "*And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.*" Two things to note: first, the "*saints*" spoken of in this verse. Who are these saints? They are those who have been saved during the Tribulation and killed for their faith in Jesus Christ. Second, the Devil is given permission, if you will, to make war with them and kill them. On the surface that verse looks pretty bleak. Nope, there's not much good news there for sure. However, there are at least two things that we can thank God for in this verse. First, that He even allows many in the Tribulation to turn to Him. It just shows that the mercies of the Lord are new every morning (Lam. 3:23). Second, the Devil can do nothing to us until he has been granted permission from our loving Heavenly Father.

Once while on night maneuvers in Korea while I served in the service, about a dozen fellow Marines perished when their helicopter crashed. They never saw it coming and probably never felt it. After my battalion returned to Okinawa, I called my Grandmother and recounted the story to her and her response has stuck with me until this day. She told me that I was "invincible until the Lord was through with me." How true that is.

It reminds me of what the Apostle John said in 1 John 4:18, "*There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in*

love.” We have nothing to fear in this life or the next because God is in total control. We will not die one day before or one day after God decides!

Verse 8: *“And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”* Here we see the Book of Life. We will speak more of this book in chapter 20. However, suffice it to say that within this book are the names of every man, woman, and child who has ever placed their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 9: *“If any man have an ear, let him hear.”* I find it interesting that all through this book, the Lord continues to say this over and over. As a little boy I remember being told by the late Dr. Harold B. Sichtler, “The reason God gave you one mouth and two ears is so you will listen twice as much as you speak.” I believe that if we all took that to heart, our problems would not be so numerous (Proverbs 17:27; 21:23; 29:20).

Verse 10: *“He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.”* This is a promise that the Devil will get his due one day. That will happen when he is cast into the bottomless pit and ultimately into the Lake of Fire. Yes, he will get his due. Praise God!

Verse 11: *“And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.”* Now we are introduced to the False Prophet who comes up out of the earth. He is the spiritual puppet of the Dragon (Satan). Notice that this beast, unlike the first, comes up out of the earth and not the sea. While the sea refers to the masses of humanity in Scripture; the earth is symbolic of religious life on this planet.

Notice that this beast, unlike the first one, only has two horns instead of ten. His horns are described as *“horns like a lamb.”* In other words, he will come as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14) acting like the true Lamb of God. John the Baptist said in John 1:29, *“The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”* Peter said in 1 Peter 1:19 *“But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”*

Both of these beasts have tremendous power, but in different ways. The first beast holds the political power. He will sit as the potentate of the world. The second beast will hold the spiritual power. He will oversee the one world religion and his primary job will be to get the world to follow the first beast. They are commonly referred to as the Antichrist and the False Prophet.

Verse 12: *“And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.”* Make no mistake; this second beast is in the employ of the first beast. His entire purpose for being is to get the entire world to bow at the feet of the Antichrist. Remember that he is ultimately imitating the Holy Spirit in the role of pointing everyone to the Antichrist.

Verse 13: “*And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men.*” Keep in mind that all of his power comes from the Devil. When you think about it, the Devil is the most powerful entity in the universe besides God. We discussed the fact that all power comes from either one or the other.

An example of Satan’s power can be found in Exodus when Moses and Aaron entered the court of pharaoh and asked that he let God’s people go. Ex 7:8-12, “*And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, When Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying, Shew a miracle for you: then thou shalt say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and cast it before Pharaoh, and it shall become a serpent. And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh, and they did so as the LORD had commanded: and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent. Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers: now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments. For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents: but Aaron’s rod swallowed up their rods.*” We are told in the New Testament the names of these men that withstood Moses was Jannes and Jambres (2: Tim. 3:8).

By what power were they able to reproduce the miracle of turning their rods into serpents? It was by the power of Satan. Just as he gave those in the court of pharaoh power that day to reproduce the miracle, so too one day he will give the power to the Antichrist and False Prophet as well (2 Thessalonians. 2:1-9). However, there is something that must be remembered at this point. Yes, while the Devil does have tremendous power, he is no match for God. As a created being he is not omniscient, omnipotent, or omnipresent.

Notice that the first part of the verse says that he, the False Prophet, performs “*great signs.*” As a pastor, I am very concerned about what I and others refer to as the “charasmaniac” movement. I could debate the validity of that movement, but that is not my point. My point is that everyone is erroneously looking for a sign today. They want manifestations of tongues, healings, fillings, gold dust in the palms of their hands and in their teeth.

Jesus said in Luke 11:29-30, “*And when the people were gathered thick together, he began to say, This is an evil generation: **they seek a sign**; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonah the prophet. For as Jonah was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation.*” Jesus said that only “evil” people seek a sign. The only sign that Christians should be looking for is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead! That is all of the proof that we should need. It is “evil” to look for anything else.

I’ve got a better idea for those of you who are seeking signs to prove that another is a Christian or filled with the Spirit. Galatians 5:22-24 says that the fruit (the proof) of the Spirit of Christ within a man is “*love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness and temperance.*” Also, if you want proof that they’re not a Christian, it says in Galatians 5:19-21 “*Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*” It’s really quite that simple.

But, we live in an “*evil generation*” that is still asking for signs even though God has clearly stated that “*no sign will be given to it.*” We have churches that are filled to overflowing every week with this “*evil generation*” seeking signs. I’m afraid that the organized “church” is being set up and conditioned to accept the Antichrist! It says in 2 Thessalonians 2:9, “*Even him (the Antichrist), whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders.*”

Verse 14: “*And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live.*” The bottom line is that the Bible is true about what it says in Hosea 4:6, “*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee...*” Don’t go looking for signs! The Devil just might give you one!

Verse 15: “*And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.*” This speaks of the image that will be set up in the third rebuilt temple that the False Prophet will give life to. This temple has not been built yet, but it will be one day. Some say that it is how the Antichrist is going to bring peace between the Arabs and the Jews. This peace will come about because they will both have their most holy sites in Jerusalem: the Dome of the Rock Mosque and the newly rebuilt Jewish Temple. This event is prophesied in Ezekiel 42 and Daniel 11:31.

It is at this point that the False Prophet will give life to this image just as Satan gave life to the snakes in pharaoh’s court with Moses and Aaron. This act is called the “*abomination of desolation*” and is also mentioned in Matthew 24:15. I know that that is some pretty deep stuff. I would encourage you to study it for yourself or ask your pastor about it if it is still confusing.

Verses 16-18: “*And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.*” This is the mark of the beast. The question has always been asked as to why the number of the Antichrist is 666. I feel that it has to do with what I’ve called the Inferior or Satanic Trinity. Each person within this evil trinity is represented by the number 6: Satan, Antichrist and the False Prophet. That is one 6 for each. Just as the number of perfection and God is 7, so the number of imperfection is 6. The Devil wants to be perfect. He wants to be God, but he falls short and can never be.

Many teachers point to this mark of the beast as the basis for a cashless monetary system that will be perfected by the Antichrist. Even today, we see it in the use of barcodes on credit cards. However, the Antichrist will have this mark placed on the right hand or the forehead of those who foolishly choose to follow him in order to buy and sell anything during the Tribulation.

It's interesting to note that John wrote this Book of Revelation while on an isolated island during a period in history when the highest form of technology was a mule and when the world's economy was based on bartering. Therefore, what makes this passage so intriguing is that John describes precisely that which is upon us economically and culturally.

For centuries, this passage confused Bible scholars. While they knew it was true, exactly how it would happen was beyond their wildest imaginations. But for us, this is no big deal, for we are accustomed to buying and selling numerically. The banking industry has been pushing hard for a cashless society for many decades. Why? Every check costs a bank between thirty-five and sixty cents to process. Electronic transactions, on the other hand, cost one cent. Banks have a very real interest in seeing us move toward an electronic funds transfer system. So do small business owners, due to the multimillion-dollar price they pay for employees who steal from them.

Not only are banks and businesses eager to see a cashless society, but the IRS is as well. The government loses what is estimated to be one trillion dollars a year in the "underground" economy which is the system whereby employees are paid in cash in order to avoid the paper trail that would require them to pay taxes. Technology for a cashless society has been around for decades. The only reason we have not seen it implemented until recently is not due to a lack of technology, but only a phobia of the technology. The older people are afraid of it and have been reluctant to embrace it. But that's changing. Why? It is partially due to the fact that the older generation is dying. You see, the kids who have grown up with Nintendo are not intimidated by technology.

Just think about it for a moment. A cashless society would eliminate a lot of social ills: crime, drugs and even people being able to avoid paying taxes. All we would have to do is to get rid of the cash. The only solution seems to be what John prophesied two thousand years ago when he wrote that Antichrist will require everyone to receive a mark on his right hand or on forehead. Certainly we're not far from this. A recent newspaper article I read addressed the fact that we are approaching the time when the key to all transactions will be a computer chip imbedded in the hand. Already, horses in St. Louis are required to have such a chip under their manes for identification purposes. Cats in San Francisco carry such chips containing their vaccination records and identification so that if lost, their owners can be notified. There is even a proposal to use such technology on convicted felons in Southern California. The Mark of the Beast may be closer than we think!

Chapter 14

Verse 1: *“And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.”* This is the second time that we are introduced to the 144,000. I believe that these are the same 144,000 that we saw back in 7:1-8. However, some say that these are not the 144,000 of chapter 7, but a very special group of saints from the Church Age. Of course, the church age began with Christ in Acts 2 and will end at the Rapture of the Church in Revelation 4.

I have a few problems with this for three reasons. First, it sounds a lot like works theology. When I say “works theology”, I am referring to any teaching that requires anything in addition to faith for salvation. I.e. baptism, tongues, etc... To say that one group of saints is more special than another group implies that they did something to earn it. I don't think so. For example, some cults believe that these people spoken of here are those who were keeping the Jewish Sabbath (Saturday) when Christ returns and others that they are the most faithful among them. That sounds like works theology no matter how you say it. Second, to say that these are some special saints begs the question, “If the rapture occurred in chapter 4, why are they still on earth? Did they miss the rapture? I think not. Third, we were clearly told that they are Jews in chapter 7. There are 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes of Israel. That rules out any possibility of any of them being Gentiles from the church age as that all of the descendants of Jacob's twelve sons are Jews just like he was. No, I believe that these are the one and the same 144,000 found in chapter 7. It's just that in chapter 7 they are sealed for the evangelistic work that God has for them during the Great Tribulation period and here in chapter 14 they are simply receiving their reward for their faithfulness.

Notice that the verse also says that before him was *“a Lamb standing on Mount Zion.”* Notice the first letter of Lamb is capitalized. This is Jesus, the Lamb of God. John the Baptist said of Jesus in John 1:29, *“...Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”*

Verse 2: *“And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps.”* Now John hears sounds from heaven.

Verse 3: *“And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.”* Now they, the 144,000, begin to sing a song that only they were able to learn. No one else but them knew it.

Verses 4-5: *“These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.”* Now we have another description of the 144,000. Notice six things about these 144,000. 1. They kept themselves from women. 2. They kept themselves pure. 3. They followed the Lamb wherever He goes. 4. They were purchased from among men and offered as first fruits to God and the Lamb. 5. No lie was found in their mouths. 6. They are blameless.

Verses 6-7: *“And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.”* As we have discussed before, there will be people saved during the time of the Tribulation. We first saw them in Revelation 6:9.

Verse 8: *“And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.”* This question that we need to tackle is, “Who is Babylon?” The answer is found in 17:5-6 where it says, *“And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.”* We will study this in much further detail when we get to chapters 17 and 18. In the meantime, suffice it to say that this Babylon is twofold. It is a political system headed up by the Antichrist and a spiritual system that is headed up by the False Prophet. Both are corrupt and will be judged.

Verses 9:12: *“And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.”* All who receive the “*mark of the beast*” will seal their doom for eternity. Once it is taken, there will be no turning back.

I’ve heard some say that if for some reason they miss the Rapture in Chapter 4:1 that they would never take this mark. I beg to differ. This mark can not be refused by those who have rejected Christ and missed the Rapture. Why? Deception! 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12 says, *“Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they **received not the love of the truth**, that they might be saved. 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.**”* Notice that those who did not receive the love of the truth when they had a chance will be deceived and ultimately damned for their decision or lack thereof.

The clearest way for me to say it is this way. If you have been given an opportunity to accept Christ in this life before the Rapture and rejected it; you will be damned. In other words, there will be no second chance as some seem to intimate. That is a lie of the Devil. Receive Christ today and stop procrastinating.

Verses 13-15: *“And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their*

labours; and their works do follow them. And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.” Here we see a preview of the terrible and dreadful Battle of Armageddon that will be fought toward the end of the Tribulation. We will see more of this battle in chapter 16 and in chapter 19. As a matter of fact, the Lord will return during this battle to set up his Kingdom. This battle will be fought in the Valley of Megiddo on the plains of Jezreel. It is when all the nations of the earth will converge against the house of Israel for the last time.

Verse 16: *“And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.”* This is a detailed description of how the Lord will proceed to assemble for the final harvest of judgment the wicked of this world into a great battle which the Bible calls Armageddon. This battle will be fought in chapters 16 and 19. It is during this battle that the Lord Jesus returns and establishes his kingdom. This is referred to by Jesus in Matthew 13:41-43 when he said, *“The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father...”*

Verses 17-20: *“And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.”* Here is a picture of the complete annihilation of the armies of the Antichrist at the Battle of Armageddon. The blood that will be shed will cover a distance of 180 miles! Notice also that it says that God *“will tread the winepress of His wrath.”* This will be covered in detail in chapter 19. It is also referred to in Isaiah 63:1-6. The Battle of Armageddon is the judgment of God upon a rebellious human race that has for centuries ignored his mercy and the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Chapter 15

Now we move into chapter 15 which is a continuation of the same thought. Remember that both of these chapters are parenthetical in nature. In other words, they do not necessarily have to do with the chronological order of events. One of the reasons that so many people get confused about end time events is because they do not see the Bible as a book of order. You can get into all kinds of trouble when you start thinking for yourself. I'm not smart enough to take the Bible and twist it around to say something else, so I leave it the way He gave it to me. I suggest you do the same.

Verse 1: *“And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God.”* These are the seven last plagues that God is going to mete out to mankind for their rebellious hearts. First were the Seven Seals, then the Seven Trumpets, and now the Seven Bowls.

Verse 2: *“And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.”* Here John sees a vision of all of the human family. The word, “sea” in the Bible is used to refer to the mass of humanity. So John sees a “sea of glass mingled with fire.” Most feel that the “fire” is speaking of judgment. So in this verse, we see the judgment of human kind.

Then we see beside of them, *“those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and over the number of his name.”* These are those who refused to worship the image of the Antichrist and by doing so, refused to accept his mark upon the right hands or foreheads and thus lost their lives. I've heard this verse quoted at funerals, but it is being quoted out of context because it is referring to those who are killed for their faith during the Tribulation.

Verses 3-4: *“And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.”* What a wonderful song! We sing it at Borderland quite often. One day, we'll sing it in Heaven. That's an awesome thought. I wonder if the melody will be the same as they way we sing it?

Verse 5: *“And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened:”* Notice the tabernacle of the testimony. What is this? Paul speaks of it in Acts 7:44 when he said, *“Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen.”* It is not referring to the entire temple, but to the Holy of Holies which was the holiest part of the temple. Only the High Priest was allowed to go into it once per year and that to speak with God. In other words, John was seeing the very dwelling place of God!

Verse 6: *“And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles.”* The fact

that these angels came out of the very dwelling place of God speaks to the gravity of their mission. These angels are to be the bearers of the seven last judgments that are to be poured out upon mankind. That's a pretty serious mission.

Verses 7-8: *“And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.”* If you will remember, we were introduced to these four beasts back in Rev. 4:6-8 where it said, *“And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind. And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle. And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.”* The amazing thing is that if you study this description very closely, it is the exact same description that the prophet Ezekiel gave in Ezekiel 1:1-10 many years before. He further identifies these creatures are cherubim. Oh, the consistency of the Bible is staggering! Written over a period of 1400 years by 40 different authors and there is not one contradiction.

I want to take a look at how both Ezekiel and John describe these cherubim. They both describe them as having four faces: the first like a lion, the second like a calf, the third like a man and the fourth like an eagle. Now, some will say that these faces represent the attributes of God that are represented in the gospels. In Matthew, He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah. In Mark, He is the Servant who became the sacrifice for sin (the calf being a sacrificial animal). In Luke, He is the Son of Man. In John, the flying eagle of John's gospel, the man from heaven. Wow! That's some pretty interesting stuff! Amen?

Chapter 16

Now, let's look at chapter 16. This chapter actually brings to an end the Tribulation. Chapters 17 and 18 only deal with the destruction of Babylon and the false religious system while in chapter 19, the Lord returns with the Saints and sets up His Millennial Reign upon this earth. However, the Tribulation actually ends with chapter 16.

Verse 1: *“And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.”* Now we are introduced to the bowl judgments. We have already seen the seal judgments and the trumpets judgments. The bowl judgments are last.

Verse 2: *“And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image.”* In this verse we see that a horrible sore erupts on the bodies of those who had worshipped the image that the Antichrist has erected in the Temple in Jerusalem. If you will remember, the last time sores like this were mentioned in the Bible was back in Exodus when God brought the plagues upon Egypt through His servant Moses. It says in Exodus 9:8-9, *“And the LORD said unto Moses and unto Aaron, Take to you handfuls of ashes of the furnace, and let Moses sprinkle it toward the heaven in the sight of Pharaoh. And it shall become small dust in all the land of Egypt, and shall be a boil breaking forth with blains upon man, and upon beast, throughout all the land of Egypt.”* Now we see them again. They can be compared to the bubonic plague of old that swept through Europe and wiped out untold millions of people.

Verse 3: *“And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea.”* Now we are introduced to the second bowl judgment which when it is poured out upon the sea causes it to become *“blood as of a dead man.”* Now does this mean that it literally becomes blood or something similar to blood? Well, the verse says that it literally became blood: not just regular blood but the blood of a dead man. In other words, the sea became blackish, coagulated, polluted, with no normal flow. There is no symbolic language used here. All marine life at this point dies. We were already told back in Rev. 8:8-9 that a third of the creatures in the sea were killed when it became blood as a result of the great mountain of fire that struck it. Now, all of the rest of the creatures in the sea die. Nothing is alive in the sea anymore.

Verses 4-7: *“And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood. And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy. And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.”* As the third angel pours out his bowl, not only are the seas blood, but now all of the rivers and the springs of water become blood as well. This makes potable water non-existent for the remainder of mankind.

God is judging sinful man for shedding the innocent blood of the saints and prophets. It says that He has *“given them blood to drink for it is their just due.”* In other words, they are

getting exactly what they deserve for their crimes against God's people. This is also the answer to prayer of those Tribulation Saints that we saw beneath the altar in Revelation 6:9-10 when it said, *"And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?"* The answer to their prayer has come! It is also the answer to our prayers when we pray, *"Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven....For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."*

Verse 8: *"And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire."* We saw earlier with the sounding of the fourth trumpet that a third of the sun, moon, and stars were darkened (8:12). However, with the pouring out of the fourth bowl judgment the sun became more brilliant than ever before to scorch and burn men with fire.

The prophet Isaiah may have been speaking of this judgment in Isaiah 24:5-6 when he said, *"The earth is also defiled under its inhabitants, Because they have transgressed the laws, Changed the ordinance, Broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore the curse has devoured the earth, And those who dwell in it are desolate. Therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, And few men are left."*

Verse 9: *"And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory."* After all that they have been through. After all of the pain, death, and suffering; and yet all wicked man can do is blaspheme their Creator. What a testimony to the hardness of the hearts of men. They are totally corrupt, bound for Hell and now it.

Verse 10-11: *"And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds."* Now the judgment is being aimed at the Antichrist himself. After all, it was he who deceived men in taking his mark and assigning them to Hell and ultimately the Lake of Fire where he, Satan, and the False Prophet will burn forever.

Many believe, as do I, that the seat of the Antichrist will be Rome. We were told back in Revelation 2 about the compromising church of Pergamos that sold out to the world and caved in to the lies of the Roman Church (2:13). Satan has always dwelled in Rome and will continue to do so through the Tribulation. He has to be somewhere as that he is not omnipresent.

Notice also in the verse that the punishment goes from one extreme to the next. With the pouring out of the fourth bowl the sun scorched men and now the sun goes completely black and they gnawed their tongues. And yet they still blasphemed the God of Heaven and Earth with no repentance in sight.

Verse 12: *“And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared.”* Now the sixth angel pours out his bowl on the river Euphrates and it is dried up. This river is some 1800 miles long, 300 to 1200 yards wide and it completely dries up! However, the reason that it is dried up is to allow the *“kings from the east”* to cross at some point in the future. These kings could include China, India, and Japan.

Who are these kings going to come and fight? Are they coming to fight Israel? The Antichrist? Ultimately, they will come to do battle against God and His Messiah (King Jesus). This can be seen very vividly in Psalm 2. We also know these guys are up to no good because of who brought them: unclean spirits.

Verses 13-14: *“And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.”* These are not literal frogs, but unclean spirits that John describes came out *“like”* frogs. They come out of the mouth of the Dragon, Beast, and the False Prophet. These unclean spirits are going out to deceive and draw the kings of the earth to their doom at the Battle of Armageddon. How utterly foolish can men be? We’ve seen this type of deception in the Old Testament as well in 1 Kings 22:19-23.

Verse 15: *“Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.”* In the midst of all of this chaos, God reminds those upon the earth that have placed their faith in Him that He will reward them at His Second Coming in Chapter 19. There is nothing like a little word of encouragement in bad times.

Verse 16: *“And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.”* This is exactly where the *“unclean spirits”* in verses 13 and 14 wanted them: Armageddon! This is also known as the Valley of Jehoshaphat, Valley of Slaughter and the Valley of Megiddo. It will be the scene of the last great battle of all battles: the Battle of Armageddon.

The Bible mentions three great battles that are yet to come. 1. The Battle of Gog and Magog in Ezekiel 38 and 39 when Russia and her allies will come against Israel. Most will agree that this will take either just prior to the rapture of the church or just after. 2. The Battle of Armageddon which will take place at the end of the Tribulation when the Antichrist will lead the nations of the world against the returning Jesus. Take a look at Revelation 17:12-16; 17:14; 19:19. 3. The Final Battle will be when Satan and his allies make war against God at the conclusion of the Millennium. This is found in Revelation 20:7-10.

Verse 17: *“And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done.”* Here we see a great voice out of heaven proclaiming that God’s judgments have concluded. The only thing left before the

great millennial reign of Christ which begins in chapter 20 begins is the destruction of the kings of the earth as they gather for the Battle of Armageddon.

Notice the words, *“It is done.”* The Seals, the Trumpets, and the Bowls have all concluded. Jesus said the same thing in John 19:30 *“When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.”* When Jesus said it on the cross, he was saying that man’s salvation had been eternally secured by His death on the cross and subsequent resurrection. Now we see the words again, indicating that man’s salvation was complete and God’s redemptive plan was indeed finished. The redemption and salvation of man is now complete!

Verse 18: *“And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.”* As a result of this great announcement from God Himself; a great earthquake like never before occurred. The writer of Hebrews said, *“Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven”*(Hebrews 12:26).

We also saw a similar earthquake in Matthew 27:45-51, 54 at Christ’s crucifixion when it says, *“Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.. Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?...And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake.”*

Verse 19-20: *“And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.”* Babylon and the cities of the world fell as a result of God’s judgments and this final earthquake. I believe this great city (Babylon) is referring to Rome! Proof of this is found in 1 Peter 5:13 where we know for a fact that Peter was writing from Rome and yet he refers to it as Babylon. It says, *“The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son.”* It can’t be referring to the ancient city of Babylon because the Bible says that it will never again be rebuilt (Isaiah 13:19-22). Of course, there are some compelling arguments to the contrary that it is indeed rebuilt Babylon.

Chapter 17

Now we come to chapters 17 and 18 in our study. These chapters deal entirely with the description of the destruction of Great Babylon, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet.

Verse 1: *“And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters:”* Who is the “*great whore who sits on many waters*”? Simply put, it is the great false religious system that has developed and culminated under the leadership of the False Prophet. One of the seven angels now is going to show John the punishment that God is going to pour out upon her.

I believe that the ecumenical church that is being built today, not by the wheat, not by God’s people, not by Bible-Believers, but by the tares among the wheat is this “*great whore*” spoken of in this verse. Jesus also spoke about this in Matthew 13:24-30 when He said, *“Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?...Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest.*

The bottom line is that all world religions are going to merge into one great world religion headed by the False Prophet. This system is referred to in the book of Revelation as spiritual Babylon. You may ask yourself, “How can that happen?” It will happen and already is happening for a few reasons. First, there is mass ignorance in the pews in the majority of churches today. The pastors and their people simply do not know their Bibles well enough to see it and confront it. Second, “tolerance” is the word today in America and around the world. Of course, tolerance means “every other religion” and not Christianity. Hollywood can blaspheme Christ everyday of the week and it won’t even make the back page of most newspapers, but say something against Allah and see what happens. Radical Islam is taking our free speech laws and using them against us and we’re too stupid to see it. Third, the Bible says it will.

This movement has been dubbed ecumenicalism by both conservatives and liberals. By the way, my definition of a liberal is one that doesn’t believe that the Bible is Word of God. Our churches and pulpits are full of them. Liberals see ecumenicalism as a dream come true, while those of us who believe the Bible see it as the “*great whore*” spoken of in our text!

It is a very dangerous movement that you would be wise to stay away from. It concerns itself with establishing and promoting unity among all churches and religions. While some walls of division are certainly unnecessary when it comes to how we get along on this planet: others are non-negotiable. Those are the ones that are being tampered with as we speak. I.e. the virgin birth, blood atonement, Jesus is the only way to heaven, etc... Those doctrines are non-negotiable to the Christian faith. If you don’t believe them you are lost and bound for an eternity

without Christ. Any one who tells you different is an apostate and has already become a part of this “*great whore*”!

The Bible says that this false religious system will be destroyed by God Himself in the closing hours of the Tribulation. This judgment has already been spoken of in Revelation 2:20-22 where it says, “*Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.*”

Verse 2: “*With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.*” Last week we took a close look at the harlot that this verse is referring to in v.1. She represents that great ecumenical church that we see taking shape today and which will eventually culminate in the last day headed by the False Prophet. In this verse, it takes it a step further and makes some astounding accusations against her. She has actually committed fornication with the kings of the earth and made all the inhabitants drink the wine of her fornication.

Now the first thing that we need to focus on is the accusation of fornication. Fornication by definition is the “act of sex by unmarried persons.” However, this fornication referred to here is not physical but spiritual. In other words, this false religious system has enticed the kings of the earth to worship her gods instead of Jehovah God. She has caused the kings of the earth and its inhabitants to commit spiritual fornication.

Do you remember the accusation that the Lord brought against the Church of Thyatira? He said in Revelation 2:20-21, “*Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.*” This false church has caused the whole earth to prostitute themselves with other gods.

It also says in Revelation 13:13-15, “*And he doeth great wonders (the False Prophet), so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.*” Notice that the False Prophet that heads this false church causes the inhabitants on the earth at this time to worship an image. An image by definition is “representation of any person or thing formed of a material substance: a statue.”

This act of worship is spiritual fornication! God said in Exodus 20:2-5, “*I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage...Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down*

thyselves to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me." The bottom line is that no images, statues or idols are to be made of anything in the earth, below the earth or above the earth: let alone bowed down to, prayed to or worshiped. Any yet today, you walk in churches and they line the walls! What's up with that? Isn't the Bible perfectly clear on this issue? Why the confusion? Two reasons come to mind. First, this church spoken of here removes this commandment from the Ten Commandments given in Exodus 20. That's kind of convenient. Second, men are just scripturally ignorant. They don't read their Bibles enough to know or care. They are blind following the blind. Jesus said in Matthew 15:14, *"Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch."*

It's unfortunate that so many today refuse to open their eyes and their Bibles. They refuse to be corrected and get all upset and angry with anyone who would dare speak the truth to them. Let me remind you of what King Solomon said in Proverbs 12:1, *"Whoever loves instruction loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid."*

Verse 3: *"So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns."* Notice that this "woman", (the Great Harlot that we've been discussing in vv.1-2) is *"sitting upon a scarlet beast."* Who is this beast that the woman is sitting upon? It is the first beast that came up out of the sea in 13:1: the Antichrist. The Political and the Spiritual Leaders of the Tribulation are working as a team; at least temporarily.

Verse 4: *"And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication:"* We see here something of the worldly wealth that this "woman" or false religious system has. If you have any discernment or knowledge of the great religious systems of the world today, these descriptions should remind you of only one: the Roman Catholic Church.

Now don't get upset with me yet. You've got plenty of time for that later. Don't shot the messenger just because you don't like the message. History doesn't lie. Ray Steadman puts it very well in his study called "The Dragon Lady" and I quote, "When we put all these clues together it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that this pictures the Roman Catholic Church. It is a church that arises during the present church age, but comes to its greatest power in the last seven years of this age, after the true church has been raptured. When we say that, we must remember that we are not talking about Roman Catholic people. We think of the church as people, but the Roman church itself teaches that the church is the clergy -- the papacy and the hierarchy -- not the people. It is interesting that Catholic scholars themselves admit as they study this section of Revelation that it is Rome which is described here as well, but they say it is pagan Rome. However, it would be too simplistic to say this describes the Roman Catholic Church and that church alone. We must remember, first of all, that there are many true saints within the Roman Catholic Church. There have been godly popes, bishops, priests and nuns through the centuries. What we need to understand is that it is the teaching of the Roman church that is described here -- the extra-biblical teachings from pagan sources that have been brought in under

the name of Christendom. They involve a seeking of earthly power or status gained by religious authority. That is what first arose in the city by the Euphrates -- a search for earthly power and glory by religious means. The Tower of Babel was built unto heaven, and the people said, "We will make a name for ourselves." There are many religious groups and churches today that are afflicted by this as well. They include Orthodox churches, Anglican churches, Eastern churches, Western churches, Protestant churches, Independent churches, Charismatic churches, and Evangelical churches -- many of them reflect this same error."

The bottom-line is that the Great Harlot or False Religious System that rides this beast is the culmination of pagan commercialized Christianity. Turn on your TV sets. It's there in full color for you to see every day. It's all about money and how to get more of it. It's all they talk about. People flock to their churches in groves to hear how God wants to make them rich. Let me remind you again of what Paul warned us in 1 Timothy 6:5-6 when speaking of these false teachers. He said that they are "*...men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.*"

Eugene Peterson put it this way when speaking of the sins of this great false church that is mentioned here when he said, "Whoredom is sex connected with money. Worship under the aspect of the Great Whore is the commercialization of our great need and deep desire for meaning, love and salvation. The promise of success, ecstasy and meaning that we can get for a price is Whore-worship." In the end, it is the diabolical inversion of "You are bought with a price" that Paul said in 1 Corinthians 6:20 to "I can get it for you wholesale."

Verse 5: "*And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.*" So, Babylon is the name of a religious system that will be climaxed in the Tribulation. This false religious system is the culmination of the doctrines of the Nicolaitans and Baalamism that we were introduced to in 2:6, 12-16, and 20-23.

Notice that the verse says, "*MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT.*" Babylon has always been a symbol of confusion in scripture beginning with the Tower of Babel when sinful man began to do things their way and not God's way (Genesis 11). That same confusion has crept into the church today. God presented a simple plan whereby man could be forgiven of his sins and brought into right relationship with God. However, as the church has grown over the years into a bureaucratic machine, that simple plan has been made confusing. So, Babylon refers to a religious system set up by men, not God.

Verse 6: "*And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.*" These references can only refer to one religious system in the world today. Have Baptists, Methodists or Presbyterians ever done this to the Saints of God? No. During the Dark Ages alone, the Church of Rome killed millions God's people for their refusal to submit to their heretical teachings. John Foxe, the author of "Foxes Book of Martyrs" says that the Church of Rome "raged war throughout the world like a hungry beast, slaughtering thousands of true believers in Christ and torturing and mutilating thousands more."

As a missionary that has spent time in countries like Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Mexico, I can say unequivocally that her tactics still have not changed and that she is still killing true Christians everyday for their faith and will continue to do so until the end of the Tribulation when King Jesus comes and judges her harshly.

Notice, *"I wondered with great admiration (astonished)."* Why was he astonished? He probably could not believe that a system this false and blatant in her sins could even exist and have so many followers. I stand astonished like John when I see so many who are willingly deceived by a system of works that is clearly outside the bounds of Biblical instruction. The only answer that makes sense is satanic influence. Ephesians 4:18 *"Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:"* Even when the truth is placed so evidently before their eyes, they are too blind to see it and are *"alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them."*

Verses 7-8: *"And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns. The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is."* Notice that the world *"the Earth shall wonder"* when they see the beast. Why? They have every reason to be. After all, the Antichrist did come back from the dead as we were told in 13:3-4 and 8.

Notice, *"whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world."* This is one of the greatest proofs for the doctrine of eternal security in the entire Bible. God doesn't write people's names in this book and then on a whim, erase them. God writes with permanent ink! This verse clearly says that their names were never written in the book to begin with!

The sad reality is that those who run around teaching that one can be saved one day and lost the next, is that they are teaching a works gospel. Of course, they will not admit that when confronted, but their actions speak louder than their words. Anything added to grace equals works. This verse is simply saying that something gained by grace cannot be lost by works.

Last week we left off discussing, *"whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world"* in Revelation 17:8. This is one of the greatest proofs for the doctrine of eternal security in the entire Bible. God doesn't write people's names in this book and then on a whim, erase them. God writes with permanent ink! This verse clearly says that their names were never written in the book to begin with! The bottom line is that those who struggle with the doctrine of eternal security have not adequately grasped the doctrine of atonement! Hebrews 10:10 says, *"By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."*

Verse 9: *"And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth."* This clearly designates Rome as that place where the

Great Harlot sits. In ancient times, Rome was called The City of Seven Hills. According to Dave Hunt, the author of "A Woman Rides the Beast," the Catholic Encyclopedia states; "It is within the city of Rome, called the city of seven hills, that the entire area of Vatican State proper is now confined." The city of seven hills is Rome and it is where the Great Harlot sits. There can be no doubt as to her location.

Verse 10: *"And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space."* Who are these seven kings? Five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come. The five that have fallen are Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece. The one that was in existence at the time John wrote the book of Revelation is Rome. The other that has not yet come is the Revived Roman Empire that we are watching take shape around us today in Europe.

Verse 11: *"And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition."* The beast spoken of here is the Antichrist who was the first beast to rise from the sea. He will become the eighth empire all by himself by overcoming and conquering the seventh which is the Revived Roman Empire. All of this is referred to in Daniel 7:4-8, *"After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful, terrible and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns. I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things."* This "fourth beast" speaks of Rome while the "ten horns" speak of the Revived Roman Empire and the "little horn" is the Antichrist. These verses are saying that the Antichrist will rise to power with the rise of the old Roman Empire and he will destroy three of the ten.

Verse 12: *"And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast."* These ten horns are the same that Daniel saw in Daniel 2 and 7. They are the ten confederated nations that will make up the revived Roman Empire. Notice that their time in rule with the Antichrist will be short as that he will overthrow them quickly.

Verse 13: *"These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast."* Now, whether by consensus or coercion, they will be "of one mind" in giving "their power and authority to the beast."

Verse 14: *"These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful."* These ten kings will go to war with the Lamb: Jesus Christ. This will happen during the Battle of Armageddon when Jesus returns with the church. These kingdoms will be gathered with the Antichrist to make war with Jesus and the church who is with Him.

Verse 15: *"And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues."* Notice that the great false religious

system called the Great Harlot sits and rules over “*peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues.*” We’ve already discussed who this great harlot is. Trust me; I’ve got the emails to prove it!

Verse 16: “*And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.*” Why will they hate the harlot? I believe that there are two reasons why the Antichrist will turn on the harlot. First, even though she is false and totally corrupt, she still represents what he loathes; the real church of Jesus Christ. She is a constant reminder of the truth of Scripture. The Devil knows how the Book will end. Second, the harlot is in the way. The harlot has great sway over the people and the Antichrist wants total domination without any competition. The harlot has fulfilled his wishes and is no longer needed.

Verses 17-18: “*For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled. And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.*” That great city that reigns over the kings of the earth is Rome!

Chapter 18

Verse 1: *“And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.”* Now bear in mind that the Great Harlot or spiritual Babylon has already been destroyed in the last chapter. Now attention is turned to political Babylon which is ruled by the Antichrist, but is still inseparably connected to spiritual Babylon.

Verse 2: *“And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.”* There are basically two views held among conservative historians, theologians and prophetic writers about who Babylon is in this verse. The first group says that the Babylon spoken of here is Rome. Some who embrace this view include Martin Luther, H.A. Ironside, and many others. However, they do not confine the prophecies merely to the literal city, but to the whole system and regime, emanating from the city. The second group believes that this Babylon is really ancient Babylon rebuilt. I find this hard to prove in Scripture. To me, Isaiah 13:19-22 clearly says that the old Babylon will never again be rebuilt.

Notice that Babylon has become *“a cage for every unclean and hated bird!”* This verse reminds me of Matthew 13:31-32 where it says in the Parable of the Mustard Seed, *“Another parable He put forth to them, saying: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.’”* The late Dr. Harold B. Sighthler believes that the parable finds its ultimately fulfillment here in Revelation 18:2 when these *“unclean and hated”* birds find their way comfortably into the culmination of this great false religious system.

However, there are some in the church today who erroneously teach that the Parable of the Mustard Seed is proof that the real church of Jesus Christ will grow bigger than ever before in the last days. That is naïve thinking and bad hermeneutics (Bible Interpretations). Just look around. The true church of Jesus Christ is not growing today. You ought to see some of the ignorant emails and letters that I receive from people who are offended that I spoke the truth on a portion of Scripture. I’m not saying or teaching anything that hasn’t been taught for the last 2000 years of church history. The fact is that they would rather stumble around in the dark than face the truth. My friend, the Devil is going to have a greater influence in the closing days than in any other time before.

Verse 3: *“For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.”* Rome has truly made the nations of the earth *“drink the wine of the wrath of her fornication”* because she has introduced the worship of idols into Christianity.

Notice also that the *“merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury.”* The *“her”* in this verse is referring to Babylon: this great spiritual and political false system called the Mother of Harlots. This verse shows us that she is not only a spiritual

institution, but a commercial one as well. There is only one religious organization in the world that owns airlines, banks, hotels, hospitals, rest homes, liquor distilleries, wineries, newspapers, radio and television stations. As a matter of fact, the Church of Rome is the wealthiest institution on earth. Vatican City is the smallest independent state in the world. It has its own military, currency, postal service and ambassadors. Thus the merchants will weep when she is finally gone. 2 Peter 2:3 says, *“And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.”*

Verses 4-5: *“And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.”* There are many people today in cold, hard, dead churches that would do well to do exactly this. I am shocked to see how some people will sit through scandal after scandal, compromise after compromise and yet will not get up and leave an apostate church because of family ties and tradition. Jesus said in Matthew 10:37 *“He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.”*

Verse 6: *“Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double.”* God is going to judge her without mercy in the same way she did His prophets. She is going to pay double for her sins.

Verses 7-8: *“How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.”* The word *“queen”* in the verse is very interesting as that this great false church does indeed see herself as a queen just like Jezebel. The prophet Jeremiah speaks of her when he says in Jeremiah 7:18, *“The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto other gods, that they may provoke me to anger.”* Also, he speaks of her in Jeremiah 44:17-19 when he says, *“But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, as we have done, we, and our fathers, our kings, and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem: for then had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil. But since we left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, we have wanted all things, and have been consumed by the sword and by the famine. And when we burned incense to the queen of heaven, and poured out drink offerings unto her, did we make her cakes to worship her, and pour out drink offerings unto her, without our men?”* It’s interesting that they are still *“burning incense”* to the Queen of Heaven in churches today. They are still offering little cakes to her as well. And, she still goes by the name Queen of Heaven.

Verses 9-13: *“And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come. And the merchants of the earth shall*

weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more: The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, And cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men.” Notice that of all the things that Babylon deals with that the last and the worst is the *“bodies and the souls of men.”* What a sad statement. I believe this means that she killed them physically and spiritually. This false religious system has taken so many on the path that leads to Hell. They have been blinded by their idolatry and their worship of idols and their prayers to the saints instead of the only true God that can hear them.

The Bible says in Psalms 115:4-8, *“Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat. They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them.”* Also, Isaiah 44:9-18 says, *“They that make a graven image are all of them vanity...The smith with the tongs both worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers,...and maketh it after the figure of a man,...He heweth him down cedars,...to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himself; yea, ...baketh bread; yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth it; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto....he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my god.”* How very foolish man can be to bow and worship an idol and expect it or the power behind it to answer their prayers.

Verse 14: *“And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all.”* All of her wealth that she obtained through the bodies and the souls of men will be no more.

Verses 15-16: *“The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, And saying, Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls!”* Notice the ecclesiastical regalia and fine clothing that characterize the wealth of Rome.” It sounds remarkably similar to the attire worn by the clergy today.

Verses 17-18: *“For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off, And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city!”* For Babylon to be destroyed in *“one hour”* would probably require a nuclear blast or a supernatural event caused by the hand of God.

Verses 19-20: *“And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate. Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.”* She is officially closed for

business and that is reason enough for all of heaven to rejoice because the blood of the martyred has been finally avenged! The prayers of the saints have been answered.

Verses 21-24: *“And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all. And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee; And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived. And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.”* This verse reminds me of what Jesus said in Matthew in regards to offenses in Matthew 18:6 when he said, *“Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.”* Only the Lord knows how many of God’s children lost their lives at the hands of Rome, but now it’s gone forever.

Chapter 19

Verses 1-3: *“And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.”* This is the great multitude that was first seen in chapter 7. These are the people who were saved during the Tribulation and martyred for their faith. It is a countless group from every nation, tribe, people, and tongue.

Notice that they sing “Hallelujah!” In Hebrew it is “Halal Yah”. Yah is the shortened form of Yahweh, the name of God. So it means “Praise Yah” or “Praise the Lord”. It is interesting to me that although this expression is frequently in the Old Testament book of Psalms; here in Revelation 19 is the first time the word appears in the New Testament.

Verses 4-6: *“And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia. And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.”* You should remember these 24 elders who first showed up in chapter 4. They are representative of the church and are discussed at length in chapter 4.

I found something extremely interesting in the visions of heaven described in Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. Their visions are almost identical to those in Revelation with one exception. The 24 elders are not present in either of them! Why not? They hadn’t been caught up to heaven yet! However, they all describe the four living creatures. These four living creatures are cherubim. Cherubim show up first in Genesis 3 when they are stationed to guard the way to the Tree of Life. Their images were also sculpted atop the Ark of the Covenant; their wings spread upward covering the mercy seat. Satan himself was once one of these creatures described as the “covering cherub”. We see this in Ezekiel 28:11-19 where it says, “...*Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God;...the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created. Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth;...thou wast upon the holy mountain of God;...Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.*”

Verses 7-9: *“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.”* Here we see the Marriage Supper of the Lamb for the Bride. The church is the bride of Christ. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 11:2, “*For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.*”

This begins to take on incredible prophetic meaning when we look at the Hebrew wedding ceremony. Culturally, it has changed quite a bit from the days of the Bible. But in those times, marriage was a perfect picture of Christ and the church. A normal marriage would go as follows: The first thing that would happen was the betrothal. Second, the groom would leave his father's house and go to where the bride lived. Third, at this time, the groom would pay the purchase price for her. Fourth, the groom would then return to his father's house, remaining separate from the bride, and prepare her living accommodations. Fifth, the bride never knew the wedding date and was forced to live in anticipation of the day when he would show up and surprise her. Sixth, the groom then took her to his father's house for the ceremony, consummation, and the wedding feast which would last seven days, during which time the bride remained closeted in her bridal chamber.

This is the perfect description of Christ's work. First, He left His Father's house to pay our purchase price. Second, He left to go and prepare a place for us. Third, we live in expectant anticipation of His return. Fourth, when He comes to get us, we will be taken to His Father's house for the wedding, during which time we will be secluded for seven years.

Verse 10: *“And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”* The bottom line is that angels are not to be worshipped. They were created by God and they refuse to be glorified. The only angel who ever wanted to be worshipped was named Lucifer. Any angel excepts worship today is a fallen angel and not a heavenly one.

Verses 11-14: *“And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.”* Remember that we saw someone imitating Christ earlier. The Antichrist too came riding upon a white horse as we saw in Revelation 6:2. However, now we see the real thing; Jesus with many crowns and following Him are His armies; all upon white horses.

Notice *“the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.”* Enoch actually prophesied of this event. Jude 14 says, *“And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints,”* Also the Prophet Zechariah speaks of this event in Zechariah 14:5 *“Then you shall flee through My mountain valley, For the mountain valley shall reach to Azal. Yes, you shall flee As you fled from the earthquake In the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Thus the LORD my God will come, And all the saints with You.”* We also know that this army will be made up of both angels and saints. The angels are mentioned in Matthew 25:31 and the saints are mentioned in Colossians 3:4.

Verses 15-16: *“And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the*

fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.” Notice that “out of His mouth goes a sharp sword.” What is this sword? In Ephesians 6:17 the Apostle Paul says when describing the armor of God, “And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;” Also, the writer of Hebrews said in Hebrews 4:12, “For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” From these verses we see that the sword is the Word of God.

If you study the history of the two-edged sword, you will find that it was developed and mastered by the Romans. It is credited with the rapid rise of the Roman Empire. While other nations were still using a single-edged sword that could only cut one direction, the Romans had mastered the double-edged sword that could cut in both directions. This gave them a huge advantage on the battle field.

Why is the Word of God compared to a double-edged sword? It also cuts two ways. If it is allowed to cut one way, it can be a surgical scalpel that the Master Physician can use to repair, heal, remove, and restore. However, it may also cut another way and be an instrument of judgment if necessary. At this point in the Tribulation, the nations have rejected the Word of God, so it is being used to judge them.

Notice the *“winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God.”* This is a vivid picture of God stamping out His enemies. It isn’t exclusive to the book of Revelation – the prophets have written about this long before. Joel 3:12-13, *“Let the nations be wakened, and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; For there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations. Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, go down; For the winepress is full, The vats overflow -- For their wickedness is great.”* It is also referred to in Revelation 14:19-20 and in Isaiah 63:1-6

Verses 17-18: *“And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great.”* The carnage will be so great at Armageddon that the birds are called to feast on the carcasses. I believe that is what Jesus meant when He said in Matthew 24:27-28, *“For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together.”*

Verses 19-21: *“And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.”* Those who have hardened their hearts to the point

of trying to oppose God militarily are killed posthaste, but the beast and the false prophet are thrown alive into the Lake of Fire. After chapters and chapters of seeing the wickedness prevail upon the earth, it is refreshing to see the righteous finally get victory.

Chapter 20

Verses 1-3: *“And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.”* The Greek word for Abyss is "abussos". It is sometimes translated *"the bottomless pit"*. This Abyss is a shaft, a bottomless pit leading to Hades in the center of the earth. How can it be bottomless, yet lead and end at the center of the earth? Simple: if you are in the center of the earth, there is no bottom? The center of the earth is the only place, that we know of, that has no bottom. Whatever direction you go, it's up, not down!

Notice that this angel has the key to the pit. In chapter 9 we saw that the devil had the key (Rev. 9:1-2). However, this angel is not releasing evil from it, but shutting up evil in it. This angel is locking up the ones who deceived the nations and God's people for thousands of years. Man, that's shouting ground!

You know, we're always so hot to kill off this person, to impeach that person, or to vote this person out of office and elect someone else. But we must never forget who we are really dealing with: Satan! Paul reminded us of this in Ephesians 6:12 when he said, *"we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places."* It is the Devil that is our enemy and not other people. Other people are just tools in his hand.

Notice that the time period of this lockup is going to be a thousand years. This thousand-year period of time is called the Millennium. In Latin, the term is "mille", meaning "1,000", and "annum", meaning "year". "Mille annum" is where we get the term "Millennium". It is what we call the Millennium or the Millennial Reign of Christ. It is during this time that Israel will finally inhabit the land that was promised to her. It is referred to in the Bible as the *"restoration of all things"* according to Acts 3:19-21 and Isaiah 11:6-9.

Verses 4-6: *“And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”* Who is this *"they"* sitting on the thrones? These that are upon the thrones are the 24 elders that first showed up in chapter 4. We examined them closely in chapter 4, and reviewed quickly in chapter 19. The 24 elders represent all of the redeemed in heaven. In other words, they are you and me! Judgement will be given to those of us who are redeemed.

That's why Paul rebuked the Corinthians in this area I Corinthians 6:1-3 when he said, *“Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before*

the saints? Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?" Jesus spoke of the same thing when the disciples were arguing among themselves about who would be the greatest in Luke 22:29-30 when he said, *"And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."* The subject was also mentioned to the Church of Thyatira in Revelation 2:26-27. Wow! What a promise!

Verses 5-6: *"But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."* Notice *"the first resurrection."* These are all of those saved beginning in the Old Testament, continuing until the last person is saved in the Great Tribulation.

The Bible actually speaks of two major resurrections; the resurrection of the just and the unjust. The first is mentioned in Luke 14:13-14 when Jesus said, *"But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just."* The second is mentioned in John 5:29 when Jesus said, *"And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."* The first resurrection will occur at Rapture of the Church (1 Corinthians 15:50-52) and the second resurrection will occur at the end of the Millennium (Rev. 20:11-13).

The text further tells us that over this group, the second death has no power. Notice that v.6 mentions the second death. Just as the Bible teaches that there are two resurrections, it also teaches that there are two deaths. The first death is physical and the second death is spiritual. The first death occurs when your soul is separated from your body at physical death. That will happen to all of us, short of the Rapture. The second death occurs when your soul is separated from God after the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:11-15). The second death is basically God granting people their earthly wish: to be apart from God. People who live their lives wanting nothing to do with God will spend eternity that way.

Now, if you don't want to die twice, you have to be born twice. Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3:3 *"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."* If you're born once, you'll die twice. But if you're born twice, you'll only die once.

Verses 7-9: *"And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them."* Here we see that Satan will be let out after the thousand years for a short time to deceive sinful man again. He will try the same thing that he did during the Tribulation; to rally people together to fight

against God. Praise God that it will be the last group of people to rebel against God that this earth will ever see.

It's interesting in that we find in these verses that the Devil will be locked up for a thousand years and yet there will still be sinful man upon this earth. None of them will be able to say that the "devil made him do it" because the devil will be locked away! As a matter of fact, the devil can't make you do any thing. The Bible says in James 1:14-15, *"But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death."* Man is tempted because of his own flesh. Even during this glorious age, the perfect society, man is still a sinner. Paul confirms this in Romans 7:18 when he said, *"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells."*

Verse 10: *"And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever."* The devil goes to eternal torment, where the beast and the false prophet had been cast 1,000 years before. He is cast into the Lake of Fire where he belongs. What a glorious day that will be! It's been said that when the Devil reminds you or your past, remind him of his future!

Verses 11-15: *"And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."* Everyone whose name is not written in the Lamb's book of life is judged by their deeds. I don't want to be judged by my deeds.

People are always demanding justice for the other guys, but not for themselves. If we got what we deserved, we'd all be in Hell right now. I want the mercy of God. I want the grace of God. Do you want to be judged for your deeds? The Bible says in Romans 3:23 that *"all have sinned and come short of the glory of God"*. Isaiah 64:6 reminds us that, *"we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."* Lest we forget, James 2:10 says, *"whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all."* Don't ask God for justice. Instead ask Him for grace.

Chapter 21

Verse 1: *“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.”* Now the Lord creates the new heaven and earth. The Psalmist said in Psalm 102:25-26 *“Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed:”* And now, after 7,000 years, the world will be made new again! Isaiah said in Isaiah 65:17, *“For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former shall not be remembered or come to mind.”*

Notice *“Also there was no more sea.”* Practically, the sea is a filter. In the new earth, there will be no more pollution. It will no longer be needed. Observationally, the sea is a barrier that separates us from each other and hides things beneath its surface. There will be no more barriers, and nothing will be left uncovered.

Verse 2: *“And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”* Here we see the New Jerusalem. It is the city of God. Hebrews 12:22 says, *“But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels,”* It is also the new dwelling place of the Church! Also, look at Hebrews 12:22-23 which speaks of the same thing.

Verse 3: *“And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.”* The tabernacle of God is again with men. Just as God was with His people in the Old Testament in the tabernacle in the wilderness. So too, He will once again be among us! The word *“dwelt”* means *“tabernacled”*. God Himself will again dwell or tabernacle among men!

Verse 4: *“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”* There is a song that I have sung at many a funeral that speaks to this truth of this verse. It’s called *“Tears Will Never Stain the Streets of that City”* and it says, *“If I could count the tears that have fallen, It would seem like an ocean to me; and if my heart were a window you could look through, Oh, the pain and scars you would see. Tears will never stain the streets of that city. No wreaths of death on my mansion door. Teardrops aren’t welcome beyond the gates of glory, ‘Cause the heart will never break anymore. I’ve never met one man without sorrow. I’ve never looked into eyes with no pain, but there’s a land where grief is a stranger and joy is the only song they sing. I have questioned the loss of a loved one. The grave seems so final and cold, but we’ll meet again where death has no vict’ry in a land where we’ll never grow old.”*

Verse 5: *“And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.”* Can you imagine what John is seeing, feeling, and thinking? He must be completely overwhelmed in numb disbelief. So much so that the Lord says, *“Write, for these words are true and faithful.”* As if, *“Hey John! Are you tracking me? Get this down on paper!”*

Verse 6: *“And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.”* He is the Alpha and the Omega. That means that He is A to Z! Jesus says he is the Alpha and the Omega over and over in the Revelation. Just take a look at Revelation 1:8; 1:17; 2:8; 21:6; and 22:13. God also says he is the Alpha and the Omega over and over in Isaiah. He says it in 41:4; 4:6 and 48:12. What better verses to prove to the cults that Jesus is God. Yes, Jesus is God!

Notice, *“I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.”* Jesus said the same thing to the woman at the well in John 4:13-14 when he said, *“Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: 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.”*

Jesus said it also in the Temple in John 7:37-38, *“In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.”* People are thirsty for things today that cannot satisfy them; money, possessions, and relationships, but there is a thirst that all men have that cannot be satisfied by anything or anyone, but Jesus.

Verse 7: *“He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.”* Look at the promise to the over comer. The Bible says in I John 5:4, *“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”* You have overcome the world, your inheritance is sure, and is reserved for you in heaven. Peter said in I Peter 1:3-4, *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,”*

What is that inheritance? Eternal Life! Jesus said in Matthew 19:29, *“And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life.”*

Verse 8: *“But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”* There is a lake that burns forever. It is a place of eternal separation from God for those who chose to be apart from Him in this life. Notice those who are listed are cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and liars. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, *“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.”*

Verse 9: *“And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the*

Lamb's wife.” This is one of the angels mentioned in 15:1. It’s interesting that John could distinguish him. They must all be different in some way.

Notice *“the bride, the Lamb’s wife.”* Revelation 19:6-8 says, “And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.” The church is the bride of Christ. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 11:2 *“For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.”* We are currently engaged to Him, but one day soon He will return for us to take us to the wedding!

We are also introduced to the Bride of Christ in this verse. She was also mentioned in Revelation 19:6-8 when it said, *“And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.”* The church is the bride of Christ. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 11:2 *“For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.”* We are currently engaged to Him, but one day soon He will return for us to take us to the wedding.

Verses 10-27: *“And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel. And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and*

honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.” This is going to be our new home! You talking about location, location, location! It is also referred to in Hebrews 12 18-24.

This city is a cube at 1,500 miles in length, width, and height. It is a total of 3,375,000,000 cubic miles. That is about the volume of the moon. More than enough room for all of us! Also, remember that we are going to have glorified bodies like Jesus, so space is not really going to be an issue any way. When we read the accounts of Jesus’ resurrected body in John 20:19, it says, *“Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.”* Jesus apparently walked right through the wall in His glorified body! You and I will have that same body! Also, in John 20:26 it says, *“And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.”* He did it again!

Notice the description and beauty of the gates. What a sight they must be! Notice also that they do not close. Security will no longer be an issue as that no enemy will ever be allowed into it, and it’s never nighttime! The Lord’s glory illuminates the entire place! It reminds of what Jesus said in Himself in John 3:19-21, *“And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.”*

Chapter 22

Verse 1: *“And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.”* Jesus spoke of this water of life many times. He spoke of it in the Gospel of John. In John 4:13-14 he said, “Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: 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.” Also, He said in John 7:37-38, “In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.”

I believe this river gives life, just as the Holy Spirit gives life. Jesus said in John 10:10 *“The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”* Also, in Revelation 21:6, Jesus said, *“And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.”*

Verse 2: *“In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.”* Notice that this speaks of the tree of life. When was the first time we saw the tree of life in the Bible? We first saw it in Genesis 2:16-17 when it says, *“And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”* It is also referred to in Genesis 3:23-24, *“Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.”* Now, we find that this tree is in Heaven!

Notice that God did not tell them that they could not eat of the Tree of Life, just the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. As a matter of fact, if the man would have taken of the tree of life, he would have lived forever. That’s why God said in Genesis 3:22, *“...Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever.”*

Verse 3: *“And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:”* There will be no more curse as the result of sin. The curse that was placed on the serpent, Adam, Eve, and the Earth will be lifted. Do you remember the curse? It was given in Genesis 3:14-19, *“And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife,*

and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” However, once the curse is removed, there will be no more death.

Notice also, *“the throne of God and of the Lamb.”* The curse will be lifted because *“the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it.”* Sin will not be in the presence of God because no one there will be sinners. Galatians 5:19-21 tells us the same things when it says, *“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”*

It is also interesting to note that many of the things that began in the book of Genesis with the fall of man will end in the book of Revelation with the restoration of man. Sin will be no more, the curse will be no more, the way to the tree of life will be open again, no more darkness, no more pain, no more tears, and no more death. If that doesn't excite you, nothing will!

Verse 4: *“And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.”* Here we see that everyone, not just the 144,000 from chapter 7, have the Lord's name on their foreheads.

Verse 5: *“And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.”* Why will it not get dark? Because Jesus will be there! Again, He is the Light of the word (John 8:12). I'm also reminded of when Moses went up to receive the Law in Exodus 34:28-35. He was so bright that the people could not even look at him.

How about us? Can people tell that we have been in the presence of God? The Bible says in Acts 4:13 *“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.”*

Notice also that *“they shall reign forever and ever.”* We shall reign with God forever and ever. I don't know about you, but that's unfathomable to me. That is a long time! It reminds me of Rev. 1:6 where it was said of us that He, *“has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”*

Verse 6: *“And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.”* Here we see some assurance from the Lord to John. Can you imagine what was going through John's mind as he penned these words, as he received them from the Lord?

Verse 7: *“Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.”* This verse reminds me of the three-fold promise that was given back in 1:3, where it said, *“Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.”* You and I have read and heard, but have we taken it to heart? Yes, the Lord is coming quickly. He admonished us in 3:11, *“Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.”*

Verses 8-9: *“And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.”* Once again, John is just overwhelmed and falls down to worship the angel. He did the same thing back in 19:10.

By the way, the worship of angels is sin. We so often make the mistake of worshipping the instrument of God instead of the God of the instrument. We saw with the Apostle Paul Acts. 14:8-19 that the people in Lystra tried to worship the messenger rather the God of the messenger.

Verse 10: *“And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand.”* It’s interesting that God told John to seal up the words of this specific portion of prophecy. The same thing happened with Daniel in Daniel 12:1-4 when he was told, *“And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever. But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.”* It is clear that the words that Daniel were commanded to seal refers to the time of the end in which you and I live. We are living in the generation that may very well see these things come to pass.

Verse 11: *“He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.”* God will not, at least in this life, force anyone into obedience. We have the freedom of choice. We can choose a life of filthiness or a life of righteousness. And when all is said and done, when you have chosen your way and died in it, there is no second chance.

Verses 12-13: *“And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.”* Four times in this book he says these words about coming quickly. He said it in Revelation 3:11; 22:7; 22:12; and 22:20. That tells me that we need to be living our lives like He could come back today.

Jesus said in Luke 21:28, *“And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.”* As such, we need to be busy doing

the Lord's work. Jesus is coming back! The Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25:14-30 will be a reality one day for all of us at that time.

Verse 14: *"Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."* Notice the word "commandments". Jesus said in John 14:21, *"He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him."* By keeping the commandments of God, we have the right to the tree of life and to enter into the Holy City!

Verse 15: *"For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie."* Conversely, those who do not know Christ will not be allowed to enter. The Bible says in Matthew 8:12 *"But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."*

Verses 16-19: *"I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."* There are many "theologians" who try to explain away portions of Scripture. Yet, the Bible is God-Breathed. That's literally what inspired means.

It says in 2 Tim 3:16-17, *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."* It also says in 2 Peter 1:19-21, *"We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."*

Verses 20:21: *"He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."* He is coming quickly! Are you ready?

Biographical Data

Dwayne was saved at the age of nine at the Tabernacle Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina and baptized by the late Dr. Harold B. Sightler who to this day is one of Dwayne's great heroes of the faith. Much of his vision and expository style of teaching were shaped while sitting under this man's ministry as a young boy and later as a student in Bible College.

Like many young people who struggled through the teenage years, Dwayne was no exception. After graduating from high school in New Orleans, Louisiana, he joined the Marine Corps. It was during this time while stationed at Camp Pendleton in California that he had the opportunity to attend Calvary Chapel in Costa Mesa, rededicated his life to the Lord and answered God's call to the ministry. Pastor Chuck Smith of Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa has also greatly influenced his ministry.

He was licensed to the ministry in 1991 by Iglesia Bautista Hispana in Greenville, South Carolina and ordained in 1995 by Calvary Chapel in Greenville, South Carolina and again by the First Baptist Church in San Benito, Texas in 2001.

He holds several degrees including a Bible Diploma from Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia; a Th.B. in Bible from Tabernacle Baptist College in Greenville, South Carolina; an M.R.E. from Andersonville Theological Seminary in Camilla, Georgia and a Ph.D. in Biblical Studies from Louisiana Baptist University in Shreveport, Louisiana. He is currently doing additional studies at Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary in Lynchburg, Virginia.

He is married to the former Jannett Perez of New Orleans, Louisiana. She holds a degree in Computer Electronics Engineering and both a Bachelor and a Master of Religious Education. They have two sons; Dane and Brandon.

He has served as Assistant Pastor and Worship Leader at Calvary Chapel in Greenville, South Carolina (1991-1997); Missionary to Zacapa, Guatemala (1997-1998); Senior Pastor of Borderland Calvary Chapel in San Benito, Texas (1998-2008); Missions Pastor and High School History Teacher at First Baptist Church and School in Brownsville, Texas (2008-2009). He currently teaches and serves as Campus Pastor at the Calvary Chapel Bible College in Lima, Peru.

He is also the founder of Dwayne Spearman.org through which he shares his love for the Word of God. You may contact him and keep up with his ministry at www.dwaynespearman.org.