

STEVENSON'S COMMENTARY
ON REVELATION

Fred G. Stevenson



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Dr. Stevenson was saved July 4, 1932, and surrendered to the work of the gospel ministry in November, 1932. He was among the first students who enrolled in the Missionary Baptist Institute and Seminary in Little Rock when it opened for the first term in 1934. In 1935 he moved to Magnolia, Arkansas, where he remained for nine years. During that time, Dr. Stevenson was instructor in English and Bible languages in the Columbia Baptist Bible School. In autumn 1943, he returned to Little Rock and began his work as an instructor in Bible languages and Bible subjects in the Missionary Baptist Seminary, a position he held until the summer of 1971. For several years he wrote the Adult Sunday School Quarterly published by the Baptist Sunday School Committee.

Dr. Stevenson reads both the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts of the Old and New Testaments with almost as much ease as the English translations. He has not allowed this great talent to lie unused, but has put it to good work for the honor and glory of God.

Dr. Stevenson says: "The great doctrinal point I have tried to put over in recent years ... is that the New Testament is not the discussion of a new plan of salvation, but it is rather the discussion of a new way of God's dealing with His special people in the world, this special people being the church."

In December 1934, Brother Stevenson married Lyda Johnson. Of their five children, one son was a casualty of the Vietnam War and the youngest son was a drowning victim.

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By
Fred G. Stevenson

Revised by
Michael B. Crane and
Bill Johnson



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FOREWORD

This book was written to give the world in general and Missionary Baptists in particular a commentary and translation of the book of Revelation. The need for such a book, free from the taint of sectarianism and unbiased in its nature, has long been felt. If there is such a work on the Revelation of Jesus Christ in existence anywhere outside of this one, then those responsible for this publication know nothing of it.

This writing treats the Revelation of Jesus Christ from the standpoint that it is literally an unveiling of Jesus Christ from the time of His appearance until the creation of the new heaven and the new earth and that this is given by the direct revelation of God to John and he, in turn, to the churches, with the accent upon the word churches. This is stated, not from the viewpoint that all denominational bodies are churches of the Lord, but from the view of the Lord's true people being local congregations and in opposition to any thought of a universal, invisible body constituting "the church."

The value of Revelation has been recognized by only a few in the last few centuries. Its worth, however, is coming more and more into realization as the end of the age approaches. There are those small minds who say that the book of Revelation cannot be understood, therefore, do not study it, and others who contend that man has the right to place his own interpretations on it—interpretations that will not conflict with his ideologies.

There is a definite blessing pronounced for those who study and hear the words of this prophecy, and if the church and individuals in the church would understand the place they occupy in the present world and the events that are transpiring about them, they must read this Revelation of Christ. The church and the minister who best understands the book of Revelation is very likely to be the busiest and best servant of the Lord.

Dr. Fred G. Stevenson is perhaps the best qualified man on earth to write the book of Revelation from a Missionary Baptist

standpoint. He is a scholar unquestioned and while a Baptist, a minister and a theological instructor, he has retained the virtue of thinking freely as God reveals His Word to him through the ancient languages. The fact that some of our brethren have disagreed with him is evident that he has not attempted to think, teach nor write from a traditional standpoint.

It is not even suggested that those reading this book will agree with the writer from every standpoint. That is your privilege but all should bear in mind that this work is the product of some thirty years of intensive research into the languages of the Bible and profound thought, intermingled with prayer. Dr. Stevenson has not striven to retain personal friendships, nor to place a sweet morsel in the theological mouths of his brethren, neither has he written from a mercenary standpoint, for it is very evident that a work of this nature will not be overwhelmingly received by the masses, even of Christianity. It is therefore, very evident that he has intended to give to us a true, orthodox translation and interpretation of a very important book in the Bible.

This Volume I comprises the first eleven chapters of Revelation and Volume II the remainder of the book.

As president of the Missionary Baptist Seminary, I wholeheartedly recommend this work to the reading public and to Missionary Baptists in particular. May there grow out of this an intensified effort on the part of God's churches to evangelize until the Lord returns, which, undoubtedly, will not be long.

L. D. Foreman

FOREWORD TO THE REVISED EDITION

When this commentary was first published, there were relatively few books on Revelation and prophecy in print. Today that market is literally glutted. Unfortunately, almost all of the newer books ignore the scriptural significance of the local New Testament church, and most books advocate an invisible, universal church concept. Such books are necessarily inaccurate, incomplete, and inadequate. The serious student of Revelation will look upon that sort of commentary as the wise seaman looks upon an iceberg at sea: that is; (1) there is much more hidden than is revealed, and (2) it is the unrevealed portion that causes the most problems.

In many books, it is not unusual to find the difficult passages in Revelation completely bypassed, while the self-evident, self-explanatory verses get paragraphs and paragraphs of elaborated commentary. In Bro. Stevenson's commentary, the tough questions are dealt with head-on. The reader may not agree with the opinion of the writer in all explanations—few people agree 100 per cent with anyone about everything—but, at least, the reader will have a logical opinion based on the Scriptures to consider. Whether he agrees or not, the reader will be compelled to study and think to form his own opinions, and that is good.

Those who are familiar with the first edition will notice that the two volumes have been reduced to one, and that the text has been edited considerably. This has been done to make it easier to read. The editors have endeavored to remove repetition and to shorten some sentences in order to make the major ideas stand out in bold relief. **No ideas have been changed or deleted!** The purpose of the editors was not to water down the original ideas; instead, every effort was made to isolate and concentrate ideas in order to intensify their presentation.

On behalf of Bible students everywhere, the editors would like to thank Bro. Stevenson for allowing his book to be published again. It is more than just a commentary on one book, it is a theological encyclopedia.

Michael Crane
Bill Johnson

PREFACE

This study of Revelation was taken up on the continued insistence of preacher students. It has been given repeatedly in oral form before various congregations of Baptists during the past few years. It was published in serial form in the *Missionary Baptist Searchlight* some few years ago. During these years some new details have been added from time to time, but fundamentally the same picture remains that was seen when Revelation first began to take shape in the mind of the writer as a connected whole.

No claim is made to infallibility, of course; neither is an exhaustive treatment given. Instead an effort is made to show the logic of the book. I am indebted to Brother M. M. Munger for the division of the church periods in the second and third chapters. Other ideas have been gleaned from various sources, but in a general way this treatment of Revelation may be claimed as my own. This preface will be an effort to explain the plan and methods to be used in this book. Before the discussion of this plan, however, some plans which will not be followed will be examined.

OTHER PLANS OF INTERPRETATION

Probably the most extensive writings on Revelation are those of the scholars produced by the Protestant Reformation. Though great in intellectual powers, these scholars never could have the proper perspective of the Bible because they started out wrong. No religious group ever started building partly on truth and partly on error and later discarded all error and came around to the full truth. It will be far safer and easier for Baptists to cling to the full truth than to allow it to slip from our grasp and then attempt to regain it.

The Mysticism Error

Protestant scholarship has generally followed a vague, mystical and meaningless plan of applying the figures of Revelation which destroys all the coherence of the book. It appears as a hopeless jumble when they have finished with their comments and suggested applications of various situations.

Protestants cannot embrace the idea of the historical existence of the church from apostolic days, for they all had their origins since the year 1517, when the Reformation began in Germany. To cover their embarrassment at this point, they embrace the idea of the great universal, invisible, spiritual church composed of all the saved. This viewpoint renders them utterly incapable of rightly understanding Revelation, for the invisible church does not exist in the Scriptures anywhere, Revelation or otherwise.

Protestants generally are nonmillennialists. They explain the Millennium as a spiritual condition that exists among the people of God now, and they assign the Great Tribulation to the Dark Ages of the past. We cannot trust the ideas of Protestants on the book of Revelation, because it deals with an historical church—not an imaginary one.

The Isolated Passage Error

Some have followed the Protestant method of expounding Revelation taking one situation or section of the book and interpreting it without regard to what goes before it and what follows after it. It is made to harmonize with other teachings of Scripture elsewhere. Although this is an advancement over what the Protestants do, it is not enough. The reader should be shown how a given situation affects, and is affected by, the ones around it. We will never understand much of Revelation so long as we follow the “spotted,” or “isolated passage” method of interpreting it. The expositor is almost as likely to be wrong as right on many details when he follows this plan.

The “Jewish” Theory Error

Another viewpoint is that Revelation does not pertain to churches or Christians of the present age at all, but that it deals entirely with the Jews, or the nation Israel. It seems to arise from the fact that much Jewish phraseology is used, and there are numerous references to the Jews and their mode of worship in the book. For instance, in the Smyrna church there are those who say they are Jews (Rev. 2:9). Doubtlessly, “Jew” is the figure here of which a Christian church member is the reality.

The “Jewish” theory of Revelation represents the seven churches of Asia as describing the different phases of the history of Israel, beginning from ancient times. It leaves little literal statement of truth. We would spiritualize practically all of the book if we followed this plan of study.

SOME CONNECTING LINKS IN REVELATION

We now proceed to some principles which are vital to viewing Revelation as a connected story. Most of these may be applied to Bible study in general, as well as to this particular book.

The Time Element Is Not Consecutive

Our first thought is to make the time element the connecting link that holds Revelation together. We do not *go* far, however, until our time is all used up and the story is not yet fairly begun. So we cannot regard it as a story that runs chronologically from the beginning of the book to the end.

If time is not the connecting link, except in isolated instances, there must be other logical ones. The following principles will be used to establish logical connecting links.

God Governs Logically

The first principle is that God follows processes of logic in all his dealings with the human race and with angels. The idea that God moves at whim in dealing with his intelligent creatures is ridiculous and unworthy of any serious Bible student. This is not a denial of the sovereign power and will of God. He acted according to his own will alone in creating the universe and the living things in it. He selected Israel as a nation above the other nations simply because he chose to do so. He chose that glorification should be in Christ before man was ever created. He decreed that the church should continue to the end of the age, regardless of what the will of men and the Devil might be.

Men and Angels Have Choice

In their creation, God gave angels and men intelligence and the will faculty. And, he has never violated the privilege of choice of a single one of them. In choosing Israel he never saved a single Israelite against his own will and choice, nor did he bar a single Gentile from salvation.

This principle explains why the world has dragged on in sin and untold misery for almost six thousand years. All men and groups of men are allowed to make their own final choices and settle their own destiny in Christ. It also explains the horrible movements that take place in the latter days as told in Revelation. God is simply giving men what they ask for. Furthermore, the Devil has some kind of claim to sovereignty, and God will not banish him to the Lake of Fire until every vestige of that claim is legitimately destroyed in Christ and by him. This is why God did not destroy the Devil back yonder in Eden.

God Reacts to Man as Man Reacts to God

God reacts to man as man reacts to God. It has been so since the creation of man, and it will be so until the victory is completely, logically, and fairly won in and by that man, Jesus Christ, at the end of the Millennium. The one who believes these things will find many connections in Revelation which others will never find. God does not gleefully torture a helpless race in the Great Tribulation. He allows men to suffer the tortures of sin because that is what they have been asking for since the days of Cain.

In following the principle that God reacts to man as man reacts to God, we conclude that before the fall, Adam had the opportunity in Eden to partake of the virtue of Christ needed to come into glorification. The Scriptures do not reveal what this virtue was, but it was not a slain lamb, for Adam was not then a sinning soul. When he became a sinner, the slain lamb was the only thing that would free him from sin and bring him into glorification. Therefore the slain lamb immediately appeared on the scene.

By this same principle, when God saw the abominations generated by the admixture of the races of Cain and Seth, he then repented himself that he had made man. On the basis of his foreknowledge, why did he not repent back in eternity before he made man, and thus not make him in the first place? The realm of the foreknowledge of God is out in infinity, which is utterly beyond the comprehension of man. Since man cannot think in terms of infinity, and since God has revealed himself in terms of time and space in Christ as the Son of Man, then the only course of wisdom for man is to think of God in those terms of time and space in which he has revealed himself to us. That is, God reacts to man as man reacts to God.

By this principle, Israel was to enjoy the good land of milk and honey if they would be obedient to God. If they would not walk in his ways, then they should suffer the untold miseries of dispersion. Israel as a nation is finally to be saved, but it will be only when they as a nation of their own free will repent and turn to God. One important view of the Great Tribulation is that it will bring Israel to where they will be willing to accept their Messiah.

By this same principle, that God reacts to man as man reacts to God, many of the fearful movements of Revelation are explained. For almost two thousand years God has been using the church to proclaim the way of righteousness to the world. Men make their own choices concerning this way, the majority rejecting it. Those rejectors say by word and deed that they want the way of Antichrist instead. Whenever this demand on the part of man becomes vehement enough and final enough, God will take his

people out of the world in the first resurrection and give sinners, especially those in ungodly religious and political movements, exactly what they have been asking for since the day Cain went out from the presence of the Lord. This reaction of God to being rejected by man will result in an almost complete hell on earth in the last half of the Great Tribulation. Yes, by all means, God reacts to man as man reacts to God. He finally gives all men exactly what they choose of their own free will and accord.

Custodian of the Scriptures

The Scriptures, including the New Testament and Revelation, are committed to the custodianship of the church. Paul declared that the advantage of the Jew was . . . chiefly in that were committed to them the oracles of God.” Only Israel, of all the nations, had the Old Testament Scriptures and was governed by them. The others were all aliens to the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise. This fact has nothing to do with the personal salvation of individuals, either Jew or Gentile.

The same principle holds in the church. It is the bride of Christ; the salt of the earth; the light of the world; the body and fulness of Christ; and the pillar and ground of the truth. The first chapter of Revelation tells us the churches are the bond servants of Christ, and John is to write and send his vision to the seven churches. In the second and third chapters, the seven churches are admonished seven times to hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. Again in closing the book, Jesus insists that he is sending his angel to testify of the things in the book to the churches. Who then can deny that Revelation is addressed to the churches, and to them alone? It is to be studied and interpreted in the light of itself and the rest of the Scriptures. This can be done only by those who believe the Bible is the very word of God, and who are willing to believe and do what it teaches. Revelation is a hopeless mystery to all who attempt to hold to parts of the Bible, but reject other parts. It must all stand together, or it will all fall in due time.

This is not an argument in favor of visions, revelations, and special spiritual light received by the true church. It is that the Bible is like a jigsaw puzzle. If some of the pieces are thrown away or put in the wrong place, the others will never fit into a connected whole. The religious world today is occupying itself with trying to fit the pieces of the puzzle where they were never intended to fit. This procedure makes far worse infidels than those who never study the Bible at all.

Let us settle in our minds the proposition that the New Testament Scriptures are committed to those who will deal with

them in full integrity. The one who does so will find himself laboring diligently, learning and teaching in a New Testament church in spite of the world and the Devil. Then, and only then, will he be in a position to learn and teach the things in Revelation, the most complex book of them all.

The Science of Bible Numbers

The science of Bible numbers is the greatest single key to the interpretation of Revelation. If one ignores the significance of these numbers, he misses much of the meaning of the book and many of the vital connections. The seven most important numbers to this study are three, four, five, six, seven, ten, and twelve. The order of their importance in Revelation is approximately: seven, three, six, four, twelve, ten, and five.

The meaning of these numbers as defined by Dr. J. W. Kesner, Sr., will be followed in this study. The following is a brief presentation of them:

Seven

Seven is the number of spiritual perfection; perfection is used in the sense of completeness. In Revelation great bodies, movements, and individuals, both good and evil, come to their ultimate spiritual end. There are three great sevens in Revelation. They are the seals, the trumpets, and the vials. There are many lesser ones.

Three

Three is the number of divine perfection. The triangle is the strongest structure in the building trade. Every brace in a building strengthens it simply because it builds a triangle into it. The greatest significance is in the trinity of God. Three has great significance in the last three of the seals, trumpets, and vials respectively. Other trinities will be mentioned shortly.

Six

Six is the number of man in rebellion. In Revelation it shows man as having ultimately rejected God and giving his full allegiance to Antichrist. Six is always associated with ultimate violence, misery, terror, etc. This proves that violent destruction is always the final goal of the Devil, even when he appears to be doing great works of moral righteousness.

Four

Four is the number of man in his relationship to the earth. It has evil implications because man has never done anything of himself

other than wreck and destroy the earth and himself. Do not fail to get the significance of the first four seals, trumpets, and vials.

Twelve

Twelve is the number of governmental perfection. It is used only in the good sense. The Devil does not have any governments of twelve. Always, twelve tribes were reckoned in any given situation in Israel, though there were actually thirteen. There are also the twelve apostles of the Lamb, and two twelves of elders in Heaven.

Ten

Ten is used as the number of ordinal perfection. This seems to mean the bringing to its completeness any order of things. Ten always has bad implications in Revelation. There are ten persecutions of the Smyrna church, ten horns of the beast, and ten kings who give their authority to the beast. In fact, ten seems to be the governmental number of the Devil in Revelation, thus standing in opposition to twelve.

Five

Five is the number of grace. We see it operating in the fifth seal, trumpet, and vial to give man what he asks for, whether it be good or bad. The fifth church of Asia, Sardis, begins to be freed from a thousand years of persecution, by the grace of God, to come into the blessedness of Philadelphia.

Trinities

Under the heading of Bible numbers, there are two trinities of institutions and a trinity of sevens which occupy much of the discussion of the book.

The Trinity of Babylon

One of these trinities of institutions is called Babylon, a trinity of government, economics, and religion. This trinity of Babylon is destroyed by Antichrist and to make way for his new system in the seventeenth and eighteenth chapters. The seventeenth deals with the destruction of religious Babylon, and the eighteenth relates the destruction of political and economic Babylon. The working principles that dominate in this trinity are the same for each. They are rule by force, the weak oppressed by the strong. The king reigns for his own benefit, not for the benefit of the people. The rich man trades to his own profit with the masses kept at the point of starvation. The religious leaders direct towards their own glory, honor, power, and luxury, forcing a religion of their own making upon the masses without regard for their spiritual welfare.

The Trinity of Religious Systems

The second trinity of institutions is of three great religious systems. They are Judaism, apostate Christianity, and true Christianity. Each of these comes to its ultimate goal in the Great Tribulation. Judaism, or the nation Israel, comes into the full inheritance of the Abrahamic covenant. Apostate Christianity comes to destruction at the hands of Antichrist. And the church is enthroned in glorified form to reign with Christ for a thousand years.

The Trinity of Sevens

The trinity of sevens is that of the seals, the trumpets, and the vials. As there is the trinity of God and the trinity of the Devil, there is also the trinity of man. The essences of his being are physical, intellectual, and spiritual. The results of the corresponding seals, trumpets and vials are strikingly similar in most instances. Some of them seem to be almost identical. For example, the opening of the second seal brings the rider on the red horse launching war on earth. This implies much bloodshed. The blasting of the second trumpet causes the sea to be turned into blood. Also, the pouring out of the second vial causes the sea to be turned into blood. There is much blood in each of the three enactments. This suggests some vital relationship among the three movements. The seals present the Great Tribulation with the emphasis on the material or physical side. The trumpets place the accent on the intellectual side. Notice the mathematical precision expressed in connection with the trumpets. The vials stress the spiritual side of the Tribulation. Notice that the vial movement starts in Heaven, and the plagues are launched from Heaven—not on earth.

The Vantage Point of Time

Although few commentators consider the question, it is important to determine what vantage point in time should be assumed to get the right interpretation of the book. Should we look from John's day, from our own day, or from the day of the end of the age? Protestants find it healthier for their mystical interpretations to look from John's day and assign both the Tribulation and the Millennium to the Church Age. Some have been inclined to see things from their own day, regardless of when they lived. It is evident that the true saints have looked for the soon return of Jesus in every generation, including the apostles themselves. However, this viewpoint has serious disadvantages. For instance, how could Bible students have recognized and identified the enthroned harlot in Rome before she ever came into existence? Or how could they

have foreseen the present democracies of the world in the toes of the king's vision in the days of Daniel?

The question of vantage point in time is of pressing interest to us today. Without the proper time viewpoint, how can we tell who the seven kings are, five of whom are fallen, the sixth now is, and the seventh and the eighth? Our own day seems to be the proper time from which to view Revelation, because some prophecies of Revelation have been gradually fulfilled down through the Church Age, giving each succeeding generation an advantage of knowledge over the previous one. This gradual fulfillment ceases to be the order just before the end, when movements begin to rush toward their conclusion. The speed of the world is being accelerated daily as it rushes on to Armageddon. Compare the pace of your own life with what it was forty, twenty, or even ten years ago, and you will see the point. We are living in the days when the last signs are coming to pass. Therefore, we have the best vantage point possible to view matters. In our day, the five kings have already fallen, the sixth now is, and the seventh has not yet come, just as the prophecy states it. When the seventh comes, the faithful will be in a position to know him, and to know that the eighth is soon to follow, and the end will be soon.

The Premillennial Viewpoint

The premillennial viewpoint is the one pursued in this study. Postmillennialism and nonmillennialism are not for those who accept the Bible as the real word of God. Either of these theories involves so much spiritualizing of the meanings from the Scriptures that there is little left when they are through.

Although Revelation is full of figures, the individuals, institutions, and movements described by them are literal realities. We do not look for the coming of a literal harlot riding upon a literal, horrible beast with seven heads and ten horns. But we most certainly do look for apostate Christianity to rise again to dictatorial power supported by the beast of political empire. We do not expect to see Antichrist literally come riding upon a white horse in imitation of Christ. But we do expect to see a marvelous man rise on the world scene to offer a sure cure for all the political, economic, and religious ills of the world. We do not expect to see a two-horned beast literally come up out of the earth. But we do expect to see a man with miraculous power rise on the world scene and teach ways contrary to the Scriptures and make his new teachings appear legitimate by the miracles which he does.

The Three Major Divisions

The Introduction for the Great Tribulation (Past)

A word remains to be said in this preface about the divisions of the book of Revelation. It naturally divides itself into three great sections. The first of these is introductory and preparatory for the story of the Great Tribulation. It embraces chapters one through five. The first chapter is a general introduction. The second and third contain a prophetic history of the church age. The fourth and fifth present heavenly scenes in definite preparation for the launching of the Tribulation.

The Tribulation Itself (Present)

The second division runs from chapter six into chapter nineteen. It is the story of the Tribulation itself. It is the real heart of the book, and its climax or culmination is the glorious coming of Christ to the earth with his glorified saints to set up his reign.

The Millennium (Future)

The third section, containing the final three chapters of the book, tells the story of the Millennium and then shows man launched out into his eternal destiny of Heaven or Hell.

The first section is the past of the book, the second section is the present, and the third is the future. This statement is made from the standpoint that Revelation hinges around the Day of the Lord, which in its broader scope embraces the seven years of the Great Tribulation.

Translations

As to the Scripture translations in this text, they are my own. No special merit is claimed with reference to this rendering of the Greek text. All I have tried to do is to transfer the sense which I believe the Greek text bears into understandable English.

Many translations of the Scriptures have been made with various goals in the minds of the translators. Some have fondly dreamed of an accurate, literal translation of the sacred writings out of the original languages into English. These have not gone far until they realized the impossibility of the task they had set for themselves. Because of the nature of various languages and their imperfections, it is often impossible to bring an idea accurately out of one tongue into another. This is further complicated by idioms, which are odd expressions peculiar to a given language, and by many words which have more than one meaning. The idioms must be expressed approximately in the language into which it is translated. Words having more than one meaning must be translated according to the

translator's general understanding of the Scriptures and the given situation. So-called literal translations usually need more explanation than other kinds of translations. All kinds of translations other than literal ones are greatly colored and influenced by the religious beliefs of the translator.

Of course, some translations have far more scholarship and integrity to truth than do others. However, it is asserted again that every competent translation must be influenced by the beliefs of the translators. For this reason, I would have more confidence in an inferior translation made from the Baptist viewpoint than I would have in a more capable translation coming from some other religious background.

No strong plea is made that anyone give any special weight to the Scripture renderings of this text. It is merely hoped that it will serve to help over some of the difficult statements. I am content that we continue to use the King James version as our standard Bible until a competent Baptist translation is made.

Israel Eclipsed by Church

One very striking feature of Revelation is the small part Israel plays compared to the great amount the Old Testament prophets wrote about Israel in the last days. From the Old Testament, one gets the impression that Israel would completely fill the picture, but in the present plan of study the church almost completely eclipses Israel. There is a logical and scriptural reason for this. Let us note some of the working principles.

Jesus preached the gospel of the kingdom first and exclusively to the Jews. This means the church was formulated at the first only of Jewish believers. Later, when the Jews rejected and crucified their Messiah the kingdom gospel was proclaimed to those of other nations, and these were brought into the church on equal terms with the Jews. Jews never have been denied salvation nor participation in the church, but it is no longer a Jewish church, nor a church centered around the Jews. The middle wall of partition is broken down, and it is simply a church composed of those of all nations who will participate.

If the Jews had accepted the appeal of their Messiah, the church would have continued to center about them. Individuals of other nations would have been brought in, just as Jesus gave the blessings to the Syrophenician woman, though she was not of the Jews.

But the Jews, the known part of the nation Israel, did reject and crucify the Messiah, resulting in their dispersion and rejection at the hands of God. This rejection will continue until the end of the

Church Age, when God will begin to deal with Israel again. But just exactly when and how will he begin to deal with them? Jesus dealt with both Israel and the church as separate bodies throughout his personal ministry. The church and Israel overlapped for three or four years during the ministry of Jesus in the world. The same thing will occur in the last days.

Antichrist and the Jew

The church will remain in the world during the first half of the Tribulation. God will begin to deal with Israel again at the beginning of the Tribulation. These dealings will be remote and indirect. The Jewish religious group wanted Antichrist when Christ presented himself to them. The Jewish religious group still wants Antichrist as their messiah and they will continue to do so until they are betrayed by Antichrist at the middle of the Great Tribulation. The direct dealings of God with a people will be with the church until the church is taken out of the world in the first resurrection.

When the church is removed, the restraint upon Antichrist will be removed and he will begin to exterminate the Jews. They will immediately flee into their place of hiding in the wilderness, there to remain until the end of the Tribulation. Just what their reactions and attitude will be, and what direct dealings God will have with them during this three and a half years of fleeing from Antichrist I do not know. I am of the opinion, however, they will sit in consternation as did Job when his woes came upon him, and as some of the prophets did when terrible visitations came upon Israel in the past. There is no certain evidence of a personal relationship between Israel and God until the Tribulation is finished. Then Israel will turn to God and be saved. This is why Israel is treated lightly in the presentation of the Great Tribulation events. God deals with them only through the forces of evil; his direct and personal dealings with them will come in the Millennium.

Of course, Israel does come into the revelation picture a number of times, but they are not prominent compared to other groups, and compared with the prominence they have in the Old Testament prophets. The dealings of God with Israel throughout the Great Tribulation are impersonal and are carried out mainly through Antichrist in his deception of this people and his efforts to destroy them in the latter part of the Tribulation period. The sealing of Israel in the seventh chapter seems to be the preservation of the nation from destruction. The personal dealings of God with Israel appear to begin the day Christ is revealed to them in glory at his coming with his saints.

Revelation and the Prophets

In this study, no strong attempt is made to coordinate the teachings of Revelation with those of the Old Testament prophets. Let us note three reasons for this.

First, the multiplicity and the complexity of the prophetic writings on Israel and the last days makes it utterly impractical to attempt to treat them in connection with a study of Revelation. It would require volumes to give notice to all the Old Testament has to say about the final destiny of Israel.

Second, the prophets saw only Israel in their view of the distant future. Their presentation of the church age was so vague that the most consecrated Jews looked for the beginning of the Millennium throughout the personal ministry of Jesus. In fact, it would be difficult to prove that Jesus did not offer the Jews an order of things which resembles the Millennium during his personal appeal to them. Since the prophets centered on Israel as they viewed the future, and since the church is far more prominent in the events of the Great Tribulation, it is an almost unsurmountable task to harmonize the prophets and Revelation in an extensive way.

Third, the prophetic writings of the Old Testament are very difficult to deal with from a chronological standpoint. As a case in point, let us consider Joel 2:28-32 where the prophet tells about the coming of the Holy Spirit on the church on Pentecost. Peter quotes this prophecy at Acts 2:15-21, and he divides it into two sections, applying part of it to the coming of the Spirit on Pentecost, and relegating part of it to the last days of this, the Church Age. Also, Peter applies the promise of salvation to all who will accept Christ in the present age; whereas Joel apparently means the salvation of Israel at the second coming of Christ. Now who has the wisdom to rightly divide such prophecies as this as to the time element, unless he were under inspiration as was Peter?

Many Bible students err in their efforts to assign a time sequence to the latter chapters of Zechariah's prophecy. They see Christ as appearing to Israel in Jerusalem at the middle of the Great Tribulation, when the Jews are about to flee from Antichrist. If this point cannot be established with reasonable certainty in the New Testament, then it cannot be safely established from what Zechariah says, for the prophets did not keep the time element clear in what they wrote of the distant future. Many times the prophets mingled the first and second comings of Christ without showing the intervention of almost two thousand years between. Therefore, we cannot rely on a time sequence between two events mentioned by the prophets concerning the second coming simply because one follows the other in the prophetic writings.

This is sufficient apology for our omission of the writings of such prophets as Zechariah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Joel from our treatment of Revelation, except as we refer to individual statements and events which evidently fit into the situation in Revelation.

Chapter I

A General Introduction to the Whole Book of Revelation

Revelation 1:1-3

The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to him, to show to his servants, the things which are necessary to come about in haste, and he signified, sending by his angel to his servant, John, who bore witness to the word of God and the witness of Jesus Christ, whatsoever he saw. Blessed is the one reading and the ones hearing the words of the prophecy and keeping the things written in it: for the season is near.

A Revelation

A revelation is the drawing back of a veil and bringing to light things previously hidden. The revelation of Jesus began when he, the Son of God, came into the world as the Son of Man. In him men saw God clothed in the likeness of sinful flesh and meeting all human problems and temptations. He revealed himself in heavenly glory to three disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration. The transfiguration of Christ anticipates the day at the end of the Great Tribulation when Jesus shall come to the earth fully clothed in righteous works, virtuous character, and resurrection glory, to set up his victorious reign on the earth for a thousand years (Matthew 24:30; Rev. 19:11-13). The revelation of Jesus Christ will come in its fulness on that day.

Why Given to Christ

The gift of God to Jesus is the privilege of revealing himself in all his works and virtues to angels and men.

God, the ultimate, righteous judge, gave Jesus the lawful right to reveal himself in the fulness of his virtue, power, and victory. The works of God are observed and evaluated by an infinite host of wise

and holy angels. These same works will be understood by man after he is glorified. Therefore, the judgments of God must be such as will evoke willing and hearty approval by all intelligent beings. Thus God will not give Jesus anything which he did not fully earn and merit. Some Bible principles on which God bases the gift to Jesus of revealing himself are: 1. His testimony that he was well pleased with the works of Jesus in a sinful world (Matt. 17:5). 2. Jesus did the will of the Father always, as the Son of Man (John 8:29); as the result of this fact God gave all judgment into his hands because he is the Son of Man (John 5:27). 3. Jesus broke the power of the Devil over death in his resurrection, thus destroying the final stronghold of Satan (John 12:31; Heb. 2:14; Eph. 4:8-10). 4. In the present age, Jesus is guiding the destiny of the church in a way that it will not fall into the snare of the Devil, as all other bodies, including Israel, have fallen (Eph. 5:25-27). God does not arbitrarily give Jesus anything. He merely gives him the authority, or lawful right, to reveal himself in the excellencies of his character and accomplished works as the Son of God, who became the Son of Man.

Revelation To Be Shown His Servants

The revelation is to be shown to the servants of Jesus. The Greek word for servant is *doulos*. It is the word used in the servant parables of the gospels. It means a servant who is in actual subjection to a master. The message is to the servants and it is to the churches, verse 4. This indicates that the servants and the churches are the same people. All Baptists will agree that the Great Commission, which involves the custody of the entire New Testament, is given to the church. Therefore, there is no reasonable doubt that Revelation is addressed to the churches as the servants of the Lord.

Must Come Quickly

It is said the things to be revealed must come quickly. In the first place, the faithful, with good reason, have been expecting the return of Jesus in every generation since he left the world. The Scriptural reason for this view is stated at Matt. 25:13, where Jesus admonishes the disciples to watch, because they do not know the day nor the hour of his coming. In the second place, when the movements of the last days actually begin, events occur with such speed that it may literally be said that they come about quickly.

Signs and Symbols

We are told that Jesus signified; that is, he gave his message in signs and symbols. One of the greatest problems of the book is to

distinguish between symbols and literal statements and situations. There is an abundance of symbols whose meanings may be found elsewhere in the Scriptures. Let us not spiritualize all meaning out of this most wonderful book.

The revelation was given to John, the apostle. John, who lived long after all the other apostles were dead, is said to have written Revelation about 96 A.D. He witnessed to the word of God, to Jesus Christ, and to whatsoever he saw. This is in keeping with his character as a servant. He had no right to do anything but obey his master. Neither do the churches. Jesus left his church in the world to bear witness to his word—no more, and no less.

The Blessed

The one reading and the ones hearing the prophecy and keeping the things written in it are blessed. The one reading is singular in number; the ones hearing is plural. This suggests a pastor reading Revelation and related Scriptures to his church. Keeping means careful watching and guarding. Luke 21:36 states that we are to watch and pray always so that we may be accounted worthy to escape the deceptions that are to ensnare all the world except the faithful in the last days. All men, except those who make their appeal entirely to the Bible, will mistake Antichrist for Christ when he makes his appearance on the world scene (Luke 21:35). True churches will stand the test; all other religious bodies will fall before the deceptions of Antichrist. This has to do strictly with the disposition of religious bodies as such. It does not reveal the position of individual members of those religious bodies, except as they fit logically into the bodies of which they are members, in which case their personal position is incidental. There will be further discussion of this subject later.

The season for these things has been near since the ascension of Jesus. Since Jesus' departure, false religions and forerunners of Antichrist have been working to overthrow the Scriptures and the faith of the saints. The last days is an intensifying of these efforts.

Revelation 1:4-6

John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: grace to you and peace from the one being, and the one who was, and the one coming, and from the seven spirits which are in the presence of his throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead ones and the chief of the kings of the earth. To the one who loves us, and who loosed us from our sins in his own blood, and he made us a kingdom, priests to God even his Father, to him the glory and the might into the ages of the ages, Amen.

Addressed to Seven Churches

John addresses the revelation to the seven churches in Asia. There were many churches in existence by the time of the revelation, and there were more than seven in Asia Minor. Seven are addressed because this number in the science of Bible numbers embraces all the bodies which the Lord recognizes as his own. In reality a hundred churches, or seven hundred, could be meant as well as the seven which are specified.

In spite of the fearful things about to come upon the churches, the apostle pronounced grace and peace upon them. Jesus warned his disciples of all kinds of dangers and persecutions, yet he said, "Peace be unto you" (John 20:19-21). They would have strife and suffering in the world, but the peace of Christ in their hearts. For this reason the faithful child of God should approach the Great Tribulation without fear.

The Message

The message comes from the one who is, was, and is to come, from the seven spirits which are in the presence of his throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness and foremost king of the earth. There is a difficulty here in that two of the descriptions of persons seem to refer to Christ. Perhaps the first refers to him as the one in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily, and the other views him as the Son of Man. There is another difficulty in the matter of the seven spirits. There is the Holy Spirit, and there are many angels, who are spirits. But why should seven spirits be specified? It is possible these spirits are the angels who send the visitations upon the earth in the trumpets and vials. Or, it may be seven becomes significant as a number again and only the Holy Spirit is meant, described as seven spirits to indicate the finality of the power and works of the Holy Spirit. I am inclined to this latter view. Thus, the three persons who send this salutation to the churches are the Father, the Holy Spirit, and the Son respectively.

The Faithful Witness

Jesus is presented as the faithful witness. Although there is only one God, Jesus is presented in the Scriptures as having a personality separate from the Father. He has a will of his own. Each of the temptations in the wilderness was an effort on the part of the Devil to induce Jesus to act of his own will and apart from the will of the Father. This would have caused division in the Godhead. But in all things it was the will of Jesus to do the will of the Father, even to the point of accepting separation from the Father in death. Thus he did and spoke the will of the Father in all things, and

earned the title of faithful witness. He is called the firstborn of the dead. Without the resurrection of Jesus, there would never be a resurrection for anyone else. All men would remain separated in spirit and body forever. Jesus broke the bond of death in his own resurrection and gained the power of resurrection over all the dead when he took the keys of death and Hades from the Devil; see verse eighteen. All shall be made alive in Christ as all die in Adam (I Cor. 15:22). Although Enoch and Elijah were translated before the resurrection of Jesus, their translation was based on the principles of his resurrection. Jesus is also recognized as the chief of the kings of the earth. In his life in the world he proved his willingness and ability to rule the earth and mankind in righteousness. The justice of God demands that he be given rulership above all kings, for no other king has ruled in this way. Jesus earns all the Father gives to him. He will be manifested as chief king in the Millennium.

What Christ Has Done for Us

It is stated that Jesus has done four things for us: He has loved us; he has loosed, or washed, us from our sins in his own blood; he has made us into a kingdom; and he has made us priests to God. The question of the words “loosed” and “washed” comes from the fact that there is only one letter’s difference between the two words in the Greek text. The common version has washed, and the later revised texts prefer loosed. Both are true, and there is no point for concern in the matter.

Glory and might are ascribed to Jesus into “the ages of the ages.” This means forever. Eternal glory is the necessary result of the character and works of Jesus. Eternal might is given to him because he always uses it rightly.

Revelation 1:7, 8

Behold, he comes with the clouds, and every eye shall see him and those who pierce him, and all the tribes of the earth shall bewail him. Yea, Amen. “I am the Alpha and the Omega, ” says the Lord God, “the one being, and the one who was, and the one coming: the Almighty. ”

His Coining in a Cloud

As Jesus went into Heaven in his ascension, a cloud received him out of the sight of the disciples, and an angel told them he would come back in like manner as they had seen him go into Heaven (Acts 1:9-11). Men shall ask for the mountains and rocks to fall on them and hide them from the face of him on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb, for this is to be the great day of his wrath (Luke 23:30, Rev. 6:16).

It is stated that those who pierced Jesus will see him. The Scriptures do not teach that the unsaved dead will be raised at the second coming of Jesus, but at the end of the Millennium. Therefore those who literally pierced Jesus will be in their graves when he comes; however, those of like mind and heart who are living will see him. This probably refers to the Jews as a nation and a religious group. There are multitudes in the world today who would crucify Jesus as readily as did those who perpetrated the deed nineteen hundred years ago. These are just as guilty as were those.

All the tribes of the earth will bewail him. This likely includes all mankind left living on the earth. The saved will have been taken out of the world in the first resurrection before this coming.

Alpha and Omega

Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. These letters and the repeated statement of the one being, who was, and who is coming refers to the eternal existence and constancy of God. He is also the Almighty. This statement, as well as a number of others in Revelation suggests that the victory has already been won by Jesus, and that the Church Age and the Millennium are only “mopping up operations” so far as Jesus is concerned. The battle is grim and real to the church, but the church shall continue to the end of the age. This subject will be discussed further at the twelfth chapter. Before rejecting the suggestion that the Devil is already beaten so far as Jesus is concerned, the reader should study carefully the statement in I Peter 3:22, with reference to angels, and authorities and powers being made subject to Jesus when he went into Heaven. He might also consider the possibility that the Devil was cast out of Heaven when Jesus went there and was enthroned as our intercessor. This will be discussed later also.

Revelation 1:9-11

I, John, your brother and fellow sharer in the affliction and kingdom and patience in Jesus, became in the isle called Patmos on account of the word of God and the witness of Jesus. I became in the Spirit in the day of the Lord, and I heard behind me a great voice as of a trumpet saying, “What thou seest write in a book and send it to the seven churches, unto Ephesus and unto Smyrna and unto Pergamos and unto Thyatira and unto Sardis and unto Philadelphia and unto Laodicea.”

Affliction and Patience

John identifies himself as a brother of those who have fellowship in the affliction, the kingdom, and the patience in Jesus. Since the

book is addressed to the churches, it is certain that the affliction, kingdom, and patience pertain to the churches. From the earliest times those who have followed Jesus in all things have suffered affliction. Jesus said that his people should have tribulation in the world (John 16:33). The kingdom is in the hands of the church (Luke 12:32; 22:29). The church has patience as it waits for the coming of the Lord, as it sees the world wilfully reject salvation, and as it sees those who parade themselves in the name of Christ wantonly pervert his truth. Jesus endured all these things before us.

John was on the Isle of Patmos when he received the vision. It has been said he was banished there to work in the salt mines as a slave. He tells us he suffered this fate because of the word of God and the witness of Jesus.

The Day of the Lord

John was transported by the Spirit into the Day of the Lord. Strictly, the Day of the Lord is that day when Christ comes in glory to be manifested to all the world. In a broader sense, however, it includes the seven years of the Great Tribulation. This latter sense is used here, for John saw the details of the Tribulation in its entirety. It is hard for us to realize that time and space form bounds and limitations mainly for our convenience while we live in a world of such limitations. The Spirit transported John hundreds of years into the future, and he saw things that were to occur nearly two thousand years later as though they were happening in his time before his eyes. It would be interesting to know whether he went bodily into infinity to see and hear these things, but there seems to be no way of knowing. Paul expresses uncertainty as to whether he were in the body or apart from the body when he went into the third heaven (II Cor. 12:2). If anyone asks how John could see and hear without eyes and ears, the answer is: the same way the rich man and Abraham saw, felt, and talked in the spirit world when they were both separated from their bodies. The spirit and the body of man are so intimately associated together that there are body sensations even when the body is not present.

Command To Write

John is commanded to write what he sees in a book and send it to the seven churches, which are then named. The book is not to be sent to the world; not even the religious world. It is to be sent to the churches. Seven implies the total of the true churches throughout the Church Age. Revelation is not for unbelievers or believers outside a scriptural church.

The command was given by a voice which sounded as a trumpet. A trumpet summons an army to prepare for battle. This is the voice

of Jesus summoning his churches throughout the age to make ready for the Great Tribulation lest they be deceived by Antichrist.

Revelation 1:12-16

And I turned about to see the voice which was talking with me. And having turned about I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands a likeness of a son of man, clothed about with a long robe, and girded about the breasts with a golden girdle. And his head and his hair white as wool, white as snow, and his eyes as a flame of fire, and his feet like polished brass as refined in a furnace, and his voice as the voice of many waters, and having in his right hand seven stars, and out of his mouth a sharp double-edged sword going, and the sight of him as the sun shines in its power.

The Candlestick

The type of the candlesticks, or lampstands, is given in the latter part of Exodus 25. In this situation there was one stand with seven branches going out from it. It gave light in the tabernacle, where no natural light was allowed to enter. This was to show that Israel was to get all her spiritual light from the heavenly source, and none of it from human wisdom. In Revelation it is not evident whether all the candlesticks, or lampstands, were built on one central supporter. If they were not, then it would seem to refer to the separate existence of every church as an entirety within itself. That is, it is not subject to nor dependent on some larger organization. The glorified Son of Man walks in the midst of the lampstands indicating his complete supervision of his churches. It also pictures the fact that he acts in full authority with reference to the church unhampered in his activities by the Devil, and given a free hand by God because he was completely victorious as the Son of Man. In the fourth chapter of Zechariah, there is a candlestick, or rather a lampstand with two golden pipes pouring golden oil into the lamp bowl, and seven lights going out from the top. Adapting this figure to the churches, the pipes would pour the word of God and the Holy Spirit into the churches, and the churches would give the light of them to the world. Through the word and the Holy Spirit, Christ walks in the midst of his churches today.

Description of the Son of Man

As Christ walked in the midst of the candlesticks, he is described as having the appearance of a son of man. As the Son of Man, Christ is absolutely necessary to the plan of redemption. He wears a robe reaching down to his feet. This is a symbol of his kingly power and authority. He wears a golden girdle, signifying that his strength is in his righteousness. His head presents a picture of his holiness. His

eyes are as a flame of fire, for he is about to arise in judgment of a world that has wilfully rejected and spurned him. His feet are like polished brass, and his voice is as the sound of many waters. His words will be awe inspiring when he speaks upon the earth at his second coming.

The seven stars he holds in his right hand are the angels, or messengers, of the churches. A sword goes out of his mouth. This likely refers to the authority with which he will speak. His general appearance is as the sun when it shines in the fulness of its power. The messengers are the pastors, or spokesmen, of the churches.

Revelation 1:17-20

And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he set his right hand upon me saying, "Do not fear thou: I am the first and the last and the one living, and I became dead, and behold I am living into the ages of the ages, and I have the keys of death and Hades. Write therefore what thou saw and the things which are and the things which are about to come about after these things. The mystery of the seven stars which thou saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are messengers of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches."

The One Living

As John stood in the presence of the glorified Christ, we get another hint of his condition in the vision. He fell down as a dead man at the feet of Jesus because an imperfect mortal man cannot stand in the presence of ultimate holiness. The Bible testifies to this fact throughout. But how could an imperfect mortal man be transported into the presence of the Holy God and the holy Heaven? It seems this is a mystery beyond us at the present time.

Jesus raised John up with his right hand, and introduced himself as the first and the last, and the one living who had become dead, but now he is living into the ages of the ages. In his humanity, Jesus lived by the flowing of the blood as other men do. From this standpoint he was mortal, for Adam made the flesh of mankind subject to death. When Jesus rose from the dead, he did not live by the flowing of the blood any more but by Spirit energy and vitality. We shall live the same way in resurrection (Rom. 8:11). The Spirit as the principle and force of life makes it immortal and frees it from the limitations of time and space.

The Keys of Death

Jesus also announced to John that he had the keys of death and Hades. The Devil is the author of death, and he made it universal

among men when Adam made him the god of the world and of the human race. *Hades* is the place where the disembodied spirits of the dead go to await the resurrection. Since all men die, even the saved are somewhat in the power of the Devil until the resurrection. In Old Testament times, all the dead went into a place called in the Hebrew language *Sheol*. This was not in the presence of God. In death, Jesus went into this place, which is the same as Hades, and there he broke the power of death with his own resurrection and the resurrection of those who came out of the tombs at the time (Matt. 27:52, 53). Both the grave and the prison house of spirits were robbed of their prey. The spirits of the saved were taken into Heaven into the presence of God (Eph. 4:8-10). Since that time the Devil has not held full power in death. The keys are not in his hands any more. They are in the hands of Jesus. It is only the bodies of the saved that are held in the prison house of death to await the resurrection now.

John was commanded to write the things of the past, the present, and the future. Revelation is primarily about the Great Tribulation, but the Tribulation is related to principles that go back to Adam, and to things that extend forward into the Heaven Age. This is why John is to write of the past, present and future.

The Seven Stars

The mystery of the seven stars is that they are the angels or messengers of the seven churches. The word used here generally refers to angels. But it is used of human messengers about seven times in the New Testament, in most instances referring to John the Baptist. Evidently, the messengers here are the pastors or spokesmen of the churches. It is significant that they are upheld by the hand of Christ, and not by human wisdom or other human qualification. Stars are reflectors of light; pastors reflect the light of Christ when they preach his truth.

The Seven Candlesticks

The mystery of the seven golden candlesticks is that they are the seven churches. The churches are the light of the world since Jesus left (Matt. 5:14). While he was in the world he was the light of the world (John 8:12). The light of salvation had been in the world since the fall of man; it was nothing new. The light that Jesus brought into the world and left in the world in the church is the light of a religious order that would continue to tell the truth until the end of the age. Israel received the oracles of God as they were given in the law and the prophets, but Israel did not keep the truth that was committed to them; they perverted it so thoroughly that they thought they were serving God when they denied his Son and

crucified him. Nineteen hundred years after the giving of the New Testament there is still a group of people just as zealous for its truth as were the churches in the apostolic age. This is the light that is to shine until the end. It is accomplished by Jesus walking in the midst of his churches by the word of the Spirit.

Chapter 2

A Prophetic View of the Churches

As we examine the messages to the various churches, there are three related matters which should be kept clearly in mind. These related facts, which overlap one another, are: first, the place and relationship of individuals in the church; second, three degrees of kinds of churches in the broad sense; and third, the whole church age. Let us note these separately here, for they will run together when we get into the details of the messages.

The Kinds of Individuals

The individual in the church is either saved or unsaved. If he is unsaved, he is not a legitimate member, of course, but he is still a part of the functioning body as the world observes it. He always stands as a definite hindrance to the church. The saved church members are either novices or they are instructed and experienced. They are either faithful or unfaithful to the doctrines and practices of the New Testament church. Any given church is likely to have all these different kinds of members. Each kind contributes his part either to the advancement or to the detriment of the church. The predominance of either group in a church determines the general condition of the church as a body. These variant groups are the explanation as to how any given church may be both good and bad as a New Testament church at the same time.

The Kinds of Churches

The three kinds of churches mentioned are: first, churches that are true and faithful in all essential details; second, churches that are more or less slack in doctrines, but yet holding to the fundamentals of the faith; and third, religious bodies which were once churches, but the candlestick has been removed by the Lord. Some of these latter may yet be judged by men as acceptable to the Lord. Whether or not these three kinds of churches have fellowship

among themselves, they still influence one another in a great way. Jezebel was called on to repent and return to the fold of faithful churches after she began to exhibit the ways of Jezebel to a very pronounced degree (Rev. 2:21). There can be no argument but that real churches today are considerably influenced in one way or another by the most completely apostate religious groups in the land. These facts must be taken into account when dealing with any one of the messages to the churches.

The Whole Church Age

Further complicating the messages to the churches is the fact that these messages embrace the whole Church Age. Though Laodicea is the church period at the end of the age, there was a Laodicean church in the apostolic days. There may have been many like it in the apostolic age. For this reason, the periods are not clearly distinguishable, and the characteristics of any one period are found in all the other periods. There are Ephesus churches in the Laodicean period and there are Sardis churches in the Philadelphia period. Let the student note these facts before attempting to see the various periods of church history clearly.

EPHESUS

Revelation 2:1-7

To the messenger of the church in Ephesus write thou, "Thus says the one grasping the seven stars in his right hand, the one walking in the midst of the seven golden lampstands, I know thy works and thy labor and thy patience, and that thou art not able to bear evil ones, and thou hast tested the ones saying themselves to be apostles, and they are not, and thou hast found them liars; and thou hast patience, and thou hast borne on account of my name, and thou hast not fainted from hard labor. But I have against thee that thou hast left thy first love. Remember then whence thou hast fallen, and repent thou and do thou the first works; but if not, I will come to thee and will remove thy lampstand out of its place, except thou should repent. But this thou hast that thou hatest the works of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate. The one having ears let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one winning the victory I will give to him to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God."

Period

The Ephesus period of church history extends from the formation of the church during the personal ministry of Jesus to the year 251 A.D., when a division in the church at Rome resulted in a division among churches throughout the empire. This divided the churches

into strict and loose groups. The loose group evolved into Catholicism.

Meaning

Ephesus means “boiling with zeal,” picturing the church as described at Acts 8:4, “The ones therefore who were scattered abroad and went everywhere preaching the word.”

Jesus describes himself as grasping the seven stars in his right hand and walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. He gives full support when the churches have zeal for the cause.

The church had labored patiently in the face of opposition from false apostles. They had done this because of their zeal for the name of Christ.

The victor will eat of the fruit of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God. This is a figurative statement of the spiritual blessings of the faithful.

There were false apostles even in the Ephesus church. Paul mentions many false apostles in his day (I Tim. 1:19, 20). False apostles are always marked by two characteristics. First, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men (Mark 7:7, 8). Second, they seek their own glory rather than the glory of God (John 7:18).

Rebuke

Ephesus is charged with leaving her first love. It is not specified what this means. The implication is that it was a slackening of their zeal for the truth of the word of God, and an abating of their zeal to preach the gospel to the lost.

Candlestick Removal

There is a threat to remove the candlestick from the Ephesus church. This is to be done unless the church remembers from whence it has fallen, and repents, and does the first works. The candlestick is the empowering and guiding office of the Holy Spirit which came on the church on Pentecost. The continuance of the Holy Spirit in this office in any given church is based on the adherence of the church to the New Testament rule of faith and practice. When a church grows slack in these things, it must repent and return to the Scripture rule, or the guiding Spirit will be withdrawn. When the Spirit is withdrawn, the body ceases to be recognized as a church by Christ. It goes on operating as a religious body, but without the guiding Spirit it will drift further into apostasy and unscriptural beliefs and practices.

No individual loses his salvation in the removing of the candlestick from a church, but he does lose the fellowship with

Christ through the Spirit if he gives his consent to the unscriptural ways of his church. He can maintain this fellowship either by protesting the way his church is going and personally holding to New Testament truth, or by getting out of the church and uniting with another.

Nicolaitanism

This church hated the works of the Nicolaitanes, which Christ also hated. Nicolaitanism is the practice of pastors and deacons setting themselves in authority over the church. The church is a pure democracy, and no one has any Scriptural right to exalt himself to a position of authority over the church. Nicolaitanism, which Christ hates, is the root of all episcopal authority which we see being exercised in the world of religion today. Baptists must steer clear of it.

Ephesus is the zealous church of the apostolic age, but there was a certain cooling off of her zeal because of the influence of false apostles, false religious groups, and the world in general. All these forces threaten and plague the churches today.

SMYRNA

Revelation 2:8-11

And to the messenger of the church in Smyrna write thou, "Thus says the first and the last, who became dead and he lived; I know thy affliction and poverty, but thou art rich, and the blasphemy of those saying themselves to be Jews, but they are not but the synagogue of Satan. Do not fear thou what thou art about to suffer. Behold, the Devil is about to cast some of you into prison in order that ye may be tested, and ye shall have affliction ten days. Become thou faithful unto death, and I will give to thee the crown of the life. The one having ears let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one winning the victory shall not be hurt of the second death."

Period

The Smyrna period of church history extends from the year 251 A.D. to 313 A.D., when the Roman emperor Constantine made the doctrinally loose branch of Christianity the state religion of the Roman Empire. At this time, thousands of pagan Romans were brought into those liberal churches without any real convictions but only as a matter of political expediency. This move did not affect the true churches directly, but it greatly affected them indirectly. For

any religious group, true or false, is affected by the activities of other religious groups about it.

Meaning

Smyrna means “bitterness.” There was a tree by this name in the Bible land, which when wounded gave out a gum that looked like tears. It was bitter to the taste and it had healing qualities. There was bitterness and tears in Smyrna, but she held steadfastly to the healing truth of the word of God.

Introduction

Smyrna was about to die under persecution, so Jesus introduces himself as the first and the last—constant despite the perils of human situations. He became dead but lived again. Therefore, people should not fear even death, for he would cause the church to live, and the individual members would live again in the resurrection though they might die under persecution for the faith.

Message

There is no rebuke of this church, only encouragement under suffering. Those faithful unto death will receive the crown of life, which is a reward for the faithful.

The one winning the victory will not be hurt of the second death. He may die the death of the body for the faith, but this is of little moment, since he lives forever in glory.

The Smyrna church is poor and afflicted, but rich and blessed at the same time; poor in the world, but rich in faith and spiritual comfort. The churches have always had greater spiritual prosperity when they have been oppressed by the world. This is because they have been forced to turn away from the world and seek comfort, strength, and hope in Christ.

There were those who blasphemously said themselves to be Jews, but they were not; they were the synagogue of Satan. This is a clear reference to that larger group of churches which had renounced the faith beginning in 251 A.D. The name Jew is not to be taken literally here, but figuratively (Rom. 2:28, 29).

Smyrna was to have affliction ten days. There were ten major persecutions of the church during this short period. Therefore ten days would mean ten times. During this period, there were three mighty forces arrayed against the churches. They were the Jews who still held to the ways of those who crucified Christ; the pagan religious groups of Greek and Roman origin which existed in the mighty Roman Empire; and the larger group of apostate churches which had gained the respect and favor of the political powers of the empire. Smyrna was bitter to the point of death under her

sufferings for the truth of Christ. The whole world is arrayed against the small minority who hold strictly to the word of God.

The year 313 A.D. is not accepted by all as the time of Christianity's becoming the state religion of the Roman Empire. The decree was issued in this year, but Constantine did not become firmly enough established in power to make the decree effective until 325 A.D. In this latter year, he assembled a church council and established uniform dogmas for the church. For this reason, some prefer the latter date.

PERGAMOS

Revelation 2:12-17

And to the messenger of the church in Pergamos write, "Thus says the one having the sharp double-edged sword, I know where thou dwellest: where the throne of Satan is; and thou boldest on to my name; and thou hast not denied my faith even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. But I have against thee a few things, that thou hast there those holding to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a snare in the way of the sons of Israel, to eat idol sacrifices, and to commit fornication. Thus thou hast also those holding to the teachings of the Nicolaitanes likewise. Repent thou therefore; but if not I will come to thee quickly and will make war with them with the sword of my mouth. The one having ears let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one winning the victory I will give to him the hidden manna, and I will give to him a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knows except the one receiving it."

Period

The Pergamos period extends from about 313 A.D. to 606 A.D., when the emperor, Phocas, appointed Boniface III the universal bishop of all Christendom. Boniface was the bishop of the apostate church in Rome, and Phocas was no more than a common cutthroat who had been elevated from the army to become the Roman emperor. He was ignorant and without any religious convictions or moral scruples at all. Thus was the beginning of the popish system, which is held in such high esteem by both the religious and political worlds of today.

Meaning

The name Pergamos is composed of a noun which refers to marriage and a preposition which has various meanings. Pergamos

seems to mean “thoroughly married,” or “hedged about by marriage.” Let it be remembered that it was not the true churches who were married to the Roman Empire; it was the apostate ones. This unholy union had much influence on the true churches nevertheless. Where the religious lines were not clearly drawn among the churches, some true churches may have received political protection and favor.

Introduction

Jesus introduces himself to this church as the one having the sharp double-edged sword. This signifies his wrathful displeasure at the unholy union of church and state.

Message

The church is dwelling where Satan is enthroned. The church is praised for holding on to the name of Christ and not denying his faith under these trying circumstances. But there were those who held to the doctrine of union with evil religious forces. It was these for whom the sword was intended.

The victor will receive the hidden manna and a secret name on a white stone. These signify spiritual communion with God through the Spirit and the conscious assurance of salvation.

The fact that Pergamos was a center for the worship of an idol serpent is only an unimportant explanation of the enthronement of Satan. The enthronement of Satan is the enthronement of religious powers on political thrones. When religious and political powers are united, Satan is enthroned. Let all Baptists remember this.

Antipas

There is a difficulty in the matter of the slaying of Antipas. Josephus wrote of a man by this name who was treacherously slain in a Jerusalem prison just before the siege of that city by the Roman general, Titus, in 70 A.D. Of course, this happened in Jerusalem and not in Pergamos. It probably happened in 69 A.D., and not between the fourth and seventh centuries when the Pergamos period existed. Since there was a Pergamos church during the apostolic age, Pergamos characteristics should have been in Jerusalem also. Josephus only says this Antipas was of the royal line. He does not explain his religious status. There is no proof whether the two occurrences of the same name refer to the same man.

Balaamism

Balaam taught that the separation of God's people could be destroyed by union with other groups (Num. 31:16). Balaam had

utterly failed in his attempt to curse Israel. He then advised Balak to have the young women of Moab entice the young men of Israel. This was done and the Israelites, whom Balaam could not curse, worshiped Baal under the influence of women. In Pergamos it was the true churches uniting in fellowship and service with apostate churches.

Nicolaitanes

The works of the Nicolaitanes are mentioned in the message to Ephesus. These works have now become a teaching or doctrine. This is the way false doctrines usually spring up. They are first admitted as expedient and later embraced as authoritative doctrines. The doctrine of the Nicolaitanes ascribed a superior position and authority to the clergy. The clearest present day illustration is the pope of Rome, whose position is absolutely denied in the New Testament (Matt. 23:9-11).

Warnings

The warning of Jesus to the church is very interesting. He calls on it to repent as though he were speaking to an individual. Then he says if the church does not repent he will come to it, but he will make war with those who hold to these false doctrines. The church should repent of the errors of individual members because it is fully responsible for the religious beliefs and practices of its members. If the church does not correct errors of this nature, the church itself becomes partaker of them. Therefore, it is the duty of the church to regret these errors and do whatever is necessary to set them right. It is to correct the false ideas of members if possible; if not possible, it is to withdraw church fellowship from them.

THYATIRA

Revelation 2:18-29

And to the messenger of the church in Thyatira write, "Thus says the Son of God, the one having his eyes as a flame of fire, and his feet like polished brass, I know thy works and thy love and thy faith and thy ministry and thy patience, and thy last works are more than the first ones. But I have against thee that thou permittest the woman Jezebel, who says herself to be a prophetess both to teach and to deceive my servants to commit fornication and to eat idol sacrifices. And I gave her time that she might repent, and she did not will to repent of her fornication. Behold I will cast her into a bed, and the ones committing adultery with her into great affliction, except they should repent of her works; and her children I will kill

in death; and all the churches shall know that I am the one searching the reins and hearts, and I will give to you every one according to your works. But to you I say, the others in Thyatira, whosoever do not have this teaching, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak, I will not cast upon you another burden: rather hold on to what you have until when I may come. And the one winning the victory and keeping until the end my works, I will give to him authority over the nations, and he shall shepherd them with an iron rod, as the clay vessels are broken. As even I received from my Father, also I will give to him the dawn star. The one having ears, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. ”

Period

According to the time divisions used in this study, the Thyatira period is by far the longest of the church periods. It begins at 606 A.D. and continues to 1517 A.D., when the Protestant Reformation launched by Martin Luther began in Germany. This period embraces approximately half the time the church has been in the world. It is almost identical in time with the period known as the Dark Ages in world history. At the beginning of this period, the Roman Empire was overrun by the barbarian tribes from the north and east of Europe. Their tendency was to destroy the existing civilization and culture. Coupled with this alien force was the policy of the Catholic church to hold the masses of the people in bondage of ignorance. Thus, it truly was the Dark Ages from the standpoints of both intellect and religion. While the Catholic church dominated both the religious and political worlds, the true churches existed, worshiped, and perpetuated themselves in secret out-of-the-way places, almost unknown to the world in general. This is why some honest students of history have failed to note that these churches have come down through all the centuries from Christ. The true churches were not a product of the Protestant Reformation as the religious world would have us believe. They had existed in the world from the time of the personal ministry of Christ.

Meaning

The name Thyatira is composed of a Greek noun and a verb. The noun means “sacrifice,” and the verb element of the word means “to weary” or “wear out.” Thus, Thyatira means to weary with sacrifice. The people were wearying God with illegitimate sacrifices or unacceptable service and worship.

Introduction

Jesus introduces himself as having his eyes as a flame of fire and

his feet a polished brass. He is angry because his people have not remained completely separated from the world. He has kept his holy position of separation, but his people have not. Therefore, he comes to them in flaming anger of judgment.

Message

In this long period of church history, the church has been patient in keeping the faith under extreme difficulties. But the Lord has some serious charges against her. She has allowed the woman Jezebel to teach and to seduce the servants of the Lord to commit spiritual fornication and to eat idol sacrifices, which is essentially the same as fornication. Not all the servants of the Lord have done these things. Since it is a long period of persecution, the church is admonished only to hold on to what she has until the Lord comes.

The victor shall have authority over the nations to rule them with an iron rod. This victor has been sorely oppressed in the world, but he has remained true to the faith. Therefore, he is counted worthy of wielding authority in the Millennial Age to come. Also, he shall have the light of the dawn star, meaning spiritual light in the dark world in which he lives.

The last works of Thyatira are more than her first ones. As this period drew to a close, Rome became increasingly troubled both politically and religiously, and thus had less resources and opportunity to persecute the true churches. As the Roman persecution waned, these churches began to multiply and do more works of righteousness. This is how the last works of Thyatira were more than her first ones.

Thyatira has permitted the woman, Jezebel, to teach and seduce the servants of the Lord to eat idol sacrifices and to commit fornication. Bible commentators are sometimes very hesitant to identify Jezebel of this situation. Some suggest that she was simply the domineering wife of the pastor of the Thyatira church in the day when John wrote the vision. This idea is absurd. The literal Jezebel of the Old Testament drove the prophets of the Lord into hiding and established idolatry and the prophets of Baal in Israel. This was an act so brazen as to almost defy the imagination. The Jezebel of Thyatira was that false religious system which had usurped the place of authority and respect in the realm of Christianity. She had driven the true churches into hiding in most instances. However, she did seduce some of them to partake of her ways.

The Lord gave the apostate churches time to repent when they were departing from the faith in the early Christian centuries. Rather than repent, the majority of them went further into apostasy. He then rejected them as his true churches and they became known as Jezebel.

Jezebel

Jezebel was cast into a bed in the sense that the Protestant denominations were born of a rebellion from her rule. The ones committing adultery with her shall be cast into great affliction unless they repent. It is likely these are some who are still recognized as churches of the Lord.

The children of Jezebel are to be killed in death. As previously mentioned, the Protestant denominations are the children who were born of the Romish system. Both they and Rome will be destroyed by Antichrist according to the seventeenth chapter of Revelation.

As the end of the age draws near, it will become more evident to the true churches that all others are preparing to embrace Antichrist when he comes. It will also become more evident that the only thing for true churches to do is to stand the more firmly on the word of God. In this way, Christ will guide the destiny of his churches.

The depths of Satan seems to be the working of that system in which the word of God is brazenly ignored or denied, while the system itself is more highly respected and revered than any other on earth. The utterances of the pope gain headlines, whereas the inspired writings of the Scriptures are unnoticed.

Messages containing both censure and praise (the two seem utterly out of harmony with one another) apply to many churches in many places during a period of a thousand years. Just as today, there were then individuals of opposite sentiments in any given church. Therefore, the message for one would differ from the message to another. This is why there is contrast as well as parallelism in the four related facts listed at the beginning of the discussion of each church message.

Most individuals cannot keep the works of Christ until the end of the age because few will live to the end of the age. Nevertheless, it is the business of every individual and church to conduct themselves constantly in such a way that they would be found faithful if Christ should come. The responsibility does not end here. It is the duty of all to leave a heritage of obedience to the faith that will induce future generations to stand steadfastly. It is not so much the spiritual condition of individuals that is important as to the total matter; it is the condition of the church as a church that should be our chief concern. This is true because the church will still be here preaching either the truth or falsehood after we as individuals are gone. We contribute to one or the other as we live our lives in the church.

SARDIS

Revelation 3:1-6

And to the messenger of the church in Sardis write, "Thus says the one having the seven spirits of God and the seven stars, I know thy works, that a name thou hast that thou livest, and thou art dead. Become thou watching, and make steadfast the remaining things which are about to die: for I have not found thy works complete in the presence of my God: Remember thou therefore how thou hast received and heard, and keep and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I shall come upon thee. But thou hast a few names in Sardis who have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with me in white, because they are worthy. The one winning the victory thus shall be clothed about in white garments, and I will not erase his name out of the book of the life, and I will confess his name in the presence of my Father and in the presence of his angels. The one having ears let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches."

Period

Sardis is the church of the Protestant Reformation period, from 1517 to 1638 A.D. At the beginning of this period, Martin Luther, a parish priest in the Catholic church, challenged the church leaders to debate on the scripturalness of their practices. This move launched a general rebellion against the authority of the Roman church which had dominated Europeans for many centuries. This rebellion bore fruit in the birth of Protestantism. The latter date mentioned, 1638, is notable because in this year a Baptist church came to America from England under the leadership of Dr. John R. Clark, who was pastor of the church. This was the beginning of Baptists in America. This church located at Newport, Rhode Island.

Meaning

Sardis is the name of a precious stone which is either red or flesh colored. Many Bible students have erred in associating Sardis with this precious stone and supposing Sardis was something extra precious in the sight of Jesus. The root word from which Sardis comes means "flesh." Thus, it is much more in harmony with the message to suppose Sardis is the fleshly church. This fleshliness is manifested in the great intellectual researches and the learned debates which went on in the field of religion during the Reformation. The learning of the Protestant scholars came nearer to obscuring the peculiar position of Baptists and to causing them to forget their ancient heritage than anything that had occurred during the centuries since the church had been in the world.

Introduction

Jesus presents himself as the one having the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. The seven spirits of God are referred to as being in the presence of God in Heaven (Rev. 1:4). The seven stars are mentioned in the introduction of Jesus to the church at Ephesus. This church had lost her first love, and so had the Sardis church. They were trusting human wisdom and forgetting the power that had guided them through the past fifteen centuries. Jesus reminds them that it is the working of the Holy Spirit and his own upholding of the messengers of the churches that had brought them through the perils of the past.

Message

Sardis is called on to remember how it had received and heard, and to watch and repent. If they did not repent, they would not know when Jesus would come upon them in judgment. That is, they would not be aware of the signs of the times at the end of the age as they are given in the Bible. Therefore, the second coming of Jesus would be a complete surprise to them. The few in Sardis who had not defiled their garments would walk with Jesus in white.

The victor will be clothed in white raiment, which means that their works would be accepted of Jesus. The white garments are the symbol of their attainments and of their honored position in the Millennium. No saved person in an apostate church will be arrayed in white raiment as these are. There is a special virtue in holding faithfully to the word of God in such perplexing times of debate as existed in the Sardis church period.

Sardis had a name that it lived, but it was dead. In the Reformation, there was a tendency for the true churches to lose sight of their identity as the churches which had come down through the Dark Ages and to think of themselves as only another religious denomination. Certainly, they were dead if they came to accept any such idea. Of course, not all the churches came to such a viewpoint.

This church is to watch and make steadfast the remaining things which were about to die. These remaining things were the evidences that were left that they were a peculiar and separated people who were not a product of the Reformation at all.

Sardis is called on to remember what it received and heard, and to keep and repent. These things are New Testament doctrines and practices. They were to repent of their spirit of accepting Protestantism on an equal basis with themselves.

The victor will not have this name erased from the book of life. If we reckon this to be a roll of saved, there would be no point in the promise, for no one ever has his name erased from the book of the saved. This book is the book of the faithful. Specifically, it is the roll

of church saints who are destined for special rewards. Names would be erased when the candlestick is removed and Jesus rejects the body as a church. No one loses salvation, but saved people in such a church lose their recognition as church members in Heaven unless they come out of the apostate body.

There seems to be no reasonable doubt that it is churches and church saints who will be specially confessed before the Father by Jesus.

PHILADELPHIA

Revelation 3:7-13

And to the messenger of the church in Philadelphia write, "Thus says the holy one, the true one, the one having the key of David, the one opening, and no one shall shut, and shutting and no one shall open, I know thy works: Behold I have given before thy face an open door, which no one shall be able to shut it: Because thou hast a little dynamic power, and thou hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. Behold I will give to be of the synagogue of Satan the ones saying themselves to be Jews, and they are not but they falsify. Behold I will make them that they shall come and do reverence before thy feet and they shall know that I have loved thee. Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, even I will keep thee from the hour of the testing which is about to come upon all the civilized world, to test the ones dwelling upon the earth. I come quickly. Hold on to what thou hast, in order that no one should receive thy crown. The one winning the victory, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall not go outside any more, and I will write upon him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of the heaven from my God, and my new name. The one having ears let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. "

Period

The Philadelphia period begins at 1638 and extends to 1812. The first date marks the planting of the first church in America, and the second marks the beginning of the convention system in America. The first date is significant because the churches have prospered in America as they never prospered in any other land. This is because America has been a land of religious freedom. The latter date is notable because at that time an organization was formed among certain individual Baptists to foster the cause of Adoniram Judson as a missionary to India. This was done because the churches were slow in taking up the cause of this missionary, perhaps because he

had just come out of a Protestant denomination to become a Baptist. At any rate, the cause of missions began to pass out of the hands of the churches as such, and the convention system had its beginning in America. That system has grown to great proportions in our day. This movement, inspired by zeal and good intentions, has paved the way for the Laodicean church, which wavers on the brink of complete apostasy.

Meaning

The name Philadelphia is composed of two Greek words which together mean “brotherly love,” or “fellowship in the brotherhood.” In this period, the churches came out from under sixteen-hundred years of almost constant persecution, with malice toward none, but with love for all men, especially the brotherhood which had, from the time of Christ, held steadfastly to the word of God as the all-sufficient source of instruction in all matters of religion. The Philadelphia church had awakened to the danger of having her peculiar identity obscured by the many Protestant denominations. She came to love the brotherhood the more for their unwavering stand on the completeness of the Scripture rule.

Introduction

Jesus introduces himself in harmony with the spirit of the Philadelphia church. He is holy and true, as this church has resolved to be holy and true. He has the kingly key of David to open and shut doors of opportunity to the church. This is the announcement of the opening of the way for the missionary endeavor such as the church had never known before.

Message

The general nature of the message is one of praise because the word of Jesus has been kept despite the efforts of the synagogue of Satan. He promises to keep this church from the hour of testing which is about to try the whole religious world. This is one of the strongest of the many promises that faithful churches will not be deceived by Antichrist when he comes.

The victor is to be most intimately identified with the reign of Christ on earth in the Millennium. He is to have the name of God, the name of the New Jerusalem, and the new name of Christ. These new names indicate the accomplishment of a long anticipated purpose of God. In Eden God purposed that man should rule the earth in righteousness through powers and virtues received from the eternal Son of God. This purpose will be accomplished when faithful church saints rule the earth under Christ in the Millennium.

Philadelphia is said to have a little dynamic power. This power came on the church in Jerusalem on Pentecost. Since that time it has remained in churches holding to the faith of the New Testament. It varies in proportion to the churches' adherence to New Testament teachings. Thus Philadelphia still held to the New Testament rule of faith and practice. This church had kept the word of Christ and had not denied his name. No one holds true to the name of Christ who denies the teachings of his word.

There are those who say they are Jews, but in reality they are the synagogue of Satan. Who could these possibly be but those of the Protestant Reformation who claimed to give the truth to the world anew after the world had been without it for many centuries? The claims of the Protestant reformers will not stand in the light of Scripture teachings. There is no reference to literal Jews here, but a figurative reference, meaning those who are the accepted people of God in the present age.

Those of the synagogue of Satan will come and worship before the feet of the true church when Christ recognizes and honors it, denying all others, at his second coming. False churches, as bodies, will be left in the world when the saints are raptured simply because the majority of their members will be unsaved. At the Judgment Seat of Christ, the saved in false churches will be compelled to renounce them.

The church has kept the word of the patience of Christ, and he will keep it from the hour of testing which is coming upon all the world. This will be accomplished in the fact that those who really study and believe the word will be abundantly warned of who Antichrist is when he comes. Others, thinking he is Christ, will be terribly deceived.

There is a crown for Philadelphia; but, if Philadelphia should depart from the faith as a church, another would receive it. The Holy Spirit would seek out others to do the work which might have been done by Philadelphia, and the other churches would logically receive the crown originally designed for Philadelphia.

LAODICEA

Revelation 3:14-22

And to the messenger of the church in Laodicea write, "Thus says the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God, I know thy works: that thou art neither cold nor boiling. I would be obliged if thou wast cold or boiling. Thus because thou art lukewarm and neither boiling nor cold, I am about to spew thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest that I am rich and have

become rich, and I have need of nothing, and thou dost not know that thou art harassed and pitiable and poor and blind and naked. I counsel thee to buy of me gold burned in fire that thou might be rich, and white garments that thou might be clothed and the shame of thy nakedness should not be manifested, and eye salve to anoint thine eyes that thou mayest see. Whomsoever I love I rebuke and chasten. Be thou zealous therefore and repent. Behold I stand at the door and knock: if anyone should hear my voice and should open the door, I will come in to him and will feast with him and he with me. The one winning the victory, I will give to him to sit with me in my throne, as even I won the victory and sat with my Father in his throne. The one having ears let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. ”

Period

The time of the Laodicean church is from 1812 until the end of the Church Age. In this year, a group of American Baptists departed from the Scripture plan of missions and took this work into their own hands as an organization of individuals. They were fostering a good cause, but they were doing it in an unscriptural way. Such a course always leads to trouble. It has developed into the convention system in America, which is rapidly drawing the churches which embrace it away from the fundamental faith of Baptists. They have become more and more modernistic in their beliefs and practices. This is the essence of the Laodicean church: liberalism ending in infidelic modernism. However, it is not meant to imply that the Laodicean church will apostatize completely. Many individual churches and groups of churches are departing from the New Testament faith. But the promise of Christ is that some will remain true (Matt. 16:18).

Meaning

The name Laodicea is composed of two words, one of which means “the masses of the people,” and the other has to do with “justification” or “making righteous.” From the general atmosphere of the message to this church, it is evident that Laodicea refers to the people’s justifying what they believe and do in the field of religion. We often see and hear people justifying what they believe and practice religiously apart from what the Scriptures teach. This is a perfect illustration of the significance of the name of this church. It is religion based on human reasoning.

Introduction

Jesus introduces himself as the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God. The churches are radically

departing from the ancient faith, but Jesus remains true, as he has been even from the beginning of the creation. The churches are yielding to the same temptation over which Jesus was victorious.

There is no praise to the Laodicean church, except the implication that there are a few who have not gone in the way of apostasy of the church in general. The church is lukewarm, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof. They say they are rich. These riches consist of intellectual talent and ability, material wealth, and efficient human ways of doing things. The latter manifests itself chiefly in efficient organization. Spiritually, this church is in extreme poverty and does not realize it. Despite this sad condition, the church is called on to repent. A church can depart a long way from the faith before Jesus rejects it.

The victor is to be enthroned with Jesus as he is enthroned with his Father. As the glorified Son of Man, Jesus is enthroned with his Father simply because all his works were worthy of the Father. By the same token, those whose works are acceptable to Christ will be enthroned with him in the Millennium. Works in the flesh are not acceptable to Christ, but when the New Testament rule is carried out in church capacity, these works are fully acceptable to him. This is the only way possible for men to have their works accepted of Jesus.

If the victor is an individual, he can win the victory only in faithful church capacity. If the victor is a church as such, only real church members are included in the promise, and unsaved members and worldly saved members have no part in the promise at all.

Message

As is usually the case in the messages to these churches, the message to Laodicea is couched in figurative terms. The church is neither cold nor boiling. They are neither irreligious nor zealous for the cause of religion.

Jesus is at the point of spewing this church out of his mouth because of this lukewarm condition and its attendant evils. Many are active in church work to satisfy social craving, to appear more respectable in the community, to gain business advantage, or other such things.

Laodicea thinks she has everything she needs for success and self-sufficiency. This is a very gratifying situation because the church does not need to look to God for any help. This may develop in churches which have plenty of money, talented and efficient leadership, and a position of respect in the community.

Jesus says Laodicea is extremely poor in all essential things. What she needs is a real belief in the Scriptures, humility in human weakness and failings, dependence on the power of God through the

agency of the Holy Spirit, and a burning zeal to help others see the necessity of accepting the truth of God for salvation and for guidance in life.

The church is in danger of walking naked and of her shame being seen. She is not properly clothing herself with the word and works of God. It will be a sad day for those saved people who have renounced the counsels of God when they stand before Christ in judgment.

Standing outside the church door, Jesus knocks, seeking admittance. This does not necessarily imply that he desires to have unsaved church members. It can as readily mean he desires that saved people should accept his word for church instruction and guidance.

He promises to come in and feast with any who will open the door. This can be a promise both to individuals in an apostate church, and to an entire church in the midst of a generally apostate religious field. A faithful saint can have communion with Christ in the midst of a worldly church if he does not have the privilege of getting out and uniting with a faithful one. Or, a faithful church is invited to come out of such a system as the convention and serve Christ in such a way that he can commune with and bless it.

A Departure from the Faith

In a general way, Laodicea pictures a departure from the faith. Baptist churches in various groups today present a jumbled picture. The majority are moving to that liberalism which will bring about unionism with the Protestant world if Jesus delays his coming very much longer. Among the smaller groups of Baptists the tendency is either to the same liberalism or to the opposite extreme of radicalism. This radicalism is just as dangerous as is the liberalism. It is no more virtuous when it wears the name Baptist than when it wears the name of any of the "charismatic" sects. There is a minority, however, who stand between these two extremes. This minority holds to the Scripture rule as the fathers have done, neither unduly swayed by the great doings of the liberals, nor turned from common sense and stability of faith by the hysteria of the radicals. Having held quietly to the faith for nineteen hundred years of trying times and situations, Christ's own churches will resist being swept off by religious hysteria.

Chapter 3

A View of Heaven

REVELATION 4

Thus far, two important matters have been disposed of in the vision of John. First, he is to receive the vision of things past, present, and future. This vision is to be written in a book and sent to the seven churches of Asia. The vision is for the churches. Second, specific messages are given to each of the seven churches. These messages constitute a prophetic history of the church age.

Though the vision is to be of things past, present, and future, the great message of Revelation has to do with the last days of the Church Age. This period of seven years is primarily known in Scripture as the Day of the Lord and the Great Tribulation.

Setting

In one way, chapter four seems timeless in its setting. The heavenly scene presented might be true of any time from the fall of man onward. It might even go back to eternity before the creation and fall of man. In another way, this chapter presents the heavenly scene with the actors in readiness for the beginning of the Great Tribulation. This latter viewpoint is the one of interest for present purposes.

THE THRONE OF GOD

Revelation 4:1-3

After these things I beheld, and behold a door was opened in the Heaven, and the first voice which I heard was of a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show thee the things which must come about after these things. " Immediately I became in Spirit, and behold a throne was set in the Heaven, and upon the

throne one sitting, and the one sitting like in sight to a jasper stone and a sardis, and a rainbow round about the throne like in sight to an emerald.

Time Element

Generally, two time elements must be dealt with in Revelation. John saw the throne set in Heaven after he saw the vision of the churches, but this does not mean that the throne is set in Heaven after the churches have finished their work in the world. It is impossible to follow the time sequence of events in Revelation because many movements are going on at the same time and they cannot all be told at once. Therefore, one set of events must be followed through to their logical conclusion. Then we must *go back* and pick up another chain of events and follow them through to their conclusion, and so on until the whole story is told. The throne is set in preparation for the coming of the Great Tribulation.

Beginning of Vision

At the beginning of this vision, John again hears the first voice which spoke with him. This is the voice of Jesus (Rev. 1:10, 18). This is perfectly logical since it is only through Jesus that God can commune with men. Angels and the Holy Spirit also come through Jesus to speak to men.

The voice of Jesus promises to show John the things that are to come after these things. Again there is a difficulty as to time. John is given the promise that he will see the things of the Great Tribulation, but he is shown this throne scene in Heaven instead. The explanation has already been indicated: seeing the throne set in Heaven is simply a preliminary step to seeing the many details of the Great Tribulation. After the throne scene is presented, John immediately goes to see the movements of the Tribulation.

In Spirit

John immediately became in Spirit. This may be a clue to the disposition of his body during these visions. It would appear that John went back to the ordinary processes of life after having received the preliminary visions. It seems the Spirit again laid hold on him for receiving of further revelations. Perhaps his body was simply in a trance somewhere on Patmos when he received the visions.

John then saw a throne set in Heaven with God on it. The appearance of God is described as like precious stones, and the rainbow was round about the throne. Possibly there is some special significance in these stones and the rainbow. Human language seems unequal to the task of describing the glory of God, and

perhaps this is the best that human language can describe his appearance.

THE ENTHRONED ELDERS AND THE LIVING BEINGS

Revelation 4:4-8a

And round about the throne twenty-four thrones, and upon the thrones twenty-four elders sitting, clothed about in white garments, and upon their heads golden crowns. And out of the throne there go forth lightnings and voices and thunderings; and seven lamps of fire burning in the presence of the throne, which are the seven spirits of God; and in the presence of the throne as a glass sea clear like crystal; and in the midst of the throne and round about the throne four living beings filled with eyes before and behind. And the first living being is like to a lion, and the second living being is like to an ox, and the third living being having a face as of a man, and the fourth living being is like to a flying eagle. And the four living beings, every one of them having six wings each, round about and inside filled with eyes.

The Elders

Round about the throne of God there were twenty-four thrones, and there were twenty-four elders seated on these thrones. An elder is one who holds his position by virtue of his wisdom and righteous works. These elders are clothed in white raiment. These garments are the righteous works of the holy ones (Rev. 19:8). There seems to be no reason to reject this interpretation here. In addition, a crown seems to be the token of accomplishment on the part of the wearer. Therefore, these elders are enthroned in Heaven as the result of what they have previously accomplished on earth. Twenty four is the sum of two twelves, and twelve is God's number of governmental perfection. God has established two governments on the earth, the nation Israel and the church. Thus, the elders seem to refer to the twelve tribes of Israel to be brought into governmental perfection in the Millennium, and to the church as represented by the twelve apostles of the Lamb. In a sense, the church has already come into governmental perfection, but this perfection will be made ultimate also in the Millennium. Therefore, the twenty-four elders would be a token of heavenly firstfruits of what God will accomplish in his two chosen people.

Lightnings, Thunderings

There go forth from the throne lightnings, voices, and thunderings. These, no doubt, express the displeasure of the holy

God concerning sin and injustice on the earth. They warn of coming judgment on these things.

Seven Lamps

There are also seven lamps of fire burning in the presence of the throne. These are said to be the seven spirits of God. It has already been suggested that this is a figurative expression of the might and completeness of power and work of the Holy Spirit.

Sea of Glass

There is a sea of glass in the presence of the throne. This sea is mentioned again at Rev. 15:2, where those who have won the victory over the beast stand upon the glass sea. These praise God for finished redemption. In the seventh chapter of I Kings, there is the account of the molten sea made by King Solomon, but the Scriptures do not seem to reveal the purpose of the molten sea. The glass sea would seem to be a token of the creation when it is delivered from every taint of sin in the finished work of redemption of Christ. In other words, the glass sea is a picture of the glorified earth.

Four Beasts

The four beasts are in the midst of the throne of God and round about the throne. They are full of eyes before and behind, denoting great spiritual discernment. The Greek word here does not usually mean a beast, but rather a living being. Two other words would fit better if a beast were meant. These are much like the cherubim of the first and tenth chapters of Ezekiel. Certainly, they have the qualities of powerful angels. They have the faces of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle. The cherubim of Ezekiel have these same likenesses. Some have seen a likeness to the four standard bearing tribes of Israel as described in the second chapter of Numbers. In this likeness, the man would represent Reuben, the lion of Judah, the ox Ephraim, and the eagle Dan. However, a survey of such high points in Israel as Jacob's blessing of his sons (Gen. 49), Moses' blessing of Israel (Deut. 33), the song of Deborah (Judg. 5), the location of the tribes in the division of the land (Josh. 18 and 19), the division of the land in the restoration (Ezk. 48), and the sealing of the tribes (Rev. 7), makes it impossible to establish a sensible pattern of types. This is due to the shifting of the positions and relationships of the various tribes in various situations. The whole problem is summed up in the two following illustrations: God set the priesthood in Levi, but then Jesus came as the eternal high priest, not of Levi, but of Judah. Joseph stands as a strong type of Christ, but then Jesus was born of Judah instead. So, it is difficult to

identify the living beings with the four types of Israel suggested above.

The most likely identification of the four living beings is that they represent the four types of flesh that live on the dry land: man, the wild beasts, the domestic beasts, and the fowls of the air. All of these are to be set free from the curse of sin in the finished work of redemption. Throughout Revelation, the office of these living beings is to praise God for creation and finish redemption, and to assist in movements which tend towards this finished redemption. It has been previously suggested that the beings bear a resemblance to cherubim. They could be angelic in nature and yet in some way represent the various kinds of flesh on earth. At Rev. 5:9, where the living beings are presented as saying, "Thou hast redeemed us by thy blood," the word, "us" is not in the revised Greek text. Therefore, it does not necessarily say the living beings are redeemed by blood. The sense seems to be that Christ has redeemed some out of every nation by his blood. The suggestion is that as the elders represent a glorified Israel and a glorified church, as the glass sea represents a glorified earth, so the living beings represent glorified creatures.

GOD PRAISED FOR CREATION

Revelation 4:8b-II

And they do not have ceasing day and night saying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, the one who was, the one being, and the one coming." And when the living beings give glory and honor and thanksgiving to the one sitting upon the throne, the one living into the ages of the ages, the twenty four elders fall down in the presence of the one sitting upon the throne, and they do reverence to the one living into the ages of the ages, and they cast their crowns in the presence of the throne, saying, "Worthy art thou, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory and the honor and the dynamic power, because thou hast created all things, and on account of thy will they were and were created."

Praise of Living Beings and the Elders

There are two elements involved in the praise of the living beings and the twenty-four elders. God is praised for eternal existence and power and for creation.

It is said the living beings do not have rest, or ceasing, day nor night saying, "Holy, holy, holy to the Almighty God, whose existence is past, present, and future." If these four living beings should be representative of the four kinds of flesh, as suggested, then it is perfectly consistent that they should give unceasing praise

to God for his eternal existence. This praise would be a confession of his preeminence in that he existed before they came into being and that his existence would be eternal future. The fall of man and the curse on the animal world does not necessarily enter into this picture. It simply shows the fact of their creation and of their ultimate glorification.

Animals in Eden

Since God finishes most of the purposes he begins, the final home of the redeemed will be populated by the same creatures that were in Eden. Of course, some may object to the idea of the glorification of animals and their existence in Heaven. However, since God had a purpose for animals in Eden before the fall, he should have a purpose for them on the earth when it becomes the eternal home of the glorified redeemed of mankind. In other words, in Eden before the fall Adam needed only to partake of the fruit of the Tree of Life to seal himself forever in a glorious state. Since he was also lord of the creation it is logical that he would, at the same time, have sealed the living things of the earth in an undying, unchanging, glorified estate. If this is true, then animals will finally come into this same estate through the redemptive work of Christ. The creation itself will gain deliverance when man comes into the liberty of the sons of God (Rom. 8:19-23).

Praise God for Creation

When the living beings give glory, honor and thanksgiving to God enthroned forever, the twenty-four elders also fall in the presence of the throne and do reverence to the one living into the ages of the ages. "Into the ages of the ages" is the Bible way of expressing eternity. These elders remove the crowns from their own heads and cast them down in the presence of God on the throne, thus confessing a glory to God far above any glory due to themselves. They, along with the living beings, praise God for creation. It is definitely stated that the creation came into existence because it was the will of God for it to do so. It is also specified that God is the author of creation. There is no sensible explanation for the existence of the universe other than that it was made by an all powerful and infinitely wise and benevolent God. The theory of evolution denies all scientific principles on which scientific facts rest. Science says that for every effect there must be a sufficient cause. Evolution says the effect of the creation was produced without a sufficient cause.

Election

In dealing with this chapter, the position has been taken that the heavenly scene presents things that have not been accomplished on earth as yet. In taking this position, however, no concession whatever is made to those of a fatalistic persuasion. We have admitted a redeemed Israel in Heaven before Israel is redeemed on earth. We have admitted a glorified church in Heaven, in token, before that church has finished her career upon the earth. We have admitted a glorified earth and glorified creatures presented in Heaven while these are still groaning under the bondage of corruption. To admit these things is one thing, and to admit a given man is saved because he was personally elected to salvation before the foundation of the earth is entirely a different matter. Let us note again these things in some detail.

First, it was suggested that twelve of the elders represent the final glorified tribes of Israel. If the time element suggested is right as to when this scene in Heaven exists, the lost tribes of Israel are still in the dispersion, and the other tribes are still in unbelief and rejection of Christ. That is, they are glorified in token in Heaven while they are still in rejection on earth. This is perfectly consistent with the general revelation of God's dealings with various groups of humanity.

Israel an Elect Nation

Israel was revealed as an elect nation to God when Abraham was called out of the land of the Chaldeans and the covenant was made with him. Regardless of what may or may not have been in the mind of God, Israel was not revealed to mankind as a chosen people until the order established under Noah had broken down and failed. The mind of God is infinite and not to be explored by the finite mind of man. Therefore, the only logical conclusion the mind of man can reach is that God chose Israel in Abraham when the Noahic order had proven itself a failure.

From the time the covenant with Abraham was made, man could begin to reckon that Israel would finally come to glory because God had so promised it in the covenant. What God knew or thought or planned concerning Israel before the making of the covenant is absolutely none of man's business, nor does he have any capabilities to delve into it. On the other hand, if we look into the Scriptures as to the historical dealings of God with Israel, the picture that presents itself is of God's trying one plan after another to bring Israel to that predestined glory, and one after another of these plans failing as one generation after another of Israelites have lived and died. This look should teach us that the plan of God for the nation is one thing, and the destiny of the individuals who compose

the nation from time to time may be entirely something else. As God is working to bring the nation of Israel to that glory which is presented in token in this chapter, multitudes of Jews are missing this national destiny because their individual destiny is not unalterably bound to that of the nation. This is true of any individual and his relationship to any group of people with whom God might be dealing. Can we not see that the great promises of God are given to groups rather than individuals where his election comes into play?

The Church and Election

Essentially the same things may be said of the church that have been said about Israel. It was suggested that twelve of the elders in Heaven represent the fact that God will finally bring the church into full glory. The church was revealed in its present development only after the Jews had rejected and crucified Jesus, their Messiah. The church ceased to center around the Jews and has had its adherents from other nations only after the Jews rejected the Messiah. Did God foreknow and plan these things? If he did he kept the information from mankind until developments warranted and necessitated their revelation. Again, let it be pointed out these infinite things are the business of God out in the reaches of infinity, and they are not for the exploration of the miserable, puny mind of finite man.

The church has long been in existence when these elders represent the glorified church in Heaven. That is just before the beginning of the Great Tribulation. So there should not be any predestination trouble over the glorification of the church in token in Heaven before this glorification actually comes. That is, the church has come successfully down through nineteen centuries. It has the promise of Christ that it will continue to the end and that it will be brought to ultimate glory as it is revealed in token in the picture with which we are dealing. All these things are accomplished, not on the integrity of man, but upon the power and working plans of Christ that were committed to him when he successfully finished his works in the world.

The Individual and Election

To admit these evident facts is one thing, to go on and contend that the personal destiny of the Apostle Peter, or John, or any present day church saint is unalterably bound to the destiny of this church is something entirely different. The destiny of man is bound to that of the church only as he by his own will and choice casts his lot with the church. God in his sovereign will and wisdom makes decrees concerning groups and movements at the beginning of such

groups and movements, or even before they come into existence. In bringing such groups to their destined end, he allows all individuals involved the freedom of choice in Christ. In token, there is a glorified church in Heaven before this church ever actually comes to glory, but every individual who shares in this final glory of the church will have his share in it because he of his own will and choice elected to be saved and to be identified with the church. Any other position apparently will lead us into fatalism.

As to the physical and animal creations presented in glory before they are actually glorified, there seems to be no real difficulty. They have no will of choice. God elected that they should be ruled by man in righteousness as far back as Adam in Eden before the fall. They have no responsibility for the sin that now mars them in every detail. It will be by no will or work of theirs that they will be finally delivered from this bondage of corruption. This will all be accomplished by Christ as the only righteous Son of Man, to whom all authority in Heaven and on earth has been committed because he is the righteous Son of Man. He restores all that Adam lost to the creation, and he goes one step beyond this and seals this creation forever in perfect righteousness.

Chapter 4

The Sealed Book and the Slain Lamb

Revelation 5

This chapter is a continuation of the foregoing one. In it was presented a view of Heaven with a number of heavenly figures. In reality, that chapter is merely the setting of the stage of action for this one. In that chapter we were introduced to a number of the actors; in the present one the drama begins to be unfolded. The sealed book and the slain lamb who takes the book from the hand of God are the two vital facts in this chapter.

THE SEALED BOOK AND THE FRUITLESS SEARCH

Revelation 5:1-4

And I saw upon the right hand of the one sitting upon the throne a little book written on the inside and on the back, thoroughly sealed up with seven seals. And I saw a mighty angel heralding in a great voice, "Who is worthy to open the book and to loose the seals of it?" And no one was able in the Heaven, nor upon the earth, nor underneath the earth to open the book nor to look upon it. And I wailed exceedingly, because no one was found worthy to open the book nor to look on it.

Man's Inheritance

There is a little book in the right hand of God as he sits upon the throne. The fact it is a little book indicates that the writing in it is relatively brief. This suggests a legal document as opposed to a lengthy narrative. It is thoroughly sealed up with seven seals. It bears another characteristic of a legal document in that it is written on the inside, then the essential facts were written on the outside, or back side, so that they might be read though the book was

sealed. The little book contained the title deed to the inheritance of mankind.

When the book is introduced, it is in the hand of God, the supreme judge of the universe. Man does not have the deed to his inheritance. This presents the condition of man after he had fallen, but before redemption was provided. There may not have been any lapse of time between the fall of man and the appearance of the slain lamb, but this scene presents it as though there were such a lapse of time.

The Search

A search began to be made for one who could prevail to receive the book out of the hand of God, the just judge, loose the seals of it and read the things written in the little book: someone who could give man his lost inheritance.

The search was conducted first in Heaven, where no one was found who could open the book. There were in Heaven: God upon the throne, the elders, the living beings, and the hosts of angels. It is a broad and sweeping assertion that none of these could open the book, but that is exactly what verse two states. The elders, the living beings, and the angels could not give man his forfeited inheritance. God could not save man by any of these. Could not God himself upon the throne open the book? No, he could not, regardless of what anyone may say to the contrary. God himself is bound by the righteous laws which he gives in the universe, and he could not violate them without becoming a sinner. He could not give man his lost inheritance without coming down from his supreme throne and becoming the slain lamb in the person of his Son, Christ. This is the reason Christ became the slain lamb. It was the only remedy for utterly ruined man. Let us be careful about making such ill advised statements as that God could have saved man by the mediatorial work of angels if he had so desired. This situation teaches such a statement is not true.

Kinsman Redeemer

To deny the position taken here is to deny the principle of the kinsman redeemer, which runs throughout the Bible. To redeem us the Son of God must become the Son of Man, made in all points like unto us, but without sin (Heb. 2:17). In Israel, the work of the kinsman redeemer was (1) to buy back the forfeited inheritance (Lev. 25:25); (2) to redeem the brother from bondage (Lev. 25:49); (3) to marry the widow (the desolate) and raise up a spiritual seed to the dead (Ruth 4:4, 5); (4) to avenge the blood on the slayer (Num. 35:19, 35; Heb. 2:14).

All of this goes back to Adam and the nature of his creation. He was made in the image and likeness of God, but he was also made a brother to the earth. The earth had previously been ruled by angels, who were outside and foreign agents to the earth. They rebelled and wrecked the earth. But, instead of God arbitrarily banishing them from the earth, he placed the earth under a kinsman ruler, a man made of the dust of the earth. He then allowed rebellious angels to try out the legitimacy of their claim to rulership of the earth through man, who could legitimately speak for the earth because the earth was and is his kin. Christ will finally redeem the earth itself as a kinsman redeemer, a thing which neither angels nor any other creature except the heir of mankind can do. The destiny of the earth was forever tied to that of mankind when God made a body for Adam like the earth and gave mankind eternal rulership of the earth. These principles are still true even though the first Adam utterly failed in the trial by the Devil. The whole matter then fell into the hands of the second Adam, who is Christ (I Cor. 15:21, 22).

No One Found

No one on earth was able to open the book or to loose the seals of it. There were and are all kinds of people on earth: the rich, the poor, the wise, the foolish, those who have suffered much, those who have prospered, the old, and those who are too young to be responsible for sin. But not one of them could claim the inheritance of man on the basis of what he was or what he had done. Not even babies could claim eternal life, though they were not accountable as sinners. Surely, no one who sees the truth of this picture could believe that salvation is by works, or that babies by nature are worthy of Heaven. It is because Christ died for them that babies go to Heaven when they die in infancy.

No one underneath the earth was found who could open the book or look on it. From many passages in the Bible, and specifically Eph. 4:9, 10, it is evident that the region beneath the earth is the place where the spirits of the dead go to await the resurrection. Cain had been in this place ever since his death, in consciousness, anticipating his eternal doom to the Lake of Fire. His condition was and is like that of the rich man in Hades of Luke 16:23, and of every other unsaved person who has died since Cain. None of these was found worthy to receive the inheritance of glory which God originally devised for mankind. Anyone who sees this truth will not believe the false doctrine of purgatory. Another terrible lesson we should remember here is that the present life is the time of opportunity to be saved, and when one dies opportunity is gone forever, no matter how much he may suffer and repent in the region of the dead.

When the search throughout the universe was completed and no one was found worthy to open the book, John tells us he screamed in agony. The reason for his agony was that all mankind was left without redemption at this stage in the revelation of things, and John saw himself with all mankind doomed to the everlasting destruction of the Lake of Fire that burns with brimstone. We are not to reckon John as a lost sinner, but rather as the revelation was being unfolded, at this particular point he saw himself without a redeemer because Christ had not yet been presented in the picture. He saw himself for the moment as though Christ did not exist as his Savior.

THE SLAIN LAMB RECEIVES THE BOOK

Revelation 5:5-7

And one of the elders says to me, "Do not wail thou: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the book and the seven seals of it." And I saw in the midst of the throne and the four living beings and in the midst of the elders a lamb standing as if it had been slaughtered, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent into all the earth. And he came and received it out of the right hand of the one sitting upon the throne.

Lion of Judah

One of the elders came to John with words of assurance and comfort. He announced that the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, had won the victory to receive the book and open it. Jacob prophesied at Gen. 49:10 that the kingly sceptre should not depart from Judah until Shiloh should come. The kingdom was established in Israel in the tribe of Judah, and this line was not broken until the Babylonian captivity. The genealogy of Jesus is traced through both Joseph and Mary back to King David. So he is the Lion of the tribe of Judah. The lion is the king of beasts, and Jesus is infinitely the mightiest of mankind. He has won in every detail the battle against the Devil, whereas every other man has failed. He is rightly called the Lion of the tribe of Judah because he is the greatest warrior of the ages.

Root of David

The elder also calls him the Root of David. The word "root" here seems to have a special significance. If a tree is cut down, then a sprout comes from the root to produce another tree. This would seem to indicate that the line of David was cut down when Zedekiah

was taken into the Babylonian captivity. Some have sought to establish that a seed of David was carried to Britain at the time of the breaking up of the kingdom of Israel, and that this line has been preserved in Britain to the present day. The proof of such a position seems to be very weak and inconclusive. It seems more likely the kingly tree was cut down, and Christ came from the root to reestablish the line of David. Since the Jews rejected the terms of the kingdom which Jesus offered to them, the spiritual aspect of the kingdom was established in the church, and the church is the only phase of the kingdom which is operative in the world today. The kingdom will be restored to Israel under Christ, the Son of David, in the Millennium.

The Slain Lamb

One of the most amazing pictures of the Bible is recorded in verse six. John saw in the midst of the throne and in the midst of the elders and the living beings a lamb as if it had been slaughtered or butchered. Of course, any experienced Bible student recognizes that God presents himself to mankind in many guises. One of these is that office of God in which he sits enthroned in holiness apart from man, or anything else which has the stain of sin upon it. In this office God takes no part when Christ comes down to earth to mingle with sinful man. But, in the present situation, the butchered Lamb comes out of the midst of the throne of the God of holiness. Thus the God of ultimate holiness is touched by the butchered Lamb. This is the most terrible picture the Bible presents of the price of human redemption. Everyone knows Christ came out of the throne to become the butchered Lamb, but to see this butchered Lamb in the midst of the throne itself is beyond imagination.

Seven Horns

The slaughtered Lamb had seven horns and seven eyes. Horns are for battle and conquest. Thus, Christ comes forth with what is required to defeat the Devil and give lost man his inheritance. Seven refers to the ultimate power in battle of the horns. While Jesus lived as the Son of Man in the world, the Devil used all of his might and guile to cause him to depart from the will of his Father, but without any success. He simply defeated the Devil on every inch of ground.

Seven Eyes

It is explained that the seven eyes are the seven spirits of God sent into all the earth. This makes it to appear that these seven spirits are really the Holy Spirit, which Jesus sends into all the

earth (John 16:8). It has been previously suggested that the number seven may simply refer to the supreme working power of the Holy Spirit. This Spirit came through Christ into the world, and it goes into all the earth to work the works of God. Jesus has these seven spirits in that he makes it lawful and right for the Holy Spirit to come into the world which has the blight of sin.

The Lamb came and received the book out of the hand of the one sitting on the throne. From the situation in general, there can be no doubt that God's holding the little book in his hand signifies his condemnation of mankind because of sin. It is the God of absolute justice who holds the book in his hand. The point is that God could not surrender the book to anyone unless there was justice in the transaction. He readily gave the book into the hands of the slaughtered Lamb, signifying that the Lamb was worthy to receive it.

THE LIVING BEINGS AND THE ELDERS SING THE SONG OF BLOOD REDEMPTION

Revelation 5:8-10

And when he received the little book, the four living beings and the twenty-four elders fell in the presence of the Lamb, having every one a harp and golden vials filled with incenses, which are the prayers of the holy ones. And they sang a new song saying, "Worthy art thou to receive the book and to open the seals of it, because thou wast slaughtered and thou hast bought to God in thy blood some of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and thou hast made them to our God a kingdom and priests, and they shall reign as kings upon the earth."

Living Beings and Elders Worship

When the Lamb received the little book from the hand of God, the living beings and the elders fell in his presence in an attitude of worship. Regardless of who these living beings and elders are, they are glorified and infinitely wise and righteous. They could not have fallen in worship before the Lamb unless they had seen just cause to do so. There is no hypocrisy in heavenly beings. If Christ had not fully earned the right to redeem man, these heavenly beings would never have worshiped him as the redeemer.

Golden Harps and Vials

Each heavenly being had a harp and golden vials. The harps were to accompany the song of praise which comes later. The vials contained the prayers of the holy ones, or the saints. The holy ones

do not necessarily include all the saved, but the term seems to be reserved for those who are committed to scriptural service to God. It is these whose prayers go up as incense to the throne of God. Just what the prayers of the saints have to do with this situation is not evident. Of course, these prayers go up to God because of redemption in Christ. This may be the reason they are mentioned here.

A New Song

The living beings and the elders sing a new song. They have already sung the songs of praise to God for his eternal existence and for his creative works. Now they sing the new song of blood redemption.

Worthy Is the Lamb

These heavenly beings state in their song that the Lamb is worthy to receive the little book and to open the seals of it. This heavenly testimony attests that Christ did fully pay the price for the redemption of man. The work of Christ in becoming sin for us was more than sham or play acting. These glorified figures in Heaven insist that the Lamb is worthy. We can do no less than accept their verdict in the matter.

The reason given for the worthiness of the Lamb is that he was slaughtered, and that he bought a people to God of every people upon earth. He also made them a kingdom and priests. This statement seems to set the picture as a New Testament one as opposed to Israel under the Law of Moses. In other words, we see the position of the church in the world existing as sons of God, not Israel as servants of God under the Law of Moses. This presents a difficulty in that the subject is blood redemption, and this includes the saved of Israel under the law as well as church saints. Probably, the elders and the living beings are looking beyond the present age to the Millennium, when the saints will literally be kings and priests to God.

The marvelous element in the praise of this song is that the Lamb takes men who- are completely alienated from God, whose inclinations are towards violence and destruction, and changes them into sons of God, and makes them worthy to be priests to God and to rule in righteousness upon the earth. No wonder they had a new song to sing when they saw the slain Lamb and the marvel of his finished work of redemption.

ANGELS PRAISE THE LAMB AS BEING WORTHY

Revelation 5:11, 12

And I saw and heard a voice of many angels round about the throne and the living beings and the elders, and the number of them was myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying in a great voice, "Worthy is the Lamb, the one having been slaughtered, to receive the dynamic power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and thanksgiving."

Angels in the Heavenly Scene

Here is the first time angels have been mentioned in this heavenly scene. They surround the throne and the living beings and the elders. This indicates the living beings and the elders are higher in honor and nearer to God in position than are the angels. It also suggests that if the living beings are angels at all they are of a higher order than the host of angels described here.

There is an indefinitely large number of these angels. The word which is translated "ten thousands" in the common version of the Bible sometimes means ten thousand, but sometimes it means an indefinitely large number. In the Greek text it is almost identical with our English word, myriad, which means an indefinite, large number. If we take these numbers as literal, we get four-hundred and four million as the smallest possible number of these angels. We should not attempt to number them, because the Scriptures do not tell the exact number.

In the song of the elders and the living beings in verses nine and ten, the Lamb is praised for seven actions and accomplishments. Seven indicates the completeness of their approval. In the present situation, the angels ascribe seven words of praise to the Lamb, again showing the complete praise of the heavenly hosts for the Lamb.

He is worthy to receive dynamic power, for he will use it righteously. In contrast, it should be recalled that the disciples wished to use such power to call down fire and destroy those who rejected Jesus (Luke 9:54). Jesus is the only man in the flesh who has ever been found worthy to use dynamic power.

He is worthy to receive the riches of the universe, for he alone will use them to the glory of God and the welfare of mankind.

He is worthy to receive wisdom, for he always turns it to righteous ends. The bright angel, Lucifer, used his wisdom to rebel against God (Isa. 14; Ezk. 28).

He is worthy to receive might, for he used it to defeat the Devil (Heb. 2:14).

He directed honor and glory and thanksgiving towards the

Father, and he did not seek these for himself, except that the Father might be glorified in him (John 7:18).

EARTHLY BEINGS GIVE GLORY TO THE LAMB

Revelation 5:13, 14

And every created thing which is in the Heaven and upon the earth and underneath the earth and upon the sea, and all the things in them, I heard saying to the one sitting upon the throne and to the Lamb, "The thanksgiving and the honor and the glory and the might into the ages of the ages. " And the four living beings said, "Amen, " and the elders fell and did reverence.

Praise from All Creation

The whole created universe is embraced in the statement of these verses. Unintelligent things cannot give conscious praise, but the heavens do declare the glory of God (Psalm 19). Climatic conditions on earth indicate that the solar system was shaken out of harmony by this fall. A universe fully restored by the works of Christ gives glory to him and to the Father for the restoration.

There are four ascriptions of praise from this realm. This fact is further evidence it is the physical creation which is rendering praise, as opposed to the heavenly beings already noted. This praise goes to God on the throne equally with the Lamb. It was never the purpose of Christ to exalt himself above the Father, but to exalt the Father within himself.

Last Scene

This last scene has more the appearance of finished redemption than it does of the initial appearance of the Lamb on the scene. The creation itself could not logically praise the Lamb for deliverance until that deliverance had come, and such deliverance will not come until the end of the thousand years reign of Christ. The elders and the living beings say "Amen" to it.

Overall Picture

Every alert Bible student will recognize two dangers in the study of Revelation. One of them is that we should overlook many vital details in our attempt to grasp the over-all picture. The other is that we should become so involved in details that we fail to see the picture as a whole. Either error will be fatal to a fair understanding of this most complex book.

The great facts in this chapter are: God on the throne with the booklet in his hand, the search throughout the universe for one who

can open the booklet, the despair of John because no such one was found, the appearance of the slain Lamb from the throne of God, his receiving of the book, and the praise of three groups to God and to the Lamb.

Ranks of the Three Groups

There must be some order or specific meaning in these three groups and their praise. It is likely that they are presented in order of rank. If so, then the living beings and the elders come first, and in a rank together. Certainly there is a difference between the two groups, but what is it? The elders are enthroned and crowned, the living beings are not. But the living beings are not only round about the throne, they are in the midst of the throne itself. And they are not identified with the angels, who are presented later. The living beings are representative of created living things which God determined to bring into immortality and glory. There is no indication of any accomplishments on their part. If man is included in their representation, it is in the sense that man was simply meant for glory, and they do not portray how man comes into that glory. They merely represent what God predetermined in the matter.

The elders present the two groups which God determines to bring to glory, Israel and the church. They are enthroned, crowned, and robed as tokens of what Christ accomplishes in them as intelligent beings with a will.

The angels stand as the holy servants of God and of righteous mankind. They are definitely inferior in rank to the elders and the living beings. Angels are only spirit and intelligence, whereas those are spirit, mind, and body. In the third group, which are third in rank, stress is on that part and order of creation which has no intelligence and will of its own. There is a trinity of praise to God and the Lamb as the host of these beings sees the unfolding of the plan of redemption.

Chapter 5

The Seals Opened

Revelation 6

We have been introduced to the little book sealed with seven seals. We have also seen how the Lamb has received the book out of the hand of God on the throne. At this transaction, the four living beings, the twenty-four elders, and the numberless hosts of angels fall in the presence of the throne and of the Lamb and give praise. We now begin to study the account of the opening of six of the seven seals and the consequent results.

Presented by the Living Beings

The opening of the first four seals produce results entirely different from the fifth and the sixth. It is also notable that each of the first four is presented to John by one of the four living beings. The first four seals have to do with results which are accomplished by man in his relationship to the earth and its inhabitants. In other words, these four seals present the Great Tribulation in a material and fleshly way not presented anywhere else in Revelation. This being true, it is fitting that these special seals should be introduced by the four living beings, who are associated with the creation and its deliverance from sin.

THE WHITE HORSE RIDER

Revelation 6:1, 2

And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living beings saying as in a voice of thunder, "Come thou. " And I saw, and behold a white horse, and the one sitting upon it having a bow; and there was given to him a crown and he went out conquering and in order that he might conquer.

White Horse Rider

The opening of the first seal brings the rider on the white horse. It has been suggested previously that the seals are opened during the Great Tribulation. In fact, the opening of these seals produces the Tribulation. It seems the surest sign of the beginning of the Tribulation is the appearance of Antichrist on the world scene (Matt. 24:15). In the nineteenth chapter of Revelation, Christ is pictured as riding on a white horse; but, this fact does not force the conclusion that the white horse rider is Christ in the present situation. It can just as logically suggest Antichrist coming as the supplanter in imitation of Christ. Thus, the position is taken that the white horse rider is Antichrist. He is the ultimate answer of God to the old demand of sinners to have the Devil as their god and an utterly ungodly, fleshly character as their christ.

The white horse rider is presented to John by one of the four living beings. These are associated with the material creation as opposed to the intellectual and spiritual realms. Antichrist is the fulfillment of the demand by fleshly men for a god.

Military Power

This rider is given a bow, a sign of military power and authority. There is also given to him a crown, the symbol of a lawful position. (A diadem, in contrast, is the symbol of actual accomplishment.) This crown indicates that Antichrist actually has a lawful reign on earth. It is made lawful by the demand of sinners, and not by the eternal principles of righteousness of God. The Devil has some legal right to rule on earth until the victory is fully accomplished in the works of Christ. Then his claims will have been utterly destroyed. God gave men the privilege and the lawful right to choose their own ways in the world, but this does not mean they may continue forever in this right. All evil and all evil men and demons will finally be banished forever from the earth by the righteous decree of God.

Peace?

The white horse rider goes forth conquering and that he may conquer. Daniel and Paul's letter to the Thessalonians teach us he will come in by peaceable means and will follow the course of a peaceable conquest in the first half of the Great Tribulation. His conquest will be by utmost violence in the last half of the Tribulation. Thus, the peaceable imitator of Christ will logically ride only for the first three and a half years of the Tribulation. He will then be revealed as the very son of violence and destruction. The majority of the religious world will think Antichrist is Christ when he comes riding on the white horse.

THE RED HORSE RIDER

Revelation 6:3, 4

And when he opened the second seal, I heard the second living being saying, "Come thou. "And there went out another fire colored horse; and to the one sitting upon it there was given to take the peace out of the earth, and that they should slaughter one another, and there was given to him a great sword.

Red Horse Rider

The Lamb opened the second seal, and the second living being said, "Come thou." The Greek text does not say, "come and see," as the common version has it. It seems more likely to be a command to the rider to come forth than an invitation to John to advance to look.

The horse that came forth was fiery colored, or red. This is the color that is associated with war and bloodshed. The whole situation leads us to the conclusion the rider on the red horse is war personified. He takes peace from the earth and causes men to slay one another. He also is given a great sword. It is not likely men will fight with bows and swords in the last days. These are only used as figures of the weapons to be used in those days.

One problem we have at this point is the question: If Antichrist comes at the beginning of the Tribulation preaching and practicing the ways of peace, then how is it consistent that the red horse rider of war comes forth and operates at the same time? The red horse rider gives Antichrist a greater opportunity to preach and practice his mock reign of peace. He and the red horse rider are in full harmony as to their ultimate goal, which is the destruction of humanity, especially the forces of righteousness.

Viewing the Riders

We cannot view the four horsemen as following one another in time, but rather as coming forth approximately at the same time. The succession here is in John's viewing the riders, not of their appearance on the world scene. This is true of any details of his visions to which we are inclined to assign a time sequence when no such time sequence is meant, nor will it fit the existing situation. This particular horseman rides the full seven years of the Tribulation, as do the two following ones.

Before leaving the account of the red horse rider, note the words of Jesus on the subject of war in the last days recorded at Matt. 24:6, 7, "And ye are about to hear of wars and rumors of wars: see ye, do not be ye stirred up; for these things are necessary to come about, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise up against nation

and kingdom against kingdom, and there shall be famines and shakings in various places. All these things are the beginning of birth pangs." The Bible testimony is that when they shall say peace and safety, destruction comes suddenly upon them as travail upon a woman with child (I Thess. 5:3). These things are mentioned because these exact conditions exist today. The Bible teaches that the world will have no peace until Christ comes in body and sets up his literal kingdom on earth.

THE BLACK HORSE RIDER

Revelation 6:5, 6

And when he opened the third seal, I heard the third living being saying, "Come thou." And I saw, and behold a black horse and the one sitting upon it having a balance in his hand. And I heard as a voice in the midst of the four living beings saying, "A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny, and the oil and the wine thou should not treat unrighteously."

Black Horse Rider

When the Lamb breaks the third seal, there comes forth the rider upon the black horse announced by the third living being. This rider has a balance, or a scale for weighing, in his hand. It is said such scales were used for carefully weighing food in times of famine. The conclusion is that the black horse rider represents famine, which shall sweep the earth in the Great Tribulation.

Famine

A voice in the midst of the four living beings was heard to say, "A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny." One and a half pints of wheat could be bought for a day's wages according to standards of Bible days. It is easy to see this is starvation wages. Americans have never experienced such a state of affairs, though other nations have known the distress of famine even in modern days. Increasing plagues coupled with an overpopulating of the earth will likely bring this condition of famine as it is viewed from the physical standpoint. Mankind historically destroys both himself and the earth wherever men congregate in great numbers. This has been the fundamental explanation for the fall of all the great nations of the past.

The wine and the oil were not to be hurt, or treated unrighteously. The word usually means the latter. It appears to be an admonition not to adulterate these substances. The sum of the admonition is to teach us of the dire famine that shall exist. In view

of the many plagues described in Revelation, likely this rider of famine will continue throughout the Tribulation.

Personal Initiative and Responsibility.

One other principle that contributes greatly to conditions of famine should be noted before leaving the subject of the black horse rider. It has been a general rule that wherever free enterprise has been fostered by governments personal initiative and responsibility have prevailed among the people, and general prosperity and advancement have prevailed in the various phases of life. This is one of the primary explanations as to why our country has been the most prosperous one known to the history of man. We have been free and have felt a personal responsibility in the fields of government, economics, and religion. We have prospered in all these fields as no other nation ever prospered.

The Bible and the signs of the times teach us that this principle of freedom of choice and action in the several phases of life will be largely destroyed in the last days. Regimentation and government supervision are becoming more pronounced, and seemingly more necessary, as time passes. This kind of system breeds all kinds and degrees of graft, improvidence, and general inefficiency in all the phases of life. This is a growing world order of things and is not peculiar to any nation or group of nations. The underlying purpose in the whole movement is to make the way ready for Antichrist, who will come heralded as the savior of a world in turmoil in all the phases of human life.

When we get enough leeches and traitors on the government payroll; when we have enough parasites preying on industry and destroying sound practices of business; when we get enough unscriptural and dictatorial leaders in the field of religion, then Antichrist will come. And, there will come with him such conditions of worldwide famine as the world has never seen. It will come largely from inefficiency, greed, regimentation of peoples, and the consequent destruction of private industry and personal initiative.

THE PALE HORSE RIDER

Revelation 6:7, 8

And when he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living being saying, "Come thou. " And I saw, and behold a pale green horse, and the one sitting upon it, whose name is Death, and Hades follows with it, and there was given to them authority upon the fourth part of the earth, to kill with the sword, and with famine, and with death, and by the wild beasts of the earth.

Pale Green Horse

When the fourth seal is opened the fourth living being invites the rider to come forth. He comes riding upon a pale green horse. This is the color of newly sprouted grass, but it is also the color of death. The pale horse rider is the embodiment of death, riding everywhere on earth in a unique way.

Hades follows after Death. Hades receives the spirits of sinners who die. Death is so much more widespread than formerly that death and Hades are represented as riding everywhere on earth.

Authority is given these two to kill a fourth of mankind living on the earth. Think what it would mean if one person in four of all families, friends, and acquaintances should die in a brief period of time. This is exactly what will happen in the Great Tribulation.

There are to be four agencies of death, the number four indicating it is devices of man himself which are really responsible. Three of these are self-explanatory. The fourth, the wild beasts of the earth, likely refers to men who act as beasts. The word for beast here is the same as that which describes the beast of the thirteenth chapter of Revelation. The word is entirely different from the one naming the four personages which are called living beings in this discussion. Though it seems logical the pale horse rider should continue throughout the Tribulation, apparently far more than a fourth of humanity will die before it is over.

Hades

Hades, which is translated Hell in the common version of the Bible, comes out of the ancient Greek mythology. According to the myth, there were three brother gods. One ruled the region of the heavens; a second ruled the earth; and Hades, the third brother god, ruled the region of the dead down beneath the earth. Thus Hades came to be the name of the region where this god ruled. This god, Hades, has much in common with the Devil himself, though we are to think of Hades, the god, as a myth and the Devil as very real.

The New Testament writers under inspiration took up this name, Hades, with its heathen Greek background, to describe the region of the dead. The New Testament does not endorse the falsehood of the myth, but it does use the word known to men which best describes the place and the condition of the spirits of dead people. Hades is personified along with death to come riding upon the earth to receive the spirits of the multitudes of men who are to be slain in the Great Tribulation.

The four horsemen are to be regarded together. They represent the result of man's efforts to direct the affairs of life apart from God. When man follows and relies on his human nature, he has the

Devil for his good; and, he brings war, famine, and death upon himself. This is exactly the way the majority are attempting to solve the problems of mankind today. What can we expect but Antichrist soon?

DEAD SAINTS PRAYING FOR RESURRECTION

Revelation 6:9-11

And when he opened the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar of sacrifice the souls of the ones having been slaughtered on account of the word of God and on account of the testimony which they had. And they cried out in a great voice saying, "Until when, O Despot, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on the ones dwelling upon the earth?" And there was given to them to each one a white robe, and it was said to them that they should rest yet a little time, until there should be fulfilled also their fellow bondservants and their brethren who were about to be killed as even they.

The Fifth Seal

There is a change in the scene as we come to this fifth seal. The setting is no longer on earth, but in Heaven. The forces of evil and destruction are no longer doing their deadly work. Here we have the faithful saints who have died, resting underneath the altar in the presence of the throne of God. There are two questions concerning these saints. Who are they and why are they presented in this particular connection? In answering these questions, remember that we are not treating such situations as isolated incidents, but we are seeking to connect them logically in the setting in which they appear. If this is the right way to deal with Revelation, then the matter of the dead saints in Heaven is vitally related to the matters incorporated in the other seals. We shall attempt to find an answer to the questions stated above on this basis.

Who Are They?

The dead saints are not just some faithful saints who are slain after the Tribulation begins. These are all the saints from Abel onward who have died up to the beginning of the Great Tribulation. It is not simply those who have died for the faith, but it is also all who would have died for the faith, if they had been called on to do so. The logic of the position is explained by telling why they are presented at this point in the development of things.

When the seven seals are all opened and their results are worked

out, righteous man will come into his destined inheritance of righteousness and glory. But, since man is created with the ability to make his own choices, evil men must have the opportunity to make their choices also. The four horsemen ride forth bringing evil because that is what sinners have chosen. By the same token, righteous men have the right to be heard before God. The prayers of all the dead saints for resurrection are presented here simply to stress the fact that righteous men must receive what they ask for just as sinners receive what they ask for. So the opening of the fifth seal is simply the presentation of one of the driving forces that brings the world of mankind to its destined end.

This view of things is stressed also by the significance of the number five, the number of grace. The grace of God decrees that the prayers of the saints must be heard and answered. The grace of God is seen in operation in the fifth of each of the sevens in Revelation.

The prayer of the saints is for avengement of their blood upon those living upon the earth. It is inconceivable that dead saints should have a spirit of vengeance against those who persecuted them while they were in the world. Therefore, they pray this because it is necessary that evil men be punished as a part of the same movement that brings righteous men into the glory of resurrection.

These saints are in the form of disembodied spirits. Their being without their bodies is the real reason for their dissatisfaction with their existing condition of rest. They are at rest, but they are separated from their bodies. The body is an essential part of the being of man, and he cannot attain to his highest possibilities and happiness without his body. Thus, they insist on the resurrection of their dead bodies.

The White Robes

At least four words are used in the Greek New Testament to name articles of clothing. The word used here, above all others, designates a garment which signifies glory and honor of position. So the giving of the white robes is simply a figurative assurance to these saints that they will be clothed with glory and honor in due time. They are to wait until their brethren have suffered the same fate as themselves; until the time of resurrection of all dead saints, which is the first resurrection.

John saw the souls of these people. Contrary to a common belief, the Bible does not teach that the soul is the spiritual part of man. Soul is conscious life of any kind—spiritual, intellectual, or physical. Or, it may be a combination of all three. The vital point is that these

people were conscious though they were separated from the bodies. Consciousness is entirely in the physical life while in the world. It is in spiritual life from the time one passes out of the world. The very fact these are called souls says essentially that they are conscious, though dead. Soul sleeping has no teaching in the Scriptures. Man is simply given a different realm of consciousness when he dies: a spiritual one.

State of the Dead

In Old Testament times, all the dead went to a place called in the Hebrew language Sheol. This name means the unknown region, or the land of the question mark. There were two compartments in Sheol, the saved being in the upper part, and the unsaved being in the lower part, called the pit. When Jesus died and went to Sheol, which is called Hades in the Greek, he took the keys of death and Hades from the Devil (Rev. 1:18). He brought the spirits of the saved out of this region and placed them underneath the altar in Heaven (Rev. 6:9; Eph. 4:8). Thus, at the time of our present study, the bodies of the saved are dead in the earth, but their conscious spirit beings are in Heaven in the very presence of God awaiting the resurrection. They look upon Christ as the glorified Son of Man, understanding he has the likeness which they shall have when they are raised from death. No wonder then they are a bit impatient for their reunion with their bodies.

ARMAGEDDON

Revelation 6:12-17

And I saw when he opened the sixth seal, and a great shaking came about, and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and all the moon became as blood, and the stars of the heaven fell into the earth, as a fig tree casts her unripe figs being shaken by a great wind, and the heaven was moved away as a book is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth and the great ones and the commanders of thousands and the rich ones and the mighty ones and every bond servant and free man hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and they say to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall ye upon us and hide us from the face of the one sitting upon the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb," because the great day of their wrath has come, and who shall be able to stand?

The Sixth Seal

This passage is exceedingly difficult of interpretation as to time

and the scope of the plagues described. It appears this situation is mentioned a number of other places in the Scriptures. One example is Joel 2:30, 31, which states the shaking of the heavenly powers will come before the great and shining day of the Lord. These verses are quoted also at Acts 2:19-22.

Order of Events

Matt. 24:29-31 seems to refer to the same situation, but again the time element is uncertain. The preceding verses in Matthew describe the flight of the Jews into the wilderness, which seems beyond a doubt to be at the middle of the seven years of the Great Tribulation. Then the account seems to go back somewhat in time and warn the saints of the appearance of false christs and false prophets. Then it tells of the manner of the coming of Christ for his saints. So, closely coupled with the flight of Israel is the account of the coming for the saints that it strongly hints these events are closely related in time. It has been previously suggested that the rapture of the saints comes immediately before the revelation of Antichrist and the resultant flight of the Jews into a place of hiding.

If we accept this order of events, that is: the rapture of the saints at the middle of the Tribulation period, immediately afterwards the revelation of the man of sin as the son of perdition, and immediately after this the flight of the Jews, then our present passage would seem to follow these things immediately, which would be immediately after the middle of the Tribulation period. For Matthew says it is immediately after the tribulation of those days that the sun is darkened, etc. But this view only thrusts upon us another difficulty, in that apparently immediately after the shaking of the heavenly powers Christ comes in glory. Our whole philosophy is based on the proposition that Christ comes in glory at the end of the Tribulation and not near the middle of it.

The result seems to be that we must suppose that somewhere in connection with our present verses the account skips over the time from the middle of the Tribulation to the end. The question then is, is the skipping done before or after the darkening of the sun, etc.? In other words, does the darkening of the sun immediately follow the rapture of the saints at the middle of the Tribulation, or does it immediately precede the coming of Christ in glory three and a half years later?

The position favored here is the latter suggestion; it is immediately at the end of the Tribulation period that the heavenly powers are shaken as described in our passage. That is, immediately after the darkening of the sun, moon, etc., the unsaved world will see Christ coming in glory with his saints.

However, the philosophy followed in this study makes the removal of the restraining force of righteousness from the world in the rapture of the church the event which releases the forces of violence which shakes even the heavenly powers. Then the proposition is, if the way was prepared for the opening of the sixth seal at the middle of the Tribulation, then why are its effects not worked out until three and half years later? If we say the sixth seal is not opened until near the end of the Tribulation, we are no better off. For that position would leave us with the last half of the Tribulation ignored entirely up to the end of the period, except as it is presented in a very general way with the four horsemen.

Time Covered by Sixth Seal

In view of the fact that six signifies man in utter rebellion against God and having given his full allegiance to the Devil, we are forced to the position that the sixth seal covers all the last half of the Tribulation, for this is the time when the world is almost entirely abandoned of God and the Devil rules as almost supreme on earth. This drives us to take the position that the sixth seal is opened immediately after the middle of the Tribulation, but only the climax of its results is told, when the heavens and the earth are shaken immediately before the coming of Christ. No adequate explanation is offered as to why the battle of Armageddon is not presented in the picture, for it does occur during this period of time. However, we have this same problem regardless of what position we take with reference to the seals. They simply do not present Armageddon clearly unless we should take the view that the shaking of the heavenly powers is a figurative description of this last great battle. And this position does not appear likely at all. The shaking of the heavens and the earth is mentioned too many times in too many varying settings for us to suppose it is not literal.

Conclusion

Again summing up the substance of the things suggested here, they are: 1. The saints are raptured at the middle of the Tribulation. 2. Antichrist is revealed as the son of perdition immediately after the rapture of the saints. 3. Antichrist sets out to destroy the Jews, and they flee into their place of refuge, to remain there the remainder of the Tribulation. 4. The rapture of the saints is the occasion for the opening of the sixth seal, and the revelation of Antichrist as the son of the Devil is the immediate result of it. 5. In the meantime, the armies are marshaled and Armageddon is fought, but these things are not mentioned in the sixth seal. 6. At the end of three and a half years, after Armageddon has been fought (but it is still in progress) there comes the shaking of the

heavens and the earth. 7. There appears the sign of the Son of Man in Heaven, and the tribes of the earth mourn because of him. 8. Christ comes in glory with his saints to judge the nations and set up his reign of righteousness on the earth.

Chapter 6

Preparation for the Seventh Seal

Revelation 7

This chapter has been entitled, "Preparation For The Seventh Seal." This is exactly why the matters in the chapter are presented here. There are two main points in the chapter. They are the sealing of Israel, and the presentation of a glorified host in Heaven. Israel is sealed lest the nation should be destroyed in Armageddon; the saints are presented in Heaven as testimony that the first resurrection has already taken place.

THE SEALING OF ISRAEL

Revelation 7:1-8

After this I saw four angels standing upon the four corners of the earth, grasping the four winds of the earth, in order that a wind should not blow upon the earth nor upon the sea nor upon any tree. And I saw another angel coming up from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God, and he cried out in a great voice to the four angels to whom it was given to them to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, "Do not hurt ye the earth nor the sea nor the trees, until we may seal the bond servants of our God upon their foreheads." And I heard the number of the ones having been sealed, a hundred forty four thousands sealed out of every tribe of the sons of Israel: Twelve thousands out of the tribe of Judah having been sealed,

*Out of the tribe of Reuben twelve thousands,
Out of the tribe of Gad twelve thousands,
Out of the tribe of Asher twelve thousands,
Out of the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousands,
Out of the tribe of Manassa twelve thousands,
Out of the tribe of Simeon twelve thousands,
Out of the tribe of Levi twelve thousands,
Out of the tribe of Issachar twelve thousands,*

*Out of the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousands,
 Out of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousands,
 Out of the tribe of Benjamin twelve thousands having been sealed.*

A Pause

Six of the seals have already been opened, and their results have been told. The seventh seal is the only one lacking, and it is about to be opened. When it is opened, the remainder of the plagues of the Tribulation are visited upon the earth. Specifically, the battle of Armageddon is to be fought, in which the human race will be almost destroyed. At the end of this battle, or rather bringing the battle to its conclusion, Christ comes in glory to set up his reign. This enthronement of Christ also comes as an immediate result of the opening of the seventh seal.

These things being true, it is perfectly logical that a pause should come before the opening of the seventh seal to take care of any necessary intervening matters. This is exactly what this seventh chapter is about, the disposal of some matters that must be dealt with before Armageddon and the coming of Christ in glory.

Winds of Destruction

At the beginning of the chapter, we have the picture of the four angels standing on the four corners of the earth grasping the four winds of the earth. These four corners refer to the four points of the compass—north, south, east, and west. Again, we are presented with a figurative situation rather than a literal one. These angels command the winds of the earth, but they do not literally hold them in their hands. They hold these winds lest they should blow upon the earth, the sea, or any tree. These are winds of destruction of the Great Tribulation.

Evidently, these angels are about to release these winds of destruction on the earth, for another mighty angel, having the seal of the living God, comes from the east, or the rising of the sun, and cries out in a great voice that they are not to hurt the earth, nor the sea, nor the trees until the servants of our God may be sealed upon their foreheads. Evidently, this angel is a representative of Christ, for he speaks in great authority, and Jesus speaks repeatedly of the authority that was given to him as the Son of Man.

It is very interesting that twelve thousand of each of the tribes of Israel are to be sealed. The facts seem to be as follows. 1. The battle of Armageddon is about to take place in which the human race will almost be destroyed, with a special effort to destroy Israel. 2. The terms of the covenant with Israel have not been fulfilled, therefore a halt of the destruction is called until Israel is sealed against being

destroyed as a nation so that God may carry out the terms of the Abrahamic covenant with them. In other words, the sealing does not indicate the personal salvation of the Israelites, but the preservation of the nation as such. Many Israelites will be slain in the Tribulation, but the Scriptures teach the nation will be preserved.

Son of Man

It is notable again that an angel who seems to represent Christ as the Son of Man commands the situation. The Father gave the Son authority to create the church and bring it to glory in the present age and in the age to come. The Father also gives the Son authority to regather Israel after the long dispersion and bring them to glory as a nation in the flesh in the Millennium. Christ will lead Israel into the good land flowing with milk and honey, establish them there, and enable them to live righteously in the flesh during the Millennial reign. No people has ever lived righteously in the flesh, but the Israelites will all turn to Christ and be saved, and they will live in a world in which Christ is the God instead of the Devil, and righteousness will be the working principle instead of sin. Israel will live without sin in the flesh in this golden age which is soon to come. If Christ could command his own flesh so that it would not sin, he can also command the flesh of Israel so that they will not sin when he acts in full authority on the earth. If this theory of the Millennium is true, then men will be born with a sinful nature in the Millennium, but they will lose all inclination to sin when they are born again. This is to say unsaved people will live in the rebellion of unbelief in the Millennium, but saved people will live in perfect righteousness before God, a condition which has not prevailed on earth since the fall of man in Eden. This will prove that Christ can work out a plan whereby even men in the flesh can please God.

The thing just suggested—that saved men, especially Israel, will live sinless lives in the Millennium—involves a complex psychological (soul) study. Man is a trinity composed of spirit, mind, and body. This fact is recognized at I Thess. 5:23, where the parts are called spirit, soul, and body. But soul is merely a loose usage of mind in this instance, for soul means conscious life, and consciousness is in the mind.

Twofold Nature of Man

On the other hand, Paul discusses the twofold nature of man at length in the latter part of the seventh chapter of Romans. However, his outer, sinful man is nothing but the flesh corresponding with the mind and engaging it in sinful and fleshly thoughts. His inner, spiritual man is his born-again spirit engaging

the mind and leading it to engage spiritual and righteous thoughts. Therefore, man is a trinity, but his thoughts and actions are twofold. They are either fleshly or spiritual as the flesh or the spirit dominates the field of consciousness in the mind.

When one is born again, his spirit becomes holy and completely like the spirit of Christ. It neither thinks nor does any sin, but it seeks to influence the mind to righteousness (I John 3:9). This is the point from which all righteous thoughts and actions originate in the saved person. Since the unsaved person is spiritually dead, there is nothing in him to induce righteous thoughts and actions. The man in the flesh cannot please God (Rom. 8:8).

We know that we sin in the flesh, even as the children of God, just as Paul admitted he sinned in the flesh. But is this motive for sinning implanted in the very essence of our being, or is it a mere creature of the flesh itself? Do we as the children of God sin simply because we live in a sinful environment which includes our own bodies, or would we still sin if the environment were changed from sin to one of righteousness as it will be in the Millennium? If we could answer this question positively, then we could say whether Israel and other saved people will live without sin in the thousand years' reign of righteousness. Until we are able to answer it, we are not likely to find this answer.

As to sinners in the Millennium, the Scriptures plainly teach that the Devil will be able to marshal an army in numbers as the sands of the sea at the end of the thousand-year reign. But they are an entirely different proposition from the saved. They still have their rebellious spirit natures in which they were born into the world. Their sins and rebellion come out of it. Thus it is easy to see why they will sin: their sins come out of their own unregenerate hearts.

Once again, we raise the question that is hard to answer. When the spirit of a man is born of God, and when his environment is made ideal by the reign of Christ, and when the Devil is chained and in the bottomless pit, is there any inducement to the individual to sin? I do not believe there is. Evidently, saved Israel and all other saved people who are still living in the flesh will attain that fleshly righteousness which we find impossible to attain now because both our bodies and our environment are in the kingdom of the Devil.

If we admit the thing just suggested, then we admit that our sins as the children of God come out of our environment, which includes our own bodies, and they do not come out of our innermost being. Therefore it is the environment, including our bodies, and not the real "I" which is responsible for sin and commits it. This is why God can accept us as his children: it is not the real inner person that sins, but it is only the outer man who perishes with the death of the body who does it so. This is the man over whom Paul admits he had

no control, and he hoped for deliverance from him through Christ the Lord. This deliverance comes partly by our substituting works of righteousness for works of sin. When our tongues are telling the truth of God, they are not lying about things of the world and the flesh. The complete deliverance comes to us in the resurrection, and perhaps to Israel in the Millennium.

Israel

There are two serious problems in the names of the tribes of Israel who are sealed. First, Joseph is substituted for Ephraim as the head of one of the tribes. Second, Dan is omitted from the tribal enumeration entirely. There were thirteen tribes of the children of Israel. But to maintain God's number of governmental perfection, twelve, only twelve tribes were reckoned in any given situation in Old Testament times. This was accomplished by omitting Levi, who was the priestly tribe, and who did not receive a tribal inheritance along with their brethren. Of course, the thirteenth tribe came as the result of Joseph being given a double portion, he being a strong type of Christ, and becoming the father of two tribes through his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. Little more than speculation is claimed for the suggestions as to why we have this strange tribal enumeration of Israel here in Revelation.

Ephraim and Manasseh

When the tribes were formed, the two tribes that came from the house of Joseph were called Ephraim and Manasseh, Ephraim always taking precedence over Manasseh though Manasseh was the firstborn. Apparently this was done on the spiritual principle that the second born takes precedence over the firstborn; for example, the first birth of an individual is the fleshly birth and the second birth is the spiritual birth. God accepts the second born, but rejects the firstborn as being fleshly and sinful. Joseph himself is not mentioned in connection with these tribes in Old Testament situations except in a figurative sense. But Manasseh and Joseph are named as the heads to the two tribes here in Revelation. Manasseh, who represents the one born after the flesh, comes into his full inheritance in the flesh in the Millennium. The fleshly man has become a man of God as well as the spiritual man. Joseph comes into his tribal inheritance as one of the original sons of Jacob. In type or parallel, Joseph could very well picture Christ literally taking the headship of his church in the Millennium, Ephraim representing the church. This would give us a logical reason why Joseph has displaced Ephraim as the tribal head.

Dan and Levi

A far more knotty tribal question is why Dan is dropped from the tribal enumeration. He has been displaced by Levi, who takes his place as one of the literal tribes of Israel. Not only do we have the question of what has become of Dan, but also we are presented with the question of why Levi no longer is separated as the priestly tribe. Levi loses the priestly office probably because Christ has become the great high priest as well as the king of Israel. Thus Levi assumes its place as one of the ordinary tribes of Israel.

As to Dan, Genesis 49:16, in the prophetic blessings of Jacob, says that Dan shall judge his people as one of the tribes of Israel. The Danites forsook their tribal inheritance and embraced idolatry long before the other tribes did; see the eighteenth chapter of Judges. Perhaps the Danites had so completely lost their identity as Israelites that they were thought to be Gentiles when Jesus came into the world. Perhaps they had been so long in idolatry that they readily accepted the message of salvation and church truth when it was preached to them by the early missionaries. Perhaps they have been prominent in the church throughout the Church Age and as a part of the glorified church will judge their brethren in the Millennium, according to the promise of Matthew 19:28. This speaks of judging Israel in the Millennium. Some believe this verse gives a promise to the apostles as such, but it seems more likely it is a promise to the church. In other words, it was given to the same group to whom the Great Commission is given. It is freely confessed there are difficulties in this suggested position. But how will we explain the disappearance of Dan from among the tribes of Israel without running into difficulties? In Bible interpretation, we are often faced with the issue of accepting the position which seems to have the fewest difficulties, and not one which has no difficulties. God does not simply forget that Dan ever existed. There is some Bible reason why Dan does not appear with the others in the sealing of the tribes in the last days.

PRAISE BECAUSE OF RESURRECTION

Revelation 7:9-12

After these things I saw, and behold a great crowd, whom no one was able to number it, of every nation and tribes and peoples and tongues, standing in the presence of the throne and in the presence of the Lamb, clothed about with white robes, and palm branches in their hands; and they cry out in a great voice saying, "The salvation to our God, the one sitting upon the throne, and to the Lamb. " And all the angels stood round about the throne and the elders and the

four living beings, and they fell in the presence of the throne upon their faces and did reverence to God, saying, "Amen, the praise and glory and the wisdom and the thanksgiving and the honor and the dynamic power and the might to our God into the ages of the ages, Amen. "

Saints

In this section, we have a great host of glorified saints in the presence of the throne of God in Heaven. Discussion of who these saints are will be reserved to the next section, for there they are described. In this section we shall notice the praise rendered to God by these saints and the mighty host of angels. The praise of both groups has to do with resurrection power and glory.

Innumerable Hosts

First, this host is so great that no one is able to number it, and they come from all nations. They have palm branches in their hands, which is a sign of victory of a conquering army and a conquering commander. They are all clothed in white robes, which indicate distinction on their own part. They simply praise God for salvation. This is not the new birth, but it is that salvation known only to resurrected, glorified saints. In other words, they render the praise which comes from all glorified saints. Any resurrected saint can sing their song.

Second, all the angels appear in the presence of the throne, where the Father, the Son, the elders, and the four living beings are. These angels fall upon their faces before the throne and do reverence to God. It is not evident from the language whether or not the elders and the living beings join in this worship and praise. No mention is made of the Lamb in the praise of the angels. This suggests that the angels are seeing only the finished work of glorification of mankind apart from the details whereby it was accomplished. These angels have watched the conflict over mankind since the transgression of Adam. They now see God having won the victory in these glorified saints, and they give their full approval of the way the victory has been won, as well as their praise for the fact it has been won, though, the battle for man has been long and terrible.

Seven Ascriptions of Praise

There are seven ascriptions of praise to God on the part of these angels. The number seven indicates these angels could not in any way add to the praise they gave. When they give full approval to the works of God, they find no fault in these works. Men in their delusion find fault with God and his works and defy him, but neither

do the holy angels find any fault, nor do the angels of the Devil defy the commands and judgments of God. Notice how the demon spirits never defied Jesus in his dealings with them. The works of God finally will all be approved by every intelligent being of the universe not only from the standpoint of mercy, but also from the standpoint of justice.

THE SAINTS OF THE FIRST RESURRECTION

Revelation 7:13-17

And there answered one of the elders saying to me, "These ones clothed about with the white robes, who are they and whence did they come?" And I said to him, "My lord thou knowest." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great affliction, and they washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. On account of this they are in the presence of the throne of God, and they shall serve him day and night in his temple, and the one sitting upon the throne shall tabernacle over them. They shall not hunger nor thirst longer, nor shall there by any means fall upon them the sun or any burning, because the Lamb, who is in the midst of the throne shall shepherd them, and he shall lead them unto fountains of waters of life; and God shall wipe every tear out of their eyes."

Question

One of the elders first asks John who the mighty host clothed with white robes are. John simply returns the question to the elder for answer. The answer is that they are the ones coming out of the great affliction, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. They are to continue in the presence of God forever.

The statement that they came out of the great affliction, or the Great Tribulation, has caused most Bible students to suppose these are confined to some mysterious group of saints who die in the Tribulation period. There are several serious objections to this view.

All Nations

First, these saints come out of all nations, tongues, etc. If this statement is to be taken literally, then we all know that many nations have ceased to exist long before the coming of the Great Tribulation. How, therefore, could these come out of such nations as ancient Babylon or Egypt, if they are saints who die martyr's deaths in the Tribulation? Of course, they could do no such thing.

Washed Robes

Second, it is said only that these have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. There is no indication of their being clothed with any righteousness of works, which would certainly be true of any who might die martyrs' deaths in the Tribulation period. No doubt many of these are clothed with righteous works, but they are not mentioned here simply because they are presented along with all other saved who have no righteous works. Righteous works has no part in their particular picture.

Martyrs

Third, if these are Tribulation martyrs who have been raptured along with all other saints, what is the point in making a distinction between them and the many others who have died the martyr's death in earlier times? There would be no logical difference between a Tribulation martyr and a martyr of the apostolic age, for instance. It is completely out of harmony with New Testament teachings in general to seek to make any such distinction.

Scripture Proof

Fourth, if these are people who are saved and martyred after the resurrection of the saints, where is the Scripture proof of any such transactions? It is believed no proof can be found, unless it be found in such uncertain situations as the one we are now dealing with, and such proof is never conclusive. Having pointed out these objections to the idea that these are a peculiar group of saints martyred after the Tribulation begins, and it is believed each objection is worthy of serious consideration, let us advance to some positive suggestions on the matter.

Saints of All Ages

These are all the saints of all ages presented in Heaven soon after the first resurrection.

First Argument

The first argument that these are all the saints of the first resurrection is based on the theory on which this whole study is based: that is that every part of Revelation is connected either logically or in time with the parts that lie around it. The logical connections are far more prevalent than are the time connections. As to the general situation, six seals have been opened. Before the opening of the seventh seal, which brings things to their awful consummation on the earth, a pause is called until Israel is sealed against annihilation in the battle of Armageddon. It is logical that the removal of the saints from the earth is the event which breaks

down the restraint which makes Armageddon possible. Therefore, it is perfectly logical that the raptured saints in Heaven should be presented in close conjunction with the sealing of Israel and the opening of the seventh seal, which follows in the eighth chapter.

Second Argument

The second argument has already been presented negatively. These saints come from all the nations of the world, and evidently they have been gathered out of all the past ages. This can be possible only if it includes all the saints who have lived and died in the past.

Third Argument

The third argument has also been mentioned. These saints are not described, as is usual with those who have been faithful unto death. Their robes are washed in the blood of the Lamb, and that is all there is to it. This description can include those who died in infancy just as readily as it can be confined to those who suffered for the cause, either in the Great Tribulation or long before. There is positively no distinction of works among the people of God indicated in this situation.

Fourth Argument

The fourth argument is closely related to the third. It is that there is no promise to this group of saints which does not equally apply to every saved person. They shall serve God day and night in his temple; God shall tabernacle over them continually; they shall not suffer any physical discomfort, because the Lamb shall shepherd them and lead them unto fountains of waters of life; and God shall erase every tear from their eyes.

This leaves the question of what is meant by their coming out of the great affliction, or the Great Tribulation. There are possible answers to this question, either of which leaves less difficulty than if we attempt to prove these are only saints who die in the period of the Great Tribulation.

First Resurrection

These saints come out of the Great Tribulation in the sense that the first resurrection comes during the Tribulation. Some believe it comes at the beginning of the period. This study is based on the theory it comes about the middle of the Tribulation period. In either instance, the living saved come out of it in that they escape from its environment. The dead saved come out of it in the sense that their bodies come out of the graves at the time of the Tribulation. In a

sense, the first resurrection comes as a result of Tribulation, and in this sense the saints all come out of it.

Life a Tribulation

The second suggestion is that this life is a time and condition of tribulation for the whole human race. The Great Tribulation is nothing but an intensifying of forces of evil which have prevailed since the days of Cain and Abel. There were both antichrists and a tribulation in the apostolic age (I John 2:18 and Acts 14:22). Coming out of the Great Tribulation, therefore, would be the leaving behind of the troubles of the present world forever. The first suggestion is preferred in this study.

Again, note the logic of this whole situation. The sixth seal has been opened, and it inevitably brings Armageddon. Six denotes man in rebellion against God and giving his full allegiance to the Devil. But there are other peoples and forces vitally related to Armageddon. When Armageddon comes, we wish to know the condition and position of three specific groups. They are Israel, the church, and unsaved humanity in general. The present chapter answers those questions.

A pause has been called for the sealing of Israel, that is a halt to the Armageddon movement. Lost men in general are about to be engulfed in the great battle. What about the third group of humanity, the saved? This question is answered by the presentation of the great and glorified host in Heaven. The scene is given simply to show where the saved are and what their condition is while such terrible destruction is going on upon the earth.

Chapter 7

The Seventh Seal and the Trumpets

REVELATION 8, 9

This section of Revelation begins with the opening of the seventh seal. There is silence in Heaven about a half hour after the opening of this seal and then the account of the blasting of the seven trumpets is given. This suggests that the trumpets are incorporated within the seventh seal. The view taken in this study is that both the trumpets and the vials, which come later, are embodied in the opening of the seventh seal.

The question of just when the seventh seal is opened, and when the trumpets begin to be blown is a perplexing one. There is evidence that both movements are confined to the last half of the Great Tribulation. However, since the time element cannot be strictly adhered to in the study of Revelation, the seventh seal may include the other six seals, the trumpets and the vials. If so, then the seventh seal must embrace the whole Tribulation period, because the opening of the first seal ushers in the Tribulation. In other words, the seventh seal may be simply a summary of the other six. The end of the seventh seal would come when Christ wins victory in the Tribulation and comes in glory to set up his throne in Jerusalem. This is why it has been insisted that when the seventh seal is finished, righteous men will have come into their inheritance in the Millennium.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE TRUMPETS

Revelation 8:1-6

And when he opened the seventh seal, there became silence in the Heaven about a half hour. And I saw the seven angels who stand in the presence of God, and there were given to them seven trumpets. And another angel came and stood upon the altar of sacrifice having a golden censer, and there was given to him much incense, in order

that he should give it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar of sacrifice in the presence of the throne. And there went up the smoke of the incense with the prayers of the saints out of the hand of the angel in the presence of God. And the angel took the censer, and filled it with the fire of the altar of sacrifice and cast it into the earth. And there became thundering s and voices and lightnings and a shaking. And the seven angels who have the seven trumpets made them ready that they might trumpet.

Opening of the Seventh Seal

The half hour of silence in Heaven resulting from the opening of the seventh seal evidently refers to the proverbial calm before the storm. Regardless of when the seal is opened, it encompasses all of the Great Tribulation with all of its horrors. Therefore, the heavenly intelligences stand in awed horror for about a half hour as they contemplate what is about to occur on earth.

The second result of the opening of the seventh seal is the appearance of seven angels in the presence of the throne of God. Seven trumpets are given to them in preparation for blasting. The intellectual side of the Great Tribulation is about to be presented in these trumpets.

The Angel and the Golden Censer

Before the seven angels begin to blast the trumpets, there comes another angel and stands upon, or over, the altar of sacrifice. He has a golden censer in his hand, there is given to him much incense, and he offers it with the prayers of all the saints upon the altar in the presence of God upon the throne. The smoke of the burning incense goes up in the presence of God. In keeping with the offering of incense as practiced under the Law of Moses, the burning of incense here represents the righteous works of Christ as the Son of Man in the world, which go up as a sweet odor to the throne of God. These works are pleasing because of their ultimate righteousness, and because they produce the righteousness and salvation of believing men. The incense is offered with the prayers of confession of the saints and their plea for help from God. It is likely there is one other element in the offering of incense, the righteous works of the saints. There is no good in the works of the flesh, but when men in the flesh believe, teach and practice the word of God these works stand as perfect before God and fully acceptable to him. For example, when a scriptural baptism is performed, the act goes up as sweet incense to God.

The angel fills the censer with fire of the burning incense from the altar and casts it into the earth. The burning incense cast into the earth signifies the righteous works of Christ and the saints in the

earth, and the burning signifies the opposition of the world to Christ and his saints. The burning of the sweet odors pictures the efforts of the world and the Devil to destroy the works of Christ and his people. There are thunderings, voices, lightnings, and a shaking of the earth as God sees the mistreatment of his Son and the rejection of his salvation by the masses of mankind. These things imply that God is about to move in judgment against a Christ-rejecting world. This scene sets the stage of action for the blasting of the seven trumpets, which bring fearful judgments upon the earth and mankind.

THE BLASTING OF FOUR TRUMPETS

Revelation 8:7-13

And the first trumpeted, and there became hail and fire mingled in blood and it was cast into the earth. And the third of the earth was burned, and the third of the trees were burned, and all green grass was burned. And the second angel trumpeted, and as a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea; and the third of the sea became blood, and the third part of the created things in the sea died, the things having souls, and the third part of the boats were destroyed. And the third angel trumpeted, and there fell out of the heaven a great star burning as a lamp, and it fell upon the third of the rivers and upon the fountains of waters. And the name of the star is called Bitter Poison. And the third part of the waters became bitter poison, and many of the men died from the waters because they were made bitter. And the fourth angel trumpeted, and the third part of the sun was plagued and the third part of the moon and the third part of the stars, in order that there might be darkened the third part of them and that the day should not shine the third part of it, and the night likewise. And I saw, and I heard one eagle flying in the midheaven saying in a great voice, "Woe, woe, woe, to the ones dwelling upon the earth because of the other soundings of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to trumpet."

Trumpet—A Summons to War

The general use of a trumpet in the Scriptures is to summon men to war. When Gideon was chosen to lead Israel against the enemy, and all other preliminaries were disposed of, he blew a trumpet to summon the men of Israel to go against the enemy (Judg. 6:34). Nehemiah had a trumpeter by him to summon the Jews to battle if the enemy came while Judah was building the walls of Jerusalem (Neh. 4:18-19). Paul says, "If the trumpet shall give an unintelligible sound, who shall be prepared for war?" (I Cor. 14:8). If the trumpets summon to battle, who are engaged in the battle? The

trumpets invite men, demons, and Antichrist to make their utmost effort in certain fields of activity, with the results described in connection with the various trumpets.

The First Four Trumpets

The first four trumpets bring plagues from heaven, or from the air, upon the earth to create wreckage of various sorts. These trumpets may introduce the results of the efforts of man, to control and dominate the earth itself, and to gain control of the atmosphere around the earth. This results in throwing the creation out of balance both physically and chemically and thus bringing the plagues of the first four trumpets upon the earth. The work of chemical rain-makers and the explosion of nuclear missiles might produce such results as those described in the first four trumpets. The extent of technological advancement before the Great Tribulation remains to be seen. The serious student of prophecy will not make definite prophecies in fields of rapid progress and change.

Again, the four first trumpets represent the final efforts of man to control the physical universe by the inventions of his intellectual powers.

Man and His Relationship to the Earth

As in the case of the first four seals, it may be said of the first four trumpets that they have to do with man and his relationship to the earth. This relationship is best understood by considering the curse is pronounced upon Adam (Gen. 3:17-18). He had rejected God, but he was not finally committed to the Devil. The four points in the curse are: the ground was cursed on his account; he would eat from the earth in sorrow; it would bring forth thorns and thistles; and he would eat the herb of the field, which would not give him a sufficient diet. Man brings this kind of environment upon himself when he lives without God but does not have the Devil as his ultimate god. His course is one of destruction and sorrow, but this course is not nearly so marked or spectacular as when he has positively committed himself to the godship of the Devil. With the Devil as their god, sinners assemble under Antichrist to fight the battle of Armageddon. Under the first four trumpet judgments, the sea, the rivers, the fountains, and the heavenly bodies are partly plagued so that a part of mankind and of the living things die; but there is not quick and complete annihilation, as would be the case if the battle of Armageddon were not interrupted. The four trumpets depict events caused by the environment which man has made for himself since the fall in Eden.

The First Trumpet

The first trumpet brings hail and fire mixed with blood, which is cast into the earth. There is no indication whether this is a plague sent directly from the hand of God, or whether it is a figurative description of an unusual disturbance of the elements, or whether it is a disturbance of the atmospheric elements by the devices of men. Preference is given to this latter suggestion. The result is that the third part of the earth and its plant life are destroyed by fire with mathematical precision. This mathematical precision of the trumpets suggests the idea this is the intellectual side of the Great Tribulation.

Second Trumpet

At the blasting of the second trumpet, not necessarily a great mountain, but something like a great mountain is cast into the sea. This object is burning with fire, and the third part of the sea becomes blood. Again, there is no indication whether it is literal blood or a polluting or poisoning of the waters that makes them look like blood. The poisoning of the waters could be caused by the radiation of nuclear explosions. A positive statement about such matters cannot be made because man may learn to increase his power of destruction many times before the end time. Men in the past have erred greatly in attempting to interpret such things in the light of the weapons of war of their day. The weapons of only fifty years ago are utterly crude and outmoded today. Those of today may be outmoded before the end of the age. The result of the plagues of the waters is that the third part of the living souls in the sea die, and the third of the boats are destroyed. These souls are not men, but they are the things living in the sea having conscious life, as opposed to plants, which do not have conscious life. Note again the mathematical precision of the destruction.

Third Trumpet

At the blast of the third trumpet, a great star falls from heaven burning like a lamp. It falls upon a third of the rivers and fountains of water. Again, there seems to be no way of determining whether this is a visitation directly from God or whether it is some agent of destruction devised and launched by man himself. It is quite possible it is something in the nature of a nuclear missile which falls upon the waters of the earth polluting them.

This star is named after a tree which produces bitter poison (Deut. 29:18). The Hebrew name is *Laanah*-, the Greek name is *Apsinthos*; and the English name is Wormwood. There is an implication that the waters of Marah (bitterness) were made bitter by wormwood (Ex. 15:23). These waters were healed by having

another tree cast into them. This perhaps refers to sin and death in Adam, but righteousness and life in the second man, Christ. Many of mankind die from drinking the poisoned waters.

Fourth Trumpet

When the fourth trumpet is blown, the third part of the sun, the moon, and the stars is plagued. Many people have seen the sun and the moon partly darkened by eclipses. If this were the case with the sun and the moon, and if a third part of the stars ceased to shine, then the situation would not be so mysterious. But this does not seem to be the case. These bodies are plagued in such a way that both day and night apparently cease to exist as usual. When it is light it is day; when it is dark it is night, and that is all there is to it. What is it like when there is neither day nor night, when it is neither light nor dark? There was a time when light and darkness were hopelessly mixed on the earth, (Gen. 1:2-5). This twilight could be caused either by explosions set off by men, or by some mysterious visitation from God. Preference is given to the former suggestion. This lends further credibility to the idea that the Great Tribulation is predominantly man under the leadership of the Devil destroying himself. Few, if any, of the visitations which come on the earth come as direct visitations from God.

The Angel in Mid-Heaven

The common version of the Scriptures says it is an angel who flies in the mid-heaven announcing the three woes. The revised texts say it is an eagle instead. It is more consistent with other similar texts to describe the messenger as an angel. But the preferred texts give it as an eagle. The important thing is the message which the flying being delivers.

The Three Woes

Some commentators attempt to separate the woes from the last three trumpets. This appears to be inconsistent with common reason as well as with the nature of the text. The woes come as the result of the blasting of the trumpets. In other words, the trumpets usher in the woes. There are three woes; the number three signifying completeness of woe in the three visitations. Note that there are two perfect numbers connected with these last three trumpets. In addition to the three woes, the last three trumpets complete the number seven, which signifies final completion. These things being true, one may expect terrible things with the blasting of the other three trumpets. There would hardly be a stronger way of expressing disastrous things.

Whereas the first four trumpets stand together as a related group, the last three stand apart as individual situations. The meaning of Bible numbers must be considered to rightly understand these trumpets.

The Numbers Five and Six

Five is the number of grace. It is always present when the working of the grace of God comes into prominence. Concisely stated, the fifth trumpet presents the working of the grace of God in his giving sinful men the thing they demand: a more complete rule of the Devil than the world has ever had before this time.

Six is the number which marks man as having ultimately rejected God and having embraced the Devil as the god whom he prefers. Six inevitably brings the battle of Armageddon, for the ultimate aim of the Devil is complete misery and destruction of man and the creation.

THE FIFTH TRUMPET

Revelation 9:1-13

And the fifth angel trumpeted, and I saw a star falling out of the heaven into the earth, and there was given to him the key of the pit of the abyss. And he opened the pit of the abyss; and there went up smoke out of the pit as smoke of a great furnace, and the sun was darkened and the air from the smoke of the pit, and out of the smoke there went forth locusts into the earth, and there was given to them authority as the scorpions of the earth have authority. And it was said to them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth nor any green thing nor any tree, but rather the men who do not have the seal of God upon their foreheads. And it was given to them that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months. And their torment is as the torment of a scorpion, whenever it may smite a man. And in those days the men shall seek death and they shall not find it, and they shall have a strong desire to die and death shall flee away from them. And the likenesses of the locusts are likenesses to horses made ready for war, and upon their heads as crowns like to gold, and their faces as faces of men, and they had hairs as hairs of women, and their teeth were as of lions, and they had breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings as the sound of many chariot horses running into war. And they have tails like to scorpions and stings, and in their tails is their authority to hurt men five months. They have over them a king, the angel of the abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek he has a name, Apollyon. The first woe is past. Behold, there come yet two woes after these things.

The Key to the Pit

At the fall of man the key of the abyss came into the possession of the Devil. The key signifies the power and authority to hold people in death. Until the death and resurrection of Jesus, the Devil maintained the authority and might of death (Heb. 2:14). At the resurrection of Jesus, he took the keys of death and Hades from the Devil (Rev. 1:18; John 12:31; Eph. 4:8-10). Evidently, the key of the abyss, which is the same as Hades, is in the possession of Jesus as the victorious Son of Man.

The key of the pit was given to a star which falls out of Heaven into the earth. No doubt, this star is an angelic being. Remember that an angelic being is called an eagle in the thirteenth verse of the eighth chapter. No doubt, there is some typical significance in that these angels are described as an eagle and a star.

The Devil is called the dawn star, (Isa. 14:12, Hebrew text). Jesus said he saw Satan like a flash of lightning fall from Heaven. The dragon drags a third part of the stars of the heaven and casts them into the earth, (Rev. 12). This evidently refers to the fall of rebellious angels from Heaven. These considerations make it appear that the star with the key of the pit is the Devil. Whether he is the Devil or an angel of God, he does the bidding of God in this situation.

Smoke and Locusts From Pit

Smoke comes out of the pit so that the sun and the air are darkened. Out of the smoke comes a great swarm of locusts into the earth. Swarms of locusts, which constituted great plagues by eating all vegetables, were common in the Bible. However, there are several peculiarities about these locusts which make it very doubtful that these are ordinary, literal locusts. These constitute a great swarm of demon spirits which are let loose on the earth during the last half of the Great Tribulation. Note the strange features concerning these locusts.

Locusts—Evil Spirits

Evidently, all such destructive creatures as locusts are agents of the Devil. There is no indication of such destructive creatures in Eden before the fall of man. God said of that creation and its living things that they were very good. Such pests as locusts became perverted from their original good offices for mankind when Adam delivered the earth into bondage to the Devil. But ordinary locusts come through the ordinary reproductive channels of nature, as do all other living things. The locusts of our study do not come in this way; they come directly out of the pit of the abyss, or Hades. This indicates they are really evil spirits and not ordinary locusts at all.

Power

It is said in the common version of the Scriptures that these locusts are given power as the scorpions of the earth. Peculiarly, the Greek text uses *exousia*, the word which means “authority” or “lawful right to act.” If left to follow their own inclination, these evil spirits would have been torturing and destroying mankind since the fall of man. But God has held such powers of evil in careful restraint. The giving of authority of these locusts means they are permitted to work without restraint from God.

Locusts ordinarily constitute a plague by devouring the plant life where they appear. These locusts are strictly commanded not to hurt any vegetation or plant life. But their attack is directly upon men. It is only those men who do not have the seal of God upon their foreheads who are attacked by the locusts. This would leave the hundred and forty-four thousands of Israel, who were sealed (Rev. 7), untouched by the plague. Evidently, all the rest of mankind are subjected to the plague.

Tormented Five Months

The torment of the locusts is like that of the sting of scorpions when they strike a man. This plague is to last five months. It is not given to the locusts to kill men, but to torment them. Men shall seek death, but it will flee away from them. The two strange facts are that the plague is to last five months and that men shall not be able to escape it by death.

It is no accident or coincidence that the plague lasts five months rather than four or six months. The waters of the flood prevailed on the earth a hundred and fifty days, which is five months, the same length of time that the plague of locusts continues, (Gen. 7:24; 8:3). Five is the number of the operation of the grace of God. The five months of the prevailing of the waters of the flood signifies the operation of the grace of God in ridding the earth and righteous Noah of the ungodly race which was destroying the earth and corrupting the family of Noah. The five months of the plague of locusts signifies the operation of the grace of God in his giving wicked men the rule of the Devil (which they have asked for since the fall of man). Again, like the judgment of the flood, the judgments of the Great Tribulation are necessary in vindicating the justice of God in his dethroning the Devil as the god of the world and enthroning Christ as the God or King of the World in the Millennium. The plague of locusts is another of the birth pangs of the coming golden age, of which birth pangs Jesus spoke several times. Not only does the plague of locusts come with the fifth trumpet but it lasts five months. This five is no accident.

The only righteous family was taken out of the earth into the ark, and the waters of destruction prevailed for a hundred and fifty days, or five months; the saved are taken out of the earth in the rapture, and the plague of demon spirits likewise prevails among mankind for five months. Men outside the ark were completely subjected to the flood waters; men who fail to attain the rapture will become complete victims of the demon plague for five months. The sealed remnant of Israel will escape this plague, (Rev. 9:4). It is like Israel's escaping the plagues that came upon Egypt when they were about to be freed from bondage (Ex. 8:22).

Men Seek Death

The second peculiarity mentioned about the plague is that men shall unsuccessfully seek death. Ordinarily, a man can find any number of ways to take his life if he so desires. When a man cannot find death, there is some mighty outside power controlling him, subjecting his own active will and initiative. This is the strongest evidence that these locusts are demon spirits rather than ordinary locusts. The demon-possessed man of the land of the Gadarenes ran up and down in the wilderness country, crying out and cutting himself with stones. He was attempting to kill himself, but the demon spirits would not allow him to do so. They tormented him to the point he wished to die, but they had such power over him he could not find death. It is the same way with men when the plague of locusts comes with the blasting of the fifth trumpet bringing the first woe.

A Description

In the description of the locusts, the war horses, the crowns, the faces of men, the hairs of women, the teeth of lions, the breastplates of iron, the mighty noise of battle, and the poisonous stings all refer to the efforts of men to do great and mighty things of themselves and to attain unto glory, honor, security and beauty by their own strength and wisdom. The Devil mocks them in his coming to them in the persons of the demon spirits to visit upon them the inevitable results of their own efforts and ambitions in life. The plague of locusts is a giving back to rebellious man what he has hoped to give to someone else.

Their King

The locusts have a king over them, who is the angel of the abyss. His Hebrew name is *Abaddon*, his Greek name is *Apollyon*. These are words brought out of the Hebrew and Greek languages without translation. When translated they both mean "the destroyer." They describe the real character and intent of the Devil, regardless of any

peaceable guise in which he may appear to men. This plague of demon spirits is the first woe which is to come upon the unsaved after the saints are taken out of the world.

THE SIXTH TRUMPET

Revelation 9:13-21

And the sixth angel trumpeted, and I heard one voice out of the four horns of the golden altar of sacrifice which is in the presence of God, saying to the sixth angel, the one having the trumpet, "Loose thou the four angels who are bound upon the great river Euphrates. "And the four angels were loosed who were made ready for the hour and day and month and year, in order that they might kill the third part of mankind. And the number of the soldiers of the horseman was two myriads of myriads; I heard the number of them. And thus I saw the horses in the vision and the ones sitting upon them, having breastplates, firecolored and purple and sulphur colored. And the heads of the horses were as heads of lions, and out of their mouths there goes forth fire and smoke and brimstone. From these three plagues were killed the third part of men, out of the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which goes forth out of their mouths. For the authority of the horses is in their mouth and in their tails. For their tails are like to serpents, having heads, and with them they hurt. And the others of the men, who were not killed in these plagues, nor did they repent of the works of their hands, in order that they should not worship the demons and the idols of gold and silver and brass and stone and wood, which are neither able to see nor to hear nor to walk, and they did not repent of their murders nor of their sorceries nor of their fornication nor of their stealing.

Man in Rejection

As elsewhere, the number six refers to man in rejection of God and giving his full allegiance to the Devil. When this condition exists, Armageddon is the inevitable result, for the violent destruction of humanity is the great goal of Satan. Serving the Devil never contributes to lasting peace. It may produce a temporary peace, but it only contributes to violent destruction later.

The Four Angels

At the blasting of the sixth trumpet, a voice speaks from the four horns of the altar of sacrifice in the presence of God commanding that the four angels bound upon the great river Euphrates be

loosed. The angel who blows the trumpet is commanded to release the bound angels. The voice that speaks from among the horns of the altar is not identified. It would seem that is the voice of Jesus, since he earned his right to speak in authority with reference to matters on the earth by the sacrifice of himself upon the altar. That is, Jesus died on the cross to save men from such a fate as this sixth trumpet brings. Jesus justly orders the judgment to be visited on rebellious men who have rejected his sacrifice.

The command is to loose the four angels who are bound upon Euphrates. The angels are not literally being bound upon the river. They are acting as a restraining force, holding back the mighty army which now advances. Or perhaps the picture will be more consistent if these are thought of as evil angels who have been restrained from marshalling the armies of the east for Armageddon. They are now set free to go about gathering the mighty hosts for destruction. Regardless of how the details are viewed, the scene is the breaking down the barriers of restraint which hitherto have prevented an all-out world conflict in the fullest sense.

Preparing for Armageddon

It is said these four angels are prepared for an hour, a day, a month, and a year. The only significance seen in this statement is that these angels have the definite office of preparing the armies for Armageddon when the time arrives for this great and fearful struggle. It is also stated that these angels shall kill a third part of mankind. No doubt, the actual killing is done in the battle to which the angels summon the armies. Thus, the angels serve as unseen spirit forces to perpetrate the battle rather than physical forces in the terrible movement.

The Rider

A rider is suddenly mentioned without introduction or identification in verse sixteen. He is the leader of the mighty army. It is consistent with prophecy in general to suppose this rider is the Antichrist himself. He is the mighty leader and instigating force in the last half of the Great Tribulation when this battle is arrayed.

Two Hundred Million

The Greek text says that the number of the army is two myriads of myriads. In English, myriad means "an indefinitely large number." In Greek it either means this same thing, or it means "ten thousands." If the latter interpretation is taken, there would be two times ten thousand times ten thousand, or two hundred million. Although this is not inconceivable, it is far larger than any army

which has ever been assembled on earth. This literal view of the number of the army seems to be preferable in view of the fact that John says in the Greek, . I heard the arithmetic of them.” The word arithmetic is lifted bodily out of the Greek, where it means “a definite number.”

Description of Army

A rather lengthy description of the army is given in the military terms that prevailed when John wrote Revelation. These military methods have long since been outmoded. Some take the view that civilization will suffer a setback between now and Armageddon which will cause men to return to the crude methods of warfare which prevailed in Bible times. No credence is placed in this view in this study. Revelation is the book of figures and comparisons, as opposed to a plain, literal statement of fact. This description is a figurative description of the most refined and efficient agencies of destruction which will have been devised by men when the time for Armageddon arrives. One can only speculate in the most vague way as to what the details of the description mean.

Number Slain?

It has been suggested that a third part of the human race will be killed in this battle. The Scriptures merely say a third of the men will be killed, not specifying whether it is a third of the men in the army or a third of the total of mankind—including women and children—who are to be slain. In fact, no one seems to have the answer as to whether irresponsible children will be left in the world at the rapture of the saints, which will surely take place before the battle of Armageddon.

Those under consideration here are those slain either directly or indirectly in the battle of Armageddon. There are many other destructive plagues and disasters of one kind and another which will take the lives of multitudes of people. Only a small remnant of those living in the world at the beginning of the Great Tribulation will still be alive when it comes to an end. Besides this, it is not certain whether the army of Christ will destroy a great host of rebellious men when he comes with his saints.

The Unrepentant

Those who are not slain in these plagues do not repent of the works of their hands. It seems strange that people, who have seen so much suffering and death and who evidently know of the disappearance from the earth of the saints in the rapture, would not repent and turn to God for mercy and salvation. It is doubtful

whether the Holy Spirit will be in the world during this time to convict men of sin. Without conviction men will not repent unto salvation. The last half of the Great Tribulation will be a fearful time for sinners.

Note the sin which had brought these people to their abandoned condition. The charge is that they had not repented of their worship of idols and demons. Everyone who does not worship according to the New Testament pattern is an idol worshipper and a demon worshipper. There is only one true God, and he must be accepted as he is presented in the Bible. The one who changes God from this pattern is not worshipping him at all; he is really worshipping a god of his own making, whether it is a graven image or not. The same thing may be said of demons. People who are obedient to the Scriptures in all fundamentals are led by the Holy Spirit; all others are led by an unholy spirit.

Steps In Apostasy

The path to apostasy is the same here as in other places in the Scriptures. The steps are: first, a rejection of the true God; second, a turning to idol worship; and third, moral decay and crime of many sorts. Those mentioned here are murder, sorcery, fornication, and stealing. These are the result of religious apostasy, and not the cause of it. The great commentary on the subject is the first chapter of Romans. The great example of it is Israel, who first turned from God to idols, then moral decay engulfed them as a nation.

The Beginning of the Second Woe

The second woe evidently comes with the blasting of the sixth trumpet, which in turn brings Armageddon as the immediate result. But the second woe does not end with the conclusion of the battle. The end of the woe comes after the ministry of the two witnesses is given, (Rev. 11). This woe is very complex in that it includes Armageddon, the new commission of John, the seven thunders, and the ministry of the two witnesses. These matters will be taken up in the next chapter.

Chapter 8

A New Commission to John

REVELATION 10

The sixth trumpet brings the marshaling of the forces for the battle of Armageddon, the battle itself, and the reaction of men to the horrors of the battle. It brings neither repentance of idolatry nor a turn to God. This battle will continue until the coming of Christ with his saints. At that time he will end the battle and set up his righteous reign over all the earth. Although the sixth trumpet is specifically the battle of Armageddon, there are within the account of it three other important things.

These three things, vitally related to the great battle, are the presentation of the open book to John, his new commission to prophesy, and the ministry of the two witnesses. Do not be deceived into attempting to establish a time sequence which does not exist. Look instead to logical relationships for connections.

Man makes his final decision and his final moves in connection with the blasting of the six trumpets. Because of this, John is told in effect that there are many other details to be revealed and other powers to make their last moves before the end of the Great Tribulation. There is no logical reason to suppose from the statement that John is to witness again as one of the two witnesses of the last days. He is simply told that the story of the Great Tribulation is not completed as yet.

In Armageddon, sinful men commit themselves finally to the godship of the Devil. The tenth and eleventh chapters tell of some results on Israel and the church of the final committal of the unsaved world to the rulership of Satan through Antichrist.

THE LITTLE BOOK AND THE SEVEN THUNDERS

Revelation 10:1-4

And I saw another mighty angel coming down out of Heaven, clothed about with a cloud, and the rainbow upon his head, and his face as the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire, and having in his hand a little book opened. And he set his right foot upon the sea and his left foot upon the earth, and he cried out in a great voice just as a lion roars. And when he cried out, the seven thunders spoke their voices. And when the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write; and I heard a voice out of Heaven saying, "Seal up what the seven thunders spoke, and do not write thou them. "

The Mighty Angel

This chapter opens with the description of a mighty angel, who comes down from Heaven with a little book opened in his hand. The description given seems to identify the angel with the glorified Christ. This is not to say he is Christ, but that he is very closely identified as a servant of Christ. Christ was presented as a slain lamb as he came out of the throne to receive the book from the hand of God (Rev. 5). He maintained this guise of the slain lamb in the opening of the seals, for the opening of the seals embraces all his works of redemption. At the present stage in Revelation, all these things pertaining to the personal works of Christ in the world are behind and he is presented as the glorified Christ who returned to Heaven after his works on earth were finished. This is the reason for the elaborate description of the mighty angel.

In the description of the mighty angel, there is mention of a rainbow on his head. The rainbow is first mentioned at the close of the flood in the days of Noah. It was to be a token to God whereby he should remember his covenant with the earth and mankind and not destroy the earth again with a flood of waters. The rainbow alludes to the work of redemption of Christ as the Son of Man in a sinful world.

The Rainbow

The rainbow comes as the storm clouds are retreating and the sun is flooding the heavens and the earth with light. It comes at the point where the rain is falling and the sun is shining at the same time. Thus, the rainbow is produced in and by a conflict between two forces that seek to prevail upon the earth: the sun and the rain. In this conflict, the sun always prevails; for, as already stated, the rainbow appears where the rain is retreating with the sunlight pursuing it and flooding the storm area with light.

This phenomenon of nature is beautifully significant and typical of

the work of Christ in the world. As Jesus struggled with sin and even went to the cross with the sins of the world upon his head, his works were as beautiful to God as the rainbow is beautiful in a physical sense, for this struggle and these works procure the salvation of many men. Christ is to bring defeat to the Devil, not by destroying mankind as in the days of Noah, but by winning every lawful right to become the God of the world himself in the Millennium. Included in this work is the bringing of all saved people into complete and eternal glory. So, when God looked upon the rainbow, he saw his Son as the Son of Man struggling with the Devil for possession of the creation, including mankind, with the promise that his Son would finally prevail. No wonder God said he would not again destroy the earth with a flood of waters when it could be won to eternal glory by his Son.

The picture of the work of Jesus in the figure of the rainbow is well expressed in the book of Hebrews, “. . . What is man that thou should remember him, or the son of man that thou should visit him? Thou hast lessened him a little something below angels, with glory and honor thou hast crowned him: thou hast set all things under his feet.

“But we see Jesus lessened a little something below angels on account of the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, to the end that by the grace of God, he might taste death on behalf of every man” (Heb. 2:6-9).

Mopping Up Operation

The angel with the rainbow upon his head represents Christ performing a mopping-up operation in preparation for the thousand-year reign on earth. The outcome of the struggle between Christ and Satan was determined forever when as the Son of Man he arose from the dead and ascended to Heaven. The outcome of the battle is already determined in the mind of God, and he is only waiting for the church to do its work, Israel to turn to the Messiah, and all men to make their final decisions as individuals, nations, and religious groups. Then the victory of Christ will be made evident on earth as it has already become evident in Heaven.

The Little Book

This notable angel has a little book opened in his hand. It is not identified as the little book which the Lamb receives from God the Judge in chapter five, but the whole situation seems to indicate it is the same. Christ has opened the book, thus launching all the movements of the Great Tribulation. With the trumpets coming as an inevitable result of the opening of the seals of the book, it is only

logical that the book should be given to John so that he may see the other things that are to come in the Tribulation.

Full Authority

The angel sets one foot upon the sea and the other upon the land, signifying his full authority to act with reference to the whole creation. This authority has been won by the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus. If God acted arbitrarily, he would have banished the Devil from the earth before the creation of man. The position of authority is taken upon the earth because all mankind, both as individuals and as groups, have had the opportunity to make their final choices and decisions.

Roaring of Lion

This angel cried out in a great voice as a lion roars. The roaring of a lion is mentioned only twice in the New Testament, here and at I Peter 5:8. A different Greek word is used for roaring in the two places. The word used by Peter evidently means the battle cry of the lion. The roaring of the lion in this text is said to be his mating cry. The evidence indicates this claim is true. Then the cry of the angel would seem to be a call to Israel to come to repentance. This position is taken because Israel begins to come more prominently into the Revelation picture than she has done thus far. A related reason, which will be discussed more fully later, is that the seven thunders have to do with judgments that will bring Israel to Christ.

Seven Thunders

When the angel calls as a lion, the seven thunders speak their voices, or utter their declarations. Thunder in the Bible usually signifies the judgments of a wrathful God. There was thunder on Mt. Sinai as God spoke of judgment without mercy in the giving of the law. In Revelation, thunder is associated with the judgment of those who reject Christ.

John was about to write what the seven thunders said, but a voice from Heaven forbade him. Thus, one can only presume what the thunders spoke. A new phase of Revelation is introduced in this chapter, and Israel takes a position of greater prominence. Religious matters very definitely come into more prominence with this new phase. These things indicate that the thunders speak of the things Israel is to suffer in the Great Tribulation as chastisement for rejection of Christ and acceptance of Antichrist. This chastisement will prepare them to receive Christ when he finally manifests himself to them in glory at his second coming.

THE MYSTERY OF GOD ENDED WITH THE SEVENTH TRUMPET

Revelation 10:5-7

And the angel whom I saw standing upon the sea and upon the land, lifted up his right hand into the heaven and swore by the one living into the ages of the ages, who created the heaven and the things in it, and the earth and the things in it, and the sea and the things in it, that there shall be no longer delay; but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to trumpet, then there shall be completed the mystery of God, as he preached to his bond servants, the prophets.

Decree of the Angel

The angel swears by the eternal creator concerning the decree that he issues. There is no mention in the oath of the Son of Man, the slain Lamb, or any other detail of how and why God can now bring the world to its consummation. All these things are necessary to the situation, but they are now in the past. The announcement that the world is not to drag wearily along in sin any longer is the vital point.

The common version of the Scriptures says the angel swears that time shall be no more. The clause can certainly be translated that way, but it does not make sense. It appears that time shall continue to exist until the end of the Millennium. This will make time continue for a thousand years after this decree is issued. Therefore, if possible, we are to find a different interpretation.

No Longer Delay

The translation given in this study makes the angel to say, “. . . there shall be no longer delay.” This rendering harmonizes perfectly with the statement that follows that the mystery of God is to be completed in the days of the voice of the seventh angel. The same word that is rendered “time” in the common version (Matt. 24:48; Luke 12:45) is translated delay in at least two instances. In these passages, the servant states that his lord delays his coming—not that he times his coming. The noun form in the Greek text is *chronos*, and the verb form is *chronize*. They have exactly the same root meaning, which is “definite time, a period of time, to spend time, to delay,” etc. So the announcement of the angel is that there shall be no more passing of time before the mystery of God is worked out.

Mystery of God Ended

The mystery of God will be completed, or brought to an end, in

the days of the blasting of the seventh trumpet. The seventh trumpet brings the conclusion of the Great Tribulation; therefore, it is at the end of this period that the mystery of God will be finished.

What Is The Mystery of God?

Mysteries are mentioned about twenty-seven times in the New Testament. Some of these will be noted. The mystery of God is the sum total of the mysteries discussed in the New Testament. This mystery was preached, or announced, to the Old Testament prophets. This seems to refer to those prophecies pertaining to the New Testament dispensation, which neither the prophets themselves, nor anyone else, understood until they were revealed with the coming of Jesus into the world.

There are the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens. These have to do with the workings and the career of the church in the world. These mysteries embrace all the mystery parables in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew.

There is the mystery of the off casting of Israel for a time and the acceptance of the church as the favored and covenant people of God. This mystery also appears to involve the regathering and salvation of Israel (Rom. 11:25).

Another mystery is that of the New Testament plan whereby people of all nations are to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ, accept and walk in it by faith, and thus be incorporated into the church body as the favored people of God. This order is set in contrast with those who follow a fleshly walk in religious beliefs and practices (Rom. 16:25, 26).

There is a mystery which seems to be our sure hope of Heaven as we serve the Lord in the church relationship and according to the New Testament pattern (I Cor. 2:7).

The resurrection and the rapture of the saints wherein we shall receive immortal, heavenly bodies is a mystery, (I Cor. 15:51).

The church is spoken of as a mystery in Ephesians and Colossians. This mystery is that men have utterly failed to do their part in every plan which God has initiated. After these failures, Jesus established the church on a plan which enables it to succeed until the end of the age. The essence of this plan is that the church, by faith, is to accept and do the things taught in the New Testament. It is to have the unerring superintendence of the Holy Spirit as long as it honestly tries to walk by the New Testament rule.

The mystery of iniquity, which means the mystery of spiritual lawlessness (II Thess. 2:7), is essentially the same as the mystery of the harlot (Rev. 17:5, 7). This is the mystery of Antichrist and apostate religion usurping the position of respect and confidence

which should belong to Christ and his church in the world. In a general way, these illustrate the mystery of God mentioned in the text. The greatest item in it is that the church will still be bearing witness to the truth at the end of the age, in spite of the fact the Devil has tried harder to corrupt the church than he has any other people God ever had in the world.

JOHN EATS THE LITTLE BOOK

Revelation 10:8-11

And the voice which I heard out of the Heaven, again speaking with me and saying, "Go thou, receive thou the little book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands upon the sea and upon the land." And I went to the angel, saying to him to give me the little book. And he says to me, "Receive it and eat it, and it shall make bitter thy insides, but in thy mouth it shall be sweet as honey." And I received the little book out of the hand of the angel and ate it, and it was in my mouth as honey sweet; and when I ate it, it made bitter my insides. And they say to me, "It is necessary for thee to prophesy again unto peoples and nations and tongues and many kings."

The Voice From Heaven

The unidentified voice speaking from Heaven to John a second time is likely that of Jesus. It was he who won the right to bring the world to judgment and to its end. The other time this voice speaks to him is recorded in verse four, where John is commanded to seal up the message spoken by the seven thunders and not write it.

Command to John

Here John is commanded to go and receive the little book out of the hand of the mighty angel who stands upon the sea and upon the land. It is logical that it should be presented to John as an open book in our present study, since it is regarded to be the seven sealed book opened by the Lamb. The angel commands John to receive the book and eat it, the Greek text indicating he is to thoroughly devour and digest it. This simply means he is to take note of its contents in a thorough manner.

He is told the book will be as sweet as honey in his mouth, but bitter to his stomach or insides. This is a figure of the sweetness of the words and judgments of God to a faithful child of God. The bitterness in the stomach refers to sorrow at the harshness of the judgments that God must bring upon mankind because of their unbelief and disobedience. There is evidence in the following chapter that the bitterness comes from John's seeing the plagues that are to come upon his Jewish brethren in the last days.

The things John learns from the little book are written in the ensuing chapters of Revelation. The necessary results of the final choices of man are the things that are written in the little book.

John to Prophecy

John is told he is to prophesy again to, or concerning, peoples, nations, tongues and many kings. Preference is given in this study to the idea he is to prophesy concerning these peoples, rather than to them. The Greek text will readily bear either interpretation. The following chapters talk about many peoples, but not to them. For, at the time the messages apply, these peoples do not hearken to anyone but Antichrist. For instance, the two beasts of the thirteenth chapter have to do with dictatorial governments and apostate religion. The chapter talks about them, but it does not talk to them, for they will not heed the word of God.

Some take the position that John is told in verse eleven he is to be one of the two witnesses described in the eleventh chapter. The fact that this statement immediately precedes the eleventh chapter is all the evidence there is for such a position. Even so, the statement is not immediately connected to the account of the two witnesses. John is simply given additional information in his eating of the little book to continue the visions of the Great Tribulation. The whole logic of the situation testifies to this.

There is a division in Revelation in the tenth chapter. One phase of the story is virtually completed and other phases are being introduced. This is the logical view of these things, and the only one that will stand under logical investigation. John is to prophesy again, not in the days of the Great Tribulation, but during his lifetime on the Isle of Patmos, when he gave all of his prophecy that is contained in the book of Revelation.

Chapter 9

The Two Witnesses and the Seventh Trumpet

REVELATION 11

This chapter opens with the command to John to measure the temple of God and the ones worshipping in it. Then the account abruptly plunges into the discussion of the two witnesses. The latter part of the chapter has to do with the seventh trumpet and the third woe, which accompanied the trumpet.

A RELIGIOUS CENSUS IS TAKEN

Revelation 11:1-2

And there was given to me a reed like a rod, saying, "Rise up and measure thou the temple of God and the altar of sacrifice and the ones worshipping in it. And the courtyard which is outside the temple cast thou out and do not measure it, because it was given to the nations, and they shall tread down the holy city forty-two months."

The Command to Measure

The command to rise up and measure the temple of God is in perfect harmony with the closing of the previous chapter, wherein John is told that he must prophesy again to peoples, nations, tongues, and many kings. The measuring of the city is a preliminary to this new work of prophecy which John is commanded to carry out.

He is to measure the temple of God, the altar of sacrifice, and the ones worshipping in it. He is not to include the temple courtyard in the measuring, for it is given to the nations, and they shall tread down, or walk, in the city forty-two months.

The time of the measuring of the temple has little to do with matters that have gone before. This measuring is simply the taking

up of another phase of the Great Tribulation, and it is not governed by the time element of the things that have gone immediately before. This measuring of the temple takes us back to the beginning of the Tribulation.

This measuring presents a peculiar situation. There is nothing strange about the taking of a measuring reed and finding the dimensions of a building and the grounds adjoining it. But the command does not stop with this. It goes on to state that John is also to measure the people who are worshipping in the temple.

The only way the measuring of the worshippers would make sense is to suppose that John is to take a religious census of Jerusalem, and likely the religious world in general, at the time the Great Tribulation begins. Perhaps we are to take a figurative view of the holy city entirely here, and let the measuring simply represent a surveying of the religious world at the beginning of the Great Tribulation.

Three Groups

The worshippers to be measured are divided into either two or three groups. There are those worshipping in the temple; there are those in the temple courtyard; and there are those who tread down, or walk in, the holy city. It is possible the second and third groups should be considered together as one. This view still leaves the question of who are worshipping in the temple, and who, from the religious standpoint, are worshipping in the courtyard and in the city in general.

Spiritual or Literal Temple?

Since the details of Daniel's seventieth week (Dan. 9:24-27) are to be discussed more at length in the treatment of the two witnesses, the question of who are worshipping in the temple, the courtyard, and the city, is passed for the present with the suggestion that the temple, as the whole book of Hebrews testifies. In this book, it is the church who worships in the spiritual temple as opposed to Israel's temple, as the whole book of Hebrews testifies. In this book, it is the church who worships in the spiritual temple as opposed to Israel's worship in the literal temple. It is true church saints whom John finds worshipping in the temple. In the courtyard, reading the law of Moses with a vail upon their hearts, are the Jews. Also, in the courtyard and throughout the city is the total of the apostate religious world. No essential distinction is to be made between the Jews and apostate Christianity, because both groups reject Christ and accept Antichrist alike. In fact, this essential identity of the Jews with apostate Christianity in the embracing of Antichrist continues until the middle of the Tribulation week.

John makes his survey of religious conditions in general at the beginning of the Great Tribulation. He finds faithful church saints represented as worshipping in the temple. All the rest of the religious world is grouped together in the courtyard and in the city, the whole situation being figurative. This picture continues without any essential changes until the middle of the Tribulation, when the saints will be raptured, the Jews will be betrayed, and the apostate Christian system will begin to be destroyed by Antichrist.

Nations

The nations are to tread down, or walk in, the city forty-two months. Most students believe this to be the last half of the Tribulation period, when Antichrist will sit in the temple showing himself that he is God. The literal Jerusalem will be dominated by Antichrist during the last half of the Tribulation. But there is a serious question whether this is the period of the forty-two months in which the nations shall dominate the city. Antichrist will also dominate the religious world in the first half of the Tribulation. He will prevail by peaceable means in the first half and by force in the last half. And there is nothing within the present account itself to indicate whether the predominance is by flattery or by force. The word which the common version renders “tread under foot” can just as readily mean simply “inhabit.” Therefore, the idea of these first two verses is simply to tell the prevailing religious conditions in the world at the beginning of the Great Tribulation. We see the religious world as it is when Antichrist makes his appearance on the world scene—no more, and no less.

THE TWO WITNESSES

Revelation 11:3-12

And I will give to my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand and two hundred sixty days clothed about with sackcloth. These are the two olive oil producers and the two lamp supporters standing in the presence of the Lord of the earth. And if any one wishes to hurt them, fire goes out of their mouth and devours their enemies; and if anyone should wish to hurt them, thus it is necessary for him to be killed. These have the authority to shut up the heaven, in order that a rain should not rain the days of their prophecy, and they have authority upon the waters to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth in every plague whatsoever they may will. And whenever they may complete their testimony, the wild beast coming up out of the abyss shall make war with them, and shall win the victory over them, and shall kill them. And their fallen body upon the avenue of the great city, which is called

spiritually Sodom and Egypt where also their Lord was crucified. And they of peoples and tribes and tongues and nations shall look on their fallen body three days and a half, and their fallen bodies they shall not permit to be placed in a tomb. And the ones dwelling upon the earth shall rejoice over them and be glad, and they shall send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented the ones dwelling upon the earth. And after the three days and a half spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood up on their feet, and great fear fell upon the ones beholding them. And I heard a great voice out of the heaven saying to them, "Come up here. " And they went up into the heaven in the cloud, and their enemies beheld them.

Why Two Witnesses Regarded as Figurative

In attempting to determine who the two witnesses are, we should first decide whether to take a literal or a figurative viewpoint of the situation. A failure to do this is the fundamental cause for many ridiculous conclusions on Revelation. The position taken in this study is that the account of the two witnesses is almost entirely figurative. Let us note some reasons for this.

Sign and Symbols

First, the very first verse of Revelation tells us in the Greek text that the vision was given to John in signs, or symbols. Therefore, we can expect many figurative situations throughout the book.

Literal Individuals

Second, only two literal individuals are prominent in the book of Revelation. These are Christ and Antichrist. Of course, allowance is made in this statement for the personality of John, the giver of the vision to the churches. Also, a number of angels, the elders, and the four living beings have a place in the book. But there are few literal men in the entirety of the vision.

Figurative Individuals

Third, many figurative personages are presented. Among these are the churches, which are addressed as individuals in the second and third chapters. There is the dragon of the twelfth chapter, who is evidently the Devil as a great intangible spirit power. This situation is different from his embodiment in Antichrist. There will be no literal fight between a snake and a woman. The woman just mentioned is not a woman at all, but a figurative representative of Israel. There are the two beasts of the thirteenth chapter, who may be embodied as men in the last days but they have been great spirit forces in the world long before their

embodiment in human form. No one expects God to pour out literal bowls of wrath in the Great Tribulation, nor does anyone expect to hear literal blasts of a trumpet when the seven angels blow the seven trumpets. The harlot of the seventeenth chapter is a personification of apostate Christianity headed up in Rome. This woman does not ride a literal beast with seven heads and ten horns, but she is supported rather in a figurative sense by the beast of empire that goes back in prophecy to the days of Daniel. These are our main points in justification for the insistence that the two witnesses are figurative, as opposed to two literal men.

Now let us note some individuals and groups who have been named as the two witnesses by various Bible commentators. Some of the prominent individuals are Enoch, Moses, Elijah, John the Baptist, and the Apostle John. The prominent groups considered are Israel and the church, or the two groups of divided Israel—Israel and Judah. We shall now observe these in various combinations in which they have been grouped.

Enoch and Elijah

Enoch and Elijah are thought to be the two witnesses because neither of these men died, but were translated into Heaven. The first objection to this idea is that the witnesses are not individuals, but groups or institutions. The second objection is the difficulty of associating Enoch and Elijah together in other theological matters. Enoch is probably a type of the church, which is raptured before the great wrath is poured out on Israel. The ministry of Elijah is much like that of the two witnesses, but this fact will be noted further later in a possible association of Elijah with Moses as the two witnesses. The third objection to Enoch and Elijah as the two witnesses is the fact they are killed. If we insist on literal men, it seems consistency would demand we insist on a literal killing. The trouble with this literal killing is that both these men were of necessity glorified in order to be taken bodily into Heaven. There seems to be no Bible evidences anywhere of anyone's being brought into an immortalized state and then returned to a mortal state that must exist before one can be killed. There is the one exception of Jesus on the mount of transfiguration, but he was God and not confined to the conditions of a man. His glorification was a mere temporary assumption of the immortal estate.

Moses and Elijah

Moses and Elijah are more likely the two witnesses because these two men, evidently as representatives of the law and the prophets, stood with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration and talked with him of his imminent death which he was about to accomplish at

Jerusalem, (Luke 9:30-31). However, there is no future ministry of the law and the prophets, since God told Peter to hear Jesus to the exclusion of the representatives of the law and the prophets, (Luke 9:35). Note that both these men were brought into immortalized bodies long before the time of the killing of the two witnesses, and remember the objection raised above to the killing of glorified men.

John the Baptist and Elijah

The claim that John the Baptist is to be one of the witnesses apparently rests on the fact of the close association of his ministry with that of Elijah. Connected with this is the prophecies of a second coming of Elijah into the world. Look carefully into what the Scriptures actually say on these matters. Malachi 4:5, from the Hebrew text reads as follows, "Behold, I am sending forth to you Elijah, the prophet, before the coming of the great and fearful day of Jehovah." The one vital fact here is the coming of Elijah before the coming of the day of the Lord.

Matt. 11:14 says from the Greek text, in the words of Jesus, "And if ye will to receive it, this one (John the Baptist) is Elijah who is about to come." If the Jews would receive the terms of the kingdom which John preached to them, then John would be the Elijah who was to come. It seems this should forever settle the question of whether the literal Elijah is to come again. Jesus did not mean that John would actually be transformed into the personality of Elijah if the people would receive his message. He meant rather that the ministry of John would fulfill the promise of the coming of Elijah, if the people would receive it. This should be plain enough to anyone who wishes to see the evident facts in the case. The point is if John the Baptist could have been Elijah, then someone else can be the Elijah of the last days, if there is to be an Elijah in the last days.

Added to the things already pointed out with reference to the ministries of Elijah and John the Baptist, let us note the testimony of John himself. John 1:21 gives the testimony of John in the following terms, "And they asked him. What then, art thou Elijah? And he says, I am not." The Jews were here seeking the personal identity of John. He denies that he is Elijah, and that should settle the issue once for all. However, remember that, though he was not literally Elijah, he could have performed the ministry of the Elijah of prophecy, if the people had heeded his message. Again the facts speak out against the idea of a literal return of Elijah in the last days.

There is one more passage of Scripture we need to note very carefully before we make our final decision as to whether Elijah and John the Baptist are to come in the last days as the two witnesses. It is Matt. 17:10-13, which is given from the Greek text as follows.

“And the disciples asked him saying, why then do the scribes say that it is necessary for Elijah to come first? And he answering said, Elijah indeed comes and shall reestablish all things. But I say to you that Elijah already has come, and they did not know him, but they did to him whatsoever they willed. Thus, also, the Son of man is about to suffer by them. Then the disciples understood that he spoke to them concerning John the Baptist.”

Two things are certain from these words of Jesus. One is that Elijah had come, and the other is that John the Baptist was the Elijah who had come. The only point of uncertainty is whether John the Baptist fully carried out the promise of the coming of Elijah before the great and fearful day of the Lord. We have accepted it as a matter of course that he did not. We have thought that Elijah or one like Elijah is to come in the days immediately before the second coming of Christ. In the light of the Scriptures quoted above this might be a hard supposition to prove. Jesus positively asserts that Elijah came in the person of John the Baptist. He does not here place any limitation on the assertion.

Jesus does place a limitation on his assertion that John is Elijah (Matt. 11:14). But, perhaps we have missed the import of this limitation. It is not that John failed to carry out the ministry of Elijah; it is that the Jews by unbelief failed at that time to claim all the promises given in connection with this ministry of Elijah. Mai. 4:6 says from the Hebrew text, "And he shall turn the heart of the fathers unto the sons, and the heart of the sons unto the fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."

Now, why was God about to smite the earth with a curse when John came to fulfill the ministry of Elijah? It was because the nations had long ago gone into idolatry (see the first chapter of Romans); but, it was specifically because Israel had gone into hopeless apostasy. Jesus offered the Jews something closely resembling the Millennial reign when he came into the world and illustrated the thing offered by his miraculous works repeatedly (Matt. 4:23; Matt. 9:35; Luke 9:11; Luke 11:20). The kingdom gospel is linked with miraculous works during the early part of the ministry of Jesus. Both as a nation and as a religious group, the Jews rejected what Jesus offered them, and they crucified the anointed one whom God had sent to them. But, instead of God's carrying out the threat to smite the earth with a curse, a plan not previously revealed clearly began to operate.

Ministry Prophesied of Elijah Carried Out by John the Baptist

Jesus had already established his church before his final rejection and crucifixion by the Jews. Therefore, the church became the salvation of the Jews and the world from the curse mentioned

above. In the church was and is fulfilled the promise to turn the hearts of people towards one another. Therefore, the ministry prophesied of Elijah was not only begun in John the Baptist, but it was also fully carried out in and by him. These promises are embraced and worked out in the church in the spiritual sense, else God would have come and smitten the earth in a curse just as he threatened. The works of Elijah and John the Baptist culminated in the formation of the church, and the church will witness until it is taken out of the world at the end of the age. The church also claimed the bountiful promises made by Joel for the last days (Acts 2:16-18).

The Gospel of the Kingdom

The hope of Israel is in the coming of the kingdom of God, and it has been so since the kingdom covenant was made with David. Both John and Jesus preached the kingdom gospel to the Jews, and Jesus illustrated the kingdom by his miraculous healings, etc. These things inevitably turned the minds of the Jews to the period that we commonly call the Millennium. The apostles were still expecting the immediate coming of the Millennium at the time Jesus ascended into Heaven (Acts 1:6).

In the meantime, the Jews had fully rejected the King and had crucified him. This made the coming of the Millennium to the Jews an impossibility at that time for the Jews must willingly accept their king before the whole house of Israel comes into the inheritance of the good land flowing with milk and honey. But, as previously stated, the church had already been formed before the final rejection and crucifixion of the anointed one of Israel. This church was formed first of Jews, and its goal was to bring all the Jews to Christ in the church relationship. Then the church was to reach out and embrace all other nations who would come on the terms of repentance, faith, and baptism.

The official rejection of Christ by the Jews did not destroy the church. It simply thrust it out of the midst of the Jewish nation to seek its converts and adherents mainly from the other nations. This new setup, brought on by the Jews themselves, barred the Jews from claiming the physical promises that had been made to them since the days of Abraham. The Jews went into the final dispersion for the duration of the Church Age, and the church went into the phase in which we now know it. Its nature, its blessings, and its present rewards are spiritual as opposed to physical. There will be—there can be—no Millennium without Israel inhabiting the good land flowing with milk and honey.

Apostle John the Witness

The claim that the Apostle John is to be one of the two witnesses is based on two passages of Scripture. The first one is John 21:20-23, where Jesus refuses to tell Peter what the future destiny of John is to be. From this refusal, the brethren arrived at the conclusion that John would not die, but would remain in the world until Jesus should come again. Therefore, modern students have speculated that he will be on the scene in the last days to become one of the two witnesses. John himself apparently denies this theory when he insists that Jesus did not say he should not die.

The other Scripture used as evidence that John is to be one of the witnesses is Rev. 10:11, which states that John is to prophesy again to many peoples. It has already been set forth that in this instance John is simply told he is to receive and write the remainder of the book of Revelation. The context testifies to this. Therefore, we have very scanty and obscure evidence on which to make the Apostle John one of the witnesses.

Israel and The Church

Now consider the groups previously mentioned as the ones to fill the qualifications of the witnesses. The first two mentioned are Israel and the church. There seems to be every evidence that the two witnesses testify at the same time and that they both give willing and zealous testimony. Israel will remain in unbelief and full rejection of Christ until after the church has gone out of the world. This would make it physically impossible for Israel and the church to bear faithful testimony at the same time.

The Scripture evidence appears to be that the ten tribes of Israel will not be regathered and identified until the day that Christ comes in glory with his saints (Matt. 24:31). It is believed that nothing different can be proven from the thirty-seventh chapter of Ezekiel, which speaks the parables of the valley of dry bones and the two sticks that become one, both of course referring to the regathering and the salvation of the whole house of Israel.

When the Jews, the known portion of the house of Israel, are betrayed by Antichrist at the middle of the Tribulation week, they seem to remain in an attitude of spiritual consternation until Jesus reveals himself to them at his coming in glory. The suggested revelation of Jesus to the Jews in the book of Zechariah cannot be verified because the prophets paid very little attention to time sequence. Thus, we would seem to violate all the fundamental Scripture teachings of the Tribulation period in pairing the church and Israel together as the two witnesses.

Two Houses of Israel?

Our last rejected theory to be noticed is that the two witnesses are the two houses or nations of Israel. The kingdom of Israel was divided in the generation following King Solomon, and it has never been reunited again. It has been previously pointed out that apparently the regathering of the lost tribes, and the reunion and salvation of the nation are to come immediately after the coming of Christ to the earth with his saints to set up the Millennial kingdom. If this is true, then it would be utterly inconsistent to place these two groups in the position of the two witnesses. Their prophesy will be before the time of the coming Christ in glory.

THE SCRIPTURES AND THE HOLY SPIRIT THE TWO WITNESSES

Now let us turn our attention to the theory that the two witnesses are the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit as they are manifested to the world in and through the church. The Great Commission was given to the church as a church, and in the institutional sense (Matt. 28:19-20). This means the commission was not given to any other religious group on earth, and it means it was not given to any individuals as such. As other churches were formed from the nucleus of the church congregated in Jerusalem, the commission passed into their hands as a matter of course. As soon as they were constituted as scriptural churches, they had the command to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. This is what is meant by saying the commission was given to the church in the institutional sense.

Custodianship of Scriptures to the Church

This group of churches has had the exclusive custodianship of the Scriptures throughout the Church Age. Anyone has the right to own and to study a Bible. But none but the churches are commanded to teach it to the ends of the earth, and to observe and administer its ordinances and precepts. The fundamental reason for this is that no one can fully embrace and carry out the teachings of the New Testament without being a part of a New Testament church. In any other position under heaven, one can only teach and practice a part of Bible truth. Jesus did not leave his truth with those who would embrace a part of it, but to those who would embrace all of it. The point is, that from the apostolic days until now, the churches are the ones, and the only ones, who have borne faithful testimony to all the things Jesus and the apostles taught. This will be true as long as the church is in the world.

The above things being true, the Scriptures have borne faithful, full, and true witness in the world only as they have borne them through the church, for all others adulterate, misapply, and deny parts of the divine record. Thus, the Bible has borne a faithful witness in the church from the apostolic age until now. It will continue to bear this kind of testimony as long as the church is in the world.

Holy Spirit

The other suggested witness is the Holy Spirit as manifested to the world in and by the church. This office of the Holy Spirit was first foretold by Jesus as follows, "The one believing into me, according as the writing said, Rivers of living waters shall flow out of his innermost part. And this he spoke concerning the Spirit, which the ones believing into him were about to receive; for not yet was Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:38-39).

At John 14:16-17, Jesus renews the promise of the Spirit to the church. He says he will ask the Father, and he will give to the church another comforter. This comforter is to take the place of Jesus when he would no longer be in the world to lead the church in person. This comforter is to remain to the end of the age, and it is to be in the church. According to the twenty-sixth verse, the Spirit is to teach and remind the church of all things that Jesus has taught them. This is a special ministry of the Holy Spirit to the church, and to the church alone.

Jesus mentioned this office work of the Holy Spirit again at John 16:7-14. He said it is more profitable for him to go away and for the Spirit to come in his stead. Evidently, this is because the Spirit could perform a universal ministry, whereas Jesus in the flesh could be at only one place at a given time. The Spirit should convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. There had been a time when God winked at the national and religious sins of the world (Acts 17:30). But now, with the Holy Spirit through the church bearing witness to the truth of Christ to all the world, the whole world becomes accountable to God for all false religious doctrines and practices.

Holy Spirit Came at Pentecost

In this office, the Holy Spirit came upon and into the church on the first Pentecost after the ascension of Jesus to Heaven. There are many references to it from then on throughout the New Testament. Always it is the Spirit indwelling, manifesting itself, and working in and through the church. Some have applied many passages that teach this work of the Holy Spirit to the matter of personal salvation, to their own embarrassment and hurt in the

defense of New Testament doctrines. Notable instances are Acts 2:38 and Gal. 3:26-27, which have no reference to baptismal regeneration at all, but they do have to do with living and operating in that realm where the Holy Spirit dwells, leads, comforts, and convicts. This realm is the scope of New Testament churches.

The Scriptures, especially the New Testament Scriptures, and the Holy Spirit have been the ultimate and infallible witness of God in the world through the Church Age. They have their dwelling place in the church, and they have their manifestation in the world until the church goes out of the world. Therefore, the two witnesses are the word of God and the Holy Spirit manifesting themselves to the world through the tangible agency which is the church.

The church is the pillar and the ground of the truth, and that it is the light of the world. It is the only body that holds to the pure word of God and manifests the Holy Spirit to the world in truth. The spirit which modern miracle workers manifest to the world is as unholy as Antichrist himself.

Faith on the Earth

In the common version of the Bible, Jesus asks the question whether he will find faith on the earth when he comes again (Luke 18:8). Since there were no question marks in the original Greek text, this passage can read, "Furthermore, when the Son of man comes, indeed he shall find the faith on the earth." This translation is much more in accord with the context of the passage than that given by the common version.

Church the Witnessing Body

The church is to be the witnessing body as long as it is in the world. There is no Scripture proof that there will be a faithful witnessing body, or individual, between the time the church leaves the world and the time that Christ comes with his saints.

Ephesians 3:21 reads from the Greek text, ". . . to him the glory in the church, and in Christ Jesus, into all the generations of the age of the ages, Amen." The prophets did not know what they were talking about when they prophesied of the church, and angels eagerly stooped down to look into (I Pet. 1:12). Truly, the church is the marvel of the ages. It has been so since its revelation, and it will continue to be so even in the Heaven Ages. There will be no mysterious force or agency to supplant it in its most trying hour at the end of the present age. This will be the most crucial time of witnessing of the ages for the church, which is the only true witnessing body on earth.

Time of Two Witnesses

They are to prophesy a thousand two-hundred and sixty days. Knoch makes the point that days refer to light, since they are associated with the sun. Months in prophecy refer to darkness, because months are controlled or reckoned by the moon. The time of the two witnesses is the first half of the Tribulation, for the last half of the Tribulation is dominated by spiritual darkness.

The witnesses are clothed in sackcloth, which is a sure symbol of great sorrow, or even of intense grief. This grief is brought on by world conditions that prevail at the time. The religious world, including the Jews, is running madly after Antichrist, who appears for the time as a great, peaceable ruler. Of this period Daniel says that the wicked shall do wickedly, and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand. Jesus repeatedly warns the church to watch, lest she be deceived at the time of the coming of Antichrist (Luke 21:36). The admonition of this verse is given directly to the disciples in the second person. Surely, Jesus did not expect Peter and John and the others to be still living when Antichrist and the Great Tribulation should literally come. Therefore, he was either deceiving them, or he was speaking to them as a church and not as individuals. When the church sees Antichrist make his appearance on the world horizon, hailed as a world savior, it will begin to cry out against the horrible situation with an agony and a zeal not previously manifested.

Olive Trees and Candlesticks

The King James version of the Bible says these two witnesses are the two olive trees and the two candlesticks. The problem at this point is the ambiguous language with reference to both the olive trees and the candlesticks. In the Bible languages, there is no essential difference among the words for olive tree, olive berry and olive oil. They are all fundamentally the same. And since olive oil is the ultimate fruit of the olive tree and the olive berry, the olive oil receives more prominence in the Scriptures than do the other two. That is, olive trees and olive berries are important simply because they produce or supply olive oil.

The same is true of the lampstand, the candlestick, and the fuel. All three are light supporters, and the Bible languages so express them. Therefore, when the Bible speaks of a light supporter, there is the element of uncertainty as to which supporter of the light is meant: the central stand, the pipes to the various lights, or the oil that goes out of the bowl through the seven pipes to the seven lights.

In the interpretative reading of this passage, the two witnesses are called the two olive oil producers and the two light supporters.

No more can be said about them with certainty from the standpoint of the actual meanings of the words.

The Candlestick

The candlestick comes prominently into the Bible picture in the latter part of the twenty-fifth chapter of Exodus. There is one lamp stand, and there are seven pipes branched out from the top of it to furnish oil for the seven lights. There is no reason why the picture of the candlesticks in the first chapter of Revelation should not be identical with this one in Exodus. Then why should there be two candlesticks, or lampstands, in our present situation? The situation is essentially identical throughout the Bible. The presenting of the evidence will involve an interpretative reading of the fourth chapter of Zechariah with a few comments. This reading will now be given, the reader being reminded that the chapter presents a prefiguring of the church.

Zechariah 4

And the angel who spoke with me returned and awakened me as a man is awakened from his sleep. And he said unto me, "What dost thou see?" And I said, "I looked, and behold a light supporter of pure gold, and a bowl upon the top of it, and its seven [little] light supporters upon it [the bowl], and seven pourers [pipes] to the little light supporters which are upon top of it [the bowl] and two olive oil producers [or furnishers] upon it [the bowl]: one at the right hand of the bowl, and one at its left hand." And I answered and said unto the angel who spoke with me, saying, "What are these, my Lord?" And the angel who spoke with me answered and said unto me, "Dost thou not know what these are?" And I said, "No, my Lord." And he answered and spoke unto me, saying, "This is the word of Jehovah unto Zerubbabel, saying, 'Not in might, and not in power, but rather in my Spirit saith Jehovah of hosts.' Who art thou great mountain? Before the face of Zerubbabel thou are a plain. And he shall bring forth the headstone with shoutings of grace, grace to it [the headstone]."

And the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, "The hands of Zerubbabel have founded this house, and his hands shall finish it. And thou shalt know that Jehovah of hosts sent me unto you. Because who has despised the day of small things? And they shall rejoice, and they shall see the stone of dividing [measuring] in the hand of Zerubbabel. These are the seven eyes of Jehovah going about inspecting in all the earth. " And I answered and said unto him, "What are these two olive oil producers upon the right hand of the light supporter and upon its left hand?" And I answered a second time and said unto him, "What are the two streams of olive

oil which are in the hands of the two golden pipes which are pouring out through themselves the golden [oil]?" And he spoke unto me, saying, "Dost thou not know what these are?" And I said, "No, my Lord. " And he said unto me, "These are the two sons of shining who abide by the Lord of all the earth."

Now here are the problems in this passage. First, it uses the occasion of Zerubbabel's building the temple to prefigure something future, probably the building and the working principles of the church. Second, it uses some Hebrew figures of speech, or idioms, of whose meaning we cannot be sure. Third, it uses some Hebrew words which have two meanings which are little related to one another. Fourth, since the Hebrew text had no punctuation, we cannot tell with certainty where some of the sentence breaks are. These things being true, no man can tell with certainty just what this chapter says, and what the picture set forth in it is, unless he is able to correlate it with plain Scripture situations elsewhere.

The picture is essentially the same as those at the twenty-fifth chapter of Exodus, the first chapter of Revelation, and the one with which we are dealing at Revelation 11:4. All of them present one lampstand, as opposed to two. There is a bowl to hold oil on top of the lampstand. Above the bowl in each instance there are the seven candlesticks, which are really pipes through which the oil passed from the bowl to the seven lights on top.

Then the passage in Zechariah and the one at Rev. 11:4 add a detail which the others do not give. This is the source from which the oil passes into the bowl of the lamp. Zechariah pictures them as two golden pipes pouring streams of golden olive oil into the lamp bowl through themselves. Revelation presents them as the two olive oil furnishers and the two light supporters.

The total picture is one of the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit pouring Christ into the church from the institutional viewpoint. Then the seven lights on top represent all of the individual churches giving forth the light of Christ in and to the world.

Before we leave the passage in Zechariah, it should be observed that the headstone and the measuring, or dividing, stone both refer to Christ. And the seven eyes which search out and judge all the earth are the word of God and the Holy Spirit as manifested to the world through the church. These seven eyes are introduced abruptly in the chapter, and apparently without connection with anything else in the chapter. But they are evidently meant to be identified with the seven lights on the candlesticks set forth earlier in the discussion. The churches are the judging, convicting, and restraining force in the world.

The two personages or agencies in both Zechariah and the present passage in Revelation are said to stand in the presence of the Lord of the earth. This contributes to the idea that the two situations are essentially identical.

Power of the Witnesses

Several statements are made concerning the miraculous powers of these two witnesses. Fire goes out of their mouths and devours their enemies. One would scarcely conceive of two men as literally breathing fire, which literally burns up their enemies. This situation contributes to the idea that we should take a figurative view of the witnesses and regard them as a group movement rather than as being two literal men.

Apparently, anyone who wishes to harm the witnesses must die in the way in which he wishes to hurt them. Jesus lays down the principle that the one who takes up the sword must perish by the sword.

The witnesses have authority to shut up the heavens that it should not rain the twelve-hundred and sixty days of their ministry. This is practically identical with what is said of the ministry of Elijah when he stood out against the evil works of Ahab and Jezebel in Israel (I Kings 17:1). And, certainly, the religious and political conditions in Israel in those days were much like those that are to prevail in the world in the first half of the Tribulation period. These conditions in Israel do not fit the last half of the Tribulation at all. This is a good argument that the witnesses will prophesy in the first half of the Tribulation period.

They have authority to turn the waters into blood and to smite the earth with whatever they may will. This is identical essentially with the power wielded by Moses and Aaron over Egypt when Israel was being delivered from the bondage. These facts associate the ministry of the two witnesses very intimately with those of Moses and Elijah. To admit this however is one thing, and to insist that Moses and Elijah must literally be the two witnesses is an entirely different matter. We could as logically insist that Moses was Christ because he said Christ would be a prophet like himself (Deut. 18:15).

The giving of miraculous powers to the faithful in times of stress was such a common thing in Bible times that it might almost be considered a general rule. Moses and Aaron used them against Egypt in the deliverance of Israel from a hopeless bondage. Both Elijah and Elisha were protected by the fire of God from their enemies. Daniel and his companions had several miraculous deliverances in the Babylonian captivity. Peter was delivered from prison, and Paul was healed of the bite of a deadly serpent.

Unshaken Faith

Jesus presented a situation identical with the ministry of the two witnesses: “Moreover, also ye shall be delivered over by parents and brethren and kindred and friends, and they shall put to death some of you, and ye shall be hated by all on account of my name. But a hair of your head shall not by any means perish.” (Luke 21:16-18). There is a peculiar blending of the singular and plural numbers here, which Jesus used when talking to his disciples as a church. For instance, there is a singular head, but plural possessors of that head. Some of them should be put to death, but a hair of their head would not perish. This can only mean that though some church members will die for the faith in the last days, yet the faith itself shall stand pure to the end. That is, personal death sinks into insignificance when personal faith has come through unmarred, and when the church faith as such stands unshaken by the assaults made on it in the last days. God erects a wall of protection around the faithful to protect the faith in the time of trial. If anyone dies for the faith, he is not to be regarded as having suffered tragedy, but rather very good fortune. The ministry of the two witnesses compares with the ministry of the church in the last days, as prophesied by Jesus.

Beast Wins Victory

The wild beast coming out of the abyss makes war with the two witnesses, he wins the victory over them, and he kills them. But it is not until the appointed time of their testimony is expired that he wins the victory. This victory is exactly like that of the enemies of Jesus when he went to his death on the cross. They had tried many times by every conceivable means to bring him to death, but every effort had utterly failed. When his personal ministry was finished according to the will of God, his enemies won the victory which they had sought since the beginning of his public works. The wild beast will win the victory over the two witnesses only in that their appointed works are finished, and God is ready to take them out of the world. The beast wins the victory over the witnesses in the same sense in which the unbelieving world won the victory over Noah when the voice of Noah was hushed against his evil generation by his being shut up in the ark. They killed Noah in the same sense in which the beast and his forces will kill the two witnesses.

The Fallen Body

Their fallen body, in the singular number, shall lie in the avenue, the prominent street, of the great city which is called spiritually Sodom and Egypt, where the Lord of the witnesses was crucified. Jesus was crucified in Jerusalem by the essence of the false

religious systems of the world. Essentially the same forces will band themselves together against the two witnesses. These same forces are uniting themselves against the churches which hold to the fundamentals of the faith today. It is no accident. It is the marshaling of the forces that will cause the church to fulfill the office of the two witnesses.

There is a common word used many times in the New Testament for a corpse or dead body. It is not used here. Rather, a word is used which describes anything that is fallen into disuse, wreckage, or decay. It can apply to a dilapidated house as well as to the body of a dead man. The city is figurative of the whole apostate religious world. The witnesses are the churches bearing witness to and by the word of God and the Holy Spirit when the lines of distinction are clearly drawn again in the last days between true and false churches, the true being left to stand alone in the minority. The fallen body of the witnesses consists of the relics of the faith left in the world at the rapture of the saints, such as the memory of their opposition to Antichrist, their refusal to unionize, and empty church houses which have been abandoned by the saints in the rapture. It is just as logical to suppose the death and resurrection of the two witnesses is figurative as it is to suppose the wounding to death and the resurrection of the head of the beast is figurative.

Three Days and a Half

The nations shall rejoice over the death of the witnesses for three days and a half. The church has been the witness to truth and the only real restraining force against evil since it has been in the world. Jesus states that the Spirit which should come into the church would reprove the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8). When this restraining force is gone, the nations rejoice because they can revel in evil ways without reproof or restraint. If there is good in all churches, it is because of the restraint of the word and the Holy Spirit as they work through the church.

The three and a half days in which the witnesses lie dead in the street presents a problem in Bible types and parallels. There are many precedents for three days as a significant period of time. But there appear to be none at all for three and a half days. However, three and a half is a half of a week. The three and a half days is the last half of Daniel's seventieth prophetic week (Dan. 9:24-27). This three and a half days is simply the three and a half years that constitute the last half of the Great Tribulation period.

In the eleventh verse is a matter which the writer has regarded as the only weak point in his theory of the two witnesses. It is their resurrection on earth and ascension to Heaven immediately before the coming of Christ in glory with his saints. The saints have been

taken to Heaven three and a half years before. Then how could they be reckoned as being resurrected on earth at the very time they are really coming down from Heaven with Christ in glory? It is not really the church that is the two witnesses, it is the word and the Holy Spirit manifested through the church who are the witnesses. But the testimony of the word and the Spirit is not necessarily tied to the church except in the Church Age. Therefore, the word and the Spirit can act apart from the church when the church is gone out of the world.

Resurrection of Two Witnesses

The word and the Spirit will not be active and authoritative forces in the world in the last half of the Tribulation. It appears that God almost entirely abandons the world to the Devil in this period of three and a half years. God protects Israel from annihilation as a nation, and it may be that an angel preaches a gospel of condemnation to the world in this period. But, otherwise, the Devil seems to have full sway. But at the end of the Tribulation, God moves to reestablish the authority of his word and his Spirit in the world. This move of necessity precedes the coming of Christ with his saints to wield the word and the Spirit in the world again. Thus, the resurrection of the word and the Spirit in the world immediately before the coming of Christ is perfectly logical. God must move authoritatively with reference to the world before Christ can come to rule the world. This authoritative move of God is essentially the resurrection of the two witnesses. It is the voice of the Supreme God of the universe speaking in ultimate authority which brings such terror into the hearts of the rebellious nations at the resurrection of the witnesses.

No attempt is made to state with certainty the significance of the ascension of the witnesses in the presence of their enemies. At the time, the battle of Armageddon will be in its final stage. The warring nations will be fighting with utter abandon, pouring the refined agencies of destruction upon one another. Suddenly, there begins to be a mighty shaking of the heavenly powers. (Matt. 24:29-30). This shaking of the physical universe is followed immediately by the coming of Christ with the saints. Apparently, the resurrection and ascension of the witnesses and the shaking of the earth and the heavenly bodies by the hand of God are one and the same thing in their manifestation to the world. Though the nations will be doing their utmost to destroy one another, they will be made to realize that a hand far mightier than theirs has laid hold on the situation. It strikes terror to their hearts. Thus, we have a logical, and a scriptural, explanation for the resurrection and ascension of the two witnesses.

God Dealing With Church and Israel

Some will raise an objection to our theory of the two witnesses on the grounds that the saints must be raptured at the beginning of the Tribulation period, because the Tribulation period is the seventieth week of the vision of Daniel, and God is dealing with Israel to the exclusion of the church in this seventieth week. Those who take this position fail to take into account the fact that God dealt with both the church and Israel during most of the personal ministry of Jesus. The church and Israel overlapped for about three and a half years at that time in the dealings of God. Then there is no logical reason, and there seems to be no scriptural reason, why the two should not so overlap again during the first half of the Tribulation. In the first half of Daniel's seventieth week, God deals with Israel through the church and through Antichrist as the great deceiver. Jesus repeatedly warned and prepared his church against Antichrist during his ministry in the world. Jesus knew his church must deal with Antichrist and stand out against him during the first half of the Tribulation, when all the rest of the world will go after him. The Jews were likewise warned against Antichrist, but they have not prepared themselves to reject him. On the other hand they are plainly told they will receive him when he comes (John 5:43).

THE SEVENTH TRUMPET AND THE THIRD WOE

Revelation 11:13-19

And in that very hour there came about a great shaking, and the tenth of the city fell, and there were killed in the shaking names of men seven thousand, and the others became fearful and gave glory to the God of the Heaven. The second woe is past. Behold the third woe comes quickly. And the seventh angel trumpeted, and there came about great voices in the Heaven saying, "The kingdom of the world has become that of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign as a king into the ages of the ages." And the twenty-four elders abiding in the presence of God upon their thrones fell upon their faces and did reverence to God saying, "We give thanks to thee, Lord God Almighty, the one being and who was, because thou hast received thy great dynamic power and hast reigned as a king. And the nations were wrathful, and thy wrath came and the season for the dead to be judged and to give the reward to thy bond servants, the prophets, and the holy ones who fear thy name, the little ones and the great ones, and to destroy the ones destroying the earth. " And the temple of God was opened in the heaven, and there appeared the ark of the covenant in his temple, and there came about lightnings and voices and thunderings and a shaking and a great hail.

There is some question as to whether verses thirteen and fourteen should be grouped with the account of the two witnesses or with the account of the seventh trumpet, which immediately follows them. Evidently, they are closely related to both situations. Therefore, it makes little difference just where we make the division between the two sections. The verses mentioned evidently conclude the account of the two witnesses, and they certainly conclude the account of the sixth trumpet and the second woe. They prepare the way for the introduction of the seventh trumpet and the third woe.

Another problem at this point is the question of just when and where in Revelation the seventh trumpet and the third woe come to an end. The book nowhere answers this question specifically. We are left to figure it out as best we may from logical reasoning on the situations involved. In one way of looking at it, this seventh trumpet ends with the telling of the immediate results of it at the close of the present chapter. In another way of looking at it, it contains at least to the fifteenth chapter, where the vials begin to be introduced. Now let us look into a reason for this statement.

In our study of the various seals and trumpets thus far, we may have been looking too closely to the results of these movements to pay full attention to what is presented as the causes for them. For instance, the sixth trumpet seems certainly to launch the battle of Armageddon. But it ends with the account of the two witnesses and the conclusion of their career in the world. If we think in terms of a time sequence, we become confused with a situation like this. Since the witnesses prophesy before the battle of Armageddon is fought, how could their ministry be related in any way to a movement whose immediate result is Armageddon. The answer is that we are told some causes of these movements as well as their results. The ministry of the two witnesses is a direct contributing cause to God's withdrawing his restraining hand and allowing the forces of evil to have full sway in preparing and fighting the battle of Armageddon.

The same thing is true of the seventh trumpet. The immediate result is the coming of Christ and the setting up of his throne in Jerusalem. But when the account advances to this point, instead of dropping the whole story, John goes back and tells of some movements that lead up to the dethronement of the Devil and the enthronement of Christ in the world. Matters of this import are told in the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth chapters. From this viewpoint, the seventh trumpet and the third woe continue through the fourteenth chapter at least. The results are told first, and the causes are given later.

Widespread Slaughter

A tenth part of the city falls and seven thousand men are killed in the earthquake. There seems to be no reason why we should not maintain this figurative viewpoint in the present situation. It makes no essential difference whether a tenth part of Jerusalem falls, or whether a tenth part of the apostate religious world is destroyed. More than likely, the seven thousand men killed is also a typical number used to express the idea that a great, thorough and widespread slaughter takes place.

The most significant fact in the thirteenth verse is that the remainder of men become fearful and give glory to God. This is the strongest of proof that the word of God and the Holy Spirit have come alive in the world again. For, throughout the last half of the Tribulation, men have only blasphemed God when plagues and fearful things have come upon them. This ends the second woe.

Seventh Trumpet Brings Kingdom Establishment

The blasting of the seventh trumpet brings the announcement of the establishment of the kingdom of Christ. Of course, Christ began to establish his kingdom while he was in the world, but the full establishment of it will come when he comes again to rule upon the throne of King David in Jerusalem.

The twenty-four elders fall on their faces and worship God at the full establishment of the throne of Christ. They address him as the Lord God Almighty. In this they suggest the mightiness of his conquest through Christ. They speak of him as the one being and the one who was, but they do not add the phrase, "the one coming," as in previous instances, for he has already come. They proclaim that he has assumed his position as king upon the earth.

Verse Eighteen A Review

The rest of verse eighteen is a review of some factors that lead up to the establishment of the kingdom on earth. The nations acted with wrath towards God. Then his wrath came upon them in the Tribulation. This season is the time for the dead to be judged and the reward to be given to all the faithful. It is also the season for the wrath of God to fall upon those who have been destroying the earth since the fall of Adam. But it falls specifically on those who are intensively trying to destroy the earth in the Tribulation.

It is difficult to associate verse nineteen with either what goes before or after it from the standpoint of time. As to what goes before, the kingdom of Christ is already proclaimed as reestablished. Hence, there is no occasion for God to rise up in wrath. As to what follows, it takes us far back in time before even

the beginning of the Tribulation. It takes us back at least to the birth of the nation Israel.

But the appearing of the ark of the covenant and the resultant outpouring of the wrath of God are evidently Tribulation events. As has been pointed out many times, the connections in Revelation are mainly logical connections. And the principle holds true to the point of ignoring the time element in a number of situations. The present situation is a notable example of this.

Actually, verse nineteen is introductory to the twelfth chapter. What happens is this: Some time during the Tribulation God looks on the ark of the covenant with Israel, for the ark of the covenant seems to be unalterably bound to Israel. He remembers his covenant with Abraham and all his plans to bring Israel to glory. Then he begins to enumerate the things that have prevented Israel's coming into that glory. These things are what evoke the demonstration of lightnings, voices, thunderings, shaking, and the great hail. This demonstration of the wrath of God may actually come on the earth at the end of the Tribulation as God rushes things to their consummation. On the other hand, it may be simply a figurative expression of all the plagues God brings on the earth during the Tribulation for the special benefit of his chosen nation, Israel.

For practical purposes, the nineteenth verse introduces the three following chapters. In these chapters, we have the age-long effort of the Devil to destroy Israel because of Christ's coming from this nation. Then we have the account of the two beasts through whom the Devil has worked for many centuries in the effort to destroy the works of God in the world. They are embodied as men when the Tribulation comes. In the fourteenth chapter, we see God moving to bring the world to its consummation. This fourteenth chapter may very well be regarded as a detailed account of what verse nineteen of our present study states in general terms. That is, God remembers what has been done and is being done as set forth in chapters twelve and thirteen. Then, the fourteenth chapter tells what he does about it to bring the age to its end and Israel into the glory of her inheritance.

Chapter 10

The Conflict Between the Woman and the Dragon

REVELATION 12

INTRODUCTION

Four Points in the Chapter

There are four focal points in the chapter. First, there is conflict between the woman and the dragon. Second, there is war in Heaven between Michael, the archangel, and the dragon, who is the Devil. Third, there are definite results in Heaven of the victory of Michael over the dragon. Fourth, there are definite results on earth because of the Devil's being cast out of Heaven into the earth.

Two Time Viewpoints

The time element is difficult in this chapter. At the same time events unfold on earth, they are seen of God in Heaven. The viewpoint of God is not governed by the limitations of time and space as is that of man. Therefore, God sees movements more in their entirety at one "glance," and the Bible often presents the heavenly view of things entirely before they come to pass. Man sees things only as they actually unfold. This explains the difficulty in reconciling the time element in much of the Bible, especially in Revelation. Events must fit into a historical time pattern that will harmonize with Scripture teachings in general and that will agree with the timeless pattern wherein God sees the cause, the course, and the end of a given movement.

THE WOMAN, THE DRAGON, AND THE MALE CHILD

Revelation 12:1-6

And a great sign appeared in the Heaven, a woman clothed about with the sun, and, the moon underneath her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars, and being with child, and she cries out

being in birth pangs and having great pain to give birth. And there appeared another sign in the Heaven, and behold a great fiery dragon, having seven heads and ten horns and upon his heads seven diadems, and his tail drags the third of the stars of the Heaven, and he cast them into the earth. And the dragon stood in the presence of the woman who was about to give birth, in order that when she should bear her child he might devour it. And she bore a son, a male, who is about to shepherd all the nations with an iron rod; and her child was seized away to God and to his throne. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place made ready there of God, in order that they may nourish her there a thousand two hundred and sixty days.

The Seven Personages

Beginning with this chapter and continuing into the fourteenth chapter, there are seven personages who are prominent in the discussion. It is believed these are Israel, the devil, Christ, Michael, the church, the Antichrist, and the Antispirit. The sixth of these is the beast with seven heads and ten horns. The seventh is the beast with two horns like a lamb. It will be shown later that the fifth is the church.

The Woman

The first great sign, or wonder, of verses one and two is described as a woman clothed about with the sun, and the moon underneath her feet, and having a crown of twelve stars on her head. She is with child and having birth Pangs to give birth. This woman is the nation Israel, under the terms of the Abrahamic covenant. The time element embraces their whole national history, but refers specifically to the time when Christ should be born of this nation.

The Glory of Israel

Malachi 4:2 refers to Christ as the Sun of Righteousness. Luke 2:32 says Christ is to be a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of his people Israel. Therefore, Israel's being clothed with the sun refers to the salvation and glory that God has destined for Israel through Christ. These were offered to Israel repeatedly from the time of their being delivered from the Egyptian bondage. Many passages in the gospels indicate that salvation was emphatically offered to Israel at the first coming of Christ into the world (Mark 1:4, 5; Matt. 10:5-8; Luke 11:20; Matt. 21:43). The prophecies reveal that the full clothing of Israel with the glory of Christ will come in the Millennium. This illustrates how some things are true in the mind of God long before they become true in actual fact.

The Moon-Type of the Church

The moon is the lesser light that has a part in bringing Israel to truth and salvation. In the re-creation story of the first chapter of Genesis, the moon was to rule and give light by night. In the dividing of the days, the night came first and was followed by the day and the full light of the sun. The sun typifies Christ, and the day is the type of the millennial reign. The moon is the type of the church, and the night is the picture of the present age. Christ brought a light into the world which it had not had previously, (Luke 2:32; John 8:12). This is not merely the light of the new birth, but it is the light of greater revelation and closer fellowship, for it is those who follow Christ in doctrine and practice who have it. At Matthew 5:14, Jesus says the church is the light of the world. It is to be the light when he should no longer be here in person. The church is not a source of light, but it is the transmitter of the light of Christ. This is the one and only way it can be the body and fulness of Christ, (Eph. 1:23). It is not the saved who are the light of the world and the body and fulness of Christ. It is rather the church. The essential difference between the church and the rest of the saved is that the church keeps the doctrines and practices of Christ; the rest of the saved do not keep these doctrines and practices.

The moon beneath the feet of Israel does not indicate a superiority of Israel over the church. It means, rather, that the church keeps the truth alive in the world lest, the truth having perished, God should destroy Israel with all other unbelievers before this chosen nation should be brought to salvation and acceptance of the truth. In II Kings 13:21, a dead Israelite touched the bones of Elisha and rose from the dead. In the type, Elisha represents the church, which has previously died in the world in the sense of its being raptured. Somehow, the death of the church in the world contributes to the resurrection of Israel as the touching the bones of Elisha caused the dead Israelite to rise from the dead.

Twelve Stars—Perfected Israel

The twelve stars in the crown of the woman signifies the perfect government into which God intends to bring Israel. Twelve is the number of governmental perfection of God. Though there were actually thirteen tribes of Israel, only twelve of them are ever considered in matters of national salvation. There were also twelve apostles of the Lamb to indicate the perfect government of the church. Again we encounter difficulty as to the time element. The woman is evidently presented with the crown of twelve stars at the time of the birth of Christ. In the mind of God, this crowning goes back at least to the time of the giving of the Abrahamic covenant, but it will not be accomplished in fact until the beginning of the

Millennium. In the study of Revelation, there is a mingling of the timeless viewpoint of God with the time-limited viewpoint of man. Israel is presented crowned with governmental perfection at the time of the birth of Christ because it has always been through the works and virtues of Christ that Israel should come into this governmental perfection.

Birth Pangs of the Grace Age

The pregnancy and birth pangs of the woman represents the political, economic, and religious condition of Israel at the time of the birth of Christ. Most of the people had already gone into the dispersion among the nations. The remnant of Jews yet in the land were in subjection to the Roman Empire. The Messiah of the Old Testament prophecies was the only hope for Israel. The seed to whom the promise was made along with Abraham was Christ (Gal. 3:16). Through faith in this seed, Israel and the nations should become heirs of the world. Israel had utterly failed under the law, and had almost come to destruction. This condition is the pregnancy and birth pangs of the woman, as already stated. Salvation by grace had prevailed throughout the national history of Israel, but as the special people of God they had utterly failed to come into the promised inheritance by law. Now Christ is coming, not to offer a new plan of salvation, but to offer the plan of grace and faith by which Israel and those of other nations might come into the inheritance. In this age the inheritance is not in salvation alone. It is in the church.

The Dragon

The second great sign that appears in Heaven is the great firecolored, or red, dragon with seven heads and ten horns. This character is the Devil. The Devil is a trinity of personalities as is God. As presented here, the Devil is the Anti-God. That is, he stands in opposition to God the Father. It is true that Antichrist is also represented as a beast with seven heads and ten horns, but the parallelism is in the fact that just as God the Father is manifested in Christ the Son, so the Devil is manifested in Antichrist. It is the heavenly view of the Devil in the present situation. When he is manifested on earth it is usually in the guise of Antichrist, just as Christ is the manifestation of God on earth. The Devil is consistently represented in Scripture as a dragon and a serpent. This fact refers to the degradation and evil into which he fell when he rebelled against God and was cast out of Heaven in the ancient past. The red color probably suggests the blood shed of evil and the fire of eternal judgment.

The Heads, Horns, and Diadems

The seven heads represent spirit power or religious government. The ten horns represent political power or government. The number of the righteous government of God is twelve; that of the Devil is ten. Ten tribes of Israel rebelled against the legitimate government and set up the northern kingdom of Israel, which God never recognized as legitimate. In Revelation, there are ten evil kings who give their allegiance to Antichrist. There are seven diadems on the seven heads of the dragon. These signify what the Devil accomplishes in the field of religion through the fall of man and the Devil's being made the god of the world.

The Fallen Angels

With his tail the dragon draws, or drags, a third of the stars of Heaven and casts them into the earth. This refers to the angels who rebelled and fell from Heaven along with Lucifer, or Helel, the archangel (Isaiah 14). There is a question whether one of the three orders of angels fell with the Devil, or whether a third part of all angels fell. Here these angels are cast into the earth. The fallen angels are bound in the pit of darkness to await the judgment (II Peter 2:4; Jude 6). Perhaps the stars or fallen angels of the present situation are only of the third order of angels, which means they were those appointed to the material realm originally, and they were cast into the earth at their fall, and thus became the demon spirits. Those of the other two realms of mind and spirit were cast into the pit because they had no business on the earth in the first place. The text says "the thirds of the stars of the heaven." It is not clear whether it is the third part or the third order of angels.

The Christ Child

The dragon stood in the presence of the woman, ready to devour her child as soon as it was born. From the historical standpoint there are several facts that we may point out. Herod sought to destroy Jesus as soon as he was born. From the beginning of his ministry, the religious world sought to destroy him. This was under the influence of the Devil. Economically, the people constantly sought to induce Jesus to give them a life of luxury and revelry, which was in accord with the will of the Devil and contrary to the will of God concerning him. The Devil made his supreme effort to destroy Jesus as the Savior of the world in the wilderness temptation. Here he subjected him to the three fundamental temptations of mankind. These are: the lust of the flesh—the appeal to the sinful physical nature of man; the lust of the eyes—the appeal to the sinful intellectual nature of man; and the pride of life—the appeal to the sinful spiritual nature of man. These are the

same temptations under which Eve and Adam fell in the garden of Eden. The lust of the flesh corresponds with the command to turn stones into bread, and that the tree was good for food. The lust of the eyes has its parallel in the worshiping of the Devil to gain the kingdoms of the world, and that the tree was pleasing to the eyes. The pride of life is identical with the suggestion that Jesus jump from the highest point of the temple to show his power in religion, and that the tree was desirable to make wise. This latter was so that Adam and Eve could walk by sight instead of by faith as God had decreed. The Devil sought to destroy Jesus by turning him away from doing the will of God before he sought to destroy him by the crucifixion. The Devil has always had more success in turning people to apostasy than he has had in destroying the faith by persecution.

Three Child Relationships

In this passage, three words are used to describe the child relationship of Christ. The first one is son, which means a mature son who is worthy as an heir to his father. Christ is the worthy heir of God, and Jesus is the worthy heir of humanity. The second word is male, which makes Jesus the second Adam as opposed to the second Eve. Adam, and not Eve, was the federal head of the human race. The third word means a born child, which refers to the fact that Jesus actually was born of a woman, though he had already been the Son of God from eternity. Christ actually became a member of the human race when he was born of the virgin Mary, and he was actually subjected to all the temptations of mankind as such. This is the only way he could have put himself in our place and borne our sins. These three words are in the Greek text *huios*, *arsen*, and *teknon* respectively.

The Second Adam

The man child is about to shepherd all the nations with an iron rod. The first Adam's lordship over the earth was conditioned on his eating of the fruit of the tree of life and living forever in righteousness. He needed only to choose by faith in order to come into the permanent rulership of a sinless creation. The second Adam must overcome the author of sin by righteous principles, make alive a spiritually dead race, and bring into subjection a completely sin dominated creation in order to rule the nations. This involves the life, death, and the resurrection of Jesus. His ascension to glory and his second coming are also involved. Jesus must accomplish all these things before he can righteously dethrone the Devil as the god of the world and be enthroned as such himself.

Christ Enthroned as Lord

The sojourn of Christ on earth is here told in three brief statements. The first one tells of his birth, the second tells that he is to rule all the nations, and the third says he is caught up to God and to his throne. This, of course, refers to the ascension of Jesus at the end of his personal ministry in the world. This was forty days from the time of his resurrection. He ascended above all the heavens (Eph. 4:10). A number of passages state that he was to sit at the right hand of the Lord until the Lord should make his enemies his footstool. At Acts 2:32-35, Peter makes out the following case: God raised Jesus from the dead, not leaving his soul in Hades, nor permitting his flesh to see corruption; the group of disciples, who were the church, were witnesses of the resurrection; Jesus, being exalted to the right hand of God, received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father, and he poured out the Spirit on the church on Pentecost. Peter says that from this evidence all the house of Israel should know that God had made Jesus both Lord and Christ. The demonstration on Pentecost was the specific evidence to this nation. Christ was received in Heaven as Lord of the universe at the time of his ascension, but he will not be so received on earth until the beginning of the Millennium. In the meantime, God is working out the process of making his enemies his footstool.

Flight of the Woman

Apparently, as a result of the child's being caught up to the throne of God, the woman flees into the wilderness, where she is nourished for twelve hundred and sixty days. It is also stated that she flees to a place made ready of God. In this matter we encounter difficulty as to the time element. Historically, Israel began fleeing into the wilderness at the time of the first Babylonian captivity about seven hundred and forty years before the birth of Jesus. The final flight into the wilderness was in the year 70 A.D., when the Roman army took Jerusalem and scattered the remnant of the Jews who were yet in the land. If this is the flight of our present passage, there is a difficulty in explaining Scripturally and historically the twelve hundred and sixty days during which Israel is nourished in the wilderness. Israel has remained in this dispersion for almost nineteen hundred years. If a day represents a year, as it often does in prophecy, what twelve hundred and sixty years out of the approximately nineteen hundred will be that in which God nourished Israel among the nations? The condition of Israel has not essentially changed at any time since the dispersion in 70 A.D. God has had no direct dealings with them. God is preserving Israel as a nation by indirect and providential means.

The flight from Jerusalem in 70 A.D. prefigures another flight of

the Jews from Jerusalem about the middle of the Great Tribulation period, when the Jews will be betrayed by Antichrist. This is when God will nourish Israel in the wilderness for twelve hundred and sixty literal days, or three and a half years, which is the last half of the Tribulation.

THE WAR IN HEAVEN

Revelation 12:7-9

And there became war in the Heaven, Michael and his angels made war with the dragon. And the dragon made war with his angels, and they did not prevail, nor was their place found longer in the Heaven. And there was cast out the great dragon, the ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world, he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

Cause of the War

This passage begins by saying there became war in Heaven. It is not a war among mankind, but rather one among the great spirit powers of the universe. The conflict has to do with who will have lordship over mankind and the earth. In deciding this issue, there has been age-long conflict on the earth and among mankind. But it is not confined to the earth by any means, for the mighty spirit powers are the ones who will finally decide this issue.

Michael, the Archangel

We are told that Michael and his angels fight against the dragon and his angels. Michael, the archangel, is mentioned only five times in the Scriptures (Dan. 10:13, 21; Dan. 12:1; Jude 9; and Rev. 12:7). Since Jude 9 indicates Michael had to do with the resurrection of Moses, and since the references in Daniel have to do with the resurrection of Israel as a nation, we conclude that Michael is the archangel in the realm of spirit, for it is spirit power, as opposed to physical and intellectual power, that raises the dead. The Holy Spirit is the power of resurrection (Rom. 8:11; I Peter 3:18). Michael is the archangel in this highest realm of power in the universe.

The Dragon and His Army

The warring group on the other side of the conflict is the dragon and his angels. The dragon is the Devil and Satan. "Devil" and "Satan" are synonymous names, coming out of the Greek and Hebrew languages respectively. They both mean the adversary or

opposer, and Devi] also carries the idea of accuser or slanderer. Satan appears first in Scripture in the guise of a serpent in Eden. His origin is clearly told in the fourteenth chapter of Isaiah and the twenty-eighth chapter of Ezekiel.

Relative Positions of Angels

In the disposition of the great spirit powers of the universe, God stands as ultimately supreme. This is true by virtue of the fact that he existed before all things, and all things, including the other spirit powers, were created by him. The Scriptures teach that the Son is also coexistent, or eternal, with the Father. By the power and the authority of the trinity of God, angels were created. As archangels, Michael and Lucifer were perhaps created on a common level, Lucifer being called the dragon in the present passage. It is consistent therefore that these two should be arrayed in battle against one another.

Ambition of Lucifer

However, there are situations in the Bible that picture the Devil as arrayed against Christ instead of against Michael. The reason for this is that Lucifer, or Helel in the Hebrew text, exalted himself above the stars, or the other angels, and sought to become like the Most High God. This was a position which God meant to be filled by Christ as the Savior (Luke 1:32). Thus, the Devil aspired to rise above his appointed realm and to usurp the office intended for Christ as the Son of God. This goal put him in direct rivalry and conflict with Christ, and if it had been attained it would have exalted Lucifer above the other angels. God allowed the ambitious scheme of Lucifer in the sense that he did not arbitrarily destroy this ambitious angel. God chose rather to defeat every effort and ambition of the Devil by just and righteous means through Christ. This is the fundamental explanation for the conflict of the ages. The net result is that we see the Devil fighting against Christ, his superior as to appointed office, and against Michael and the other holy angels, his equals as to appointed office, but his superiors as to righteousness of office. The whole plan of God would fail should the Devil succeed in his goal, and the whole plan of the Devil will fail when the victory of Christ is completed. In the war in Heaven, Michael fulfills his appointed office under Christ. The Devil fails in his effort to carry out his own ambitious scheme.

The Time of War in Heaven

A concrete determination of the time of this war in Heaven and the casting out of the dragon and his host would enable a more confident application of their details. In the fourteenth chapter of

Isaiah, the casting of Lucifer down to the earth appears to have occurred before the creation of man. However, the Devil went into Heaven to accuse the saints in Job's day. This access was gained when Adam made the Devil the god of the world. At John 12:31, Jesus, facing the cross says, "Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out." At the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, the Devil was cast out of Heaven as the accuser of the brethren, and it was at this time the war in Heaven of our present chapter took place. It would be hard to prove that the Devil is in Heaven accusing the saints during the present age. Those who attempt it usually end up by appealing to the first and second chapters of Job. This was, of course, before the resurrection and ascension of Jesus and the saints mentioned in the twenty-seventh chapter of Matthew. If the war in Heaven is to take place some time during the Great Tribulation it would be difficult to explain who the remnant of the seed of the woman are, whom the dragon persecutes after the woman flees into the wilderness.

The saints accused by the Devil would of necessity be the Old Testament saints. If the casting out occurs at the end of the age in the Tribulation period, those accused would include the church saints. Much of the New Testament discussion deals with a great salvation which we have than the salvation enjoyed by the Old Testament saints (Heb. 2:2-4). It is believed that one detail of this greater salvation is the fact that the Devil has been cast out of Heaven as the accuser of the brethren.

Principle of the Reign of the Devil

The ultimate accusation of the saints by the Devil seems to be that they sin against God while they live in the world, and his semblance of victory is that the saints die and remain dead when they die. Jesus established the church in the world and promised that it would remain true to God to the end of the Church Age. This destroyed the accusation of the Devil against the saints, unless the Devil could destroy the church. With Jesus enthroned as the glorified Son of Man in Heaven, and with a company of glorified Old Testament saints there also, the Devil can no longer claim that dead saints will remain dead forever. Therefore, he has no effective argument to make to God against the saints in the world. It is evident in Heaven that all the saints will in due time come into immortal glory through Christ. This is by virtue of the tokens of complete victory that already exist as accomplished facts in Heaven.

Why the Devil Fails

In the war in Heaven the Devil does not have the might to prevail. In the world, wars are often decided by force of arms apart from

principles of law, logic, and righteousness in the cause involved. The false principle that might makes right has settled many issues among mankind. This is not true of the conflict among heavenly or spiritual powers. God always stands as the just and righteous judge of forces and causes involved in conflict. The question then arises that if this be true, why does God not destroy the forces of the Devil without delay, since his cause is always sinful and destructive? The answer is that there is a legal rightness in the claims of the Devil until these claims have been overthrown by the righteous works of Christ.

The Legal Claim of the Devil

The philosophy of these matters is this: In order to bring intelligent creatures into willing subjection to God, man was not only given the ability and opportunity to choose his own destiny in Christ, but also he was made lord of the creation. Thus, the destiny of the earth should be the same as that of mankind. Then, when Adam by his choice obeyed the Devil rather than God, he legally made the Devil the god, not only of himself, but of the world also. There was nothing righteous about this transaction, but there was an element of legal rightness in it. Man could choose for himself and the world; therefore, he could legally make the Devil the god of the world. This is still true, though the Devil would bring man and the world to complete destruction. The work of Christ in redemption is not only to destroy the legal claim of the Devil to godship over the world, but also to bring the world and mankind under a completely righteous rule, and to do this without violating any legal claims either of the Devil or of mankind. This is why the conflict has gone on in the world these six thousand years. From this standpoint, the war in Heaven and the casting out of the Devil and his angels may be regarded as merely the enforcing of the victory which Christ had won on earth in his life, death, resurrection, ascension in glory and immortality. The victory was determined when Jesus was righteously enthroned at the right hand of the Most High God as the glorified Son of man. With Christ enthroned in righteous victory over sin and death, God would not tolerate the Devil's coming into the very presence of the victorious Christ to make accusations against his brethren in the world. The Devil's accusing faithful Job in the presence of the Lord is an Old Testament picture which will not fit as a Church Age picture at all.

Whole World Deceived

The common version of the Bible says the Devil deceives the whole world. In the Greek text, the more common word translated world is *kosmos*. In verse nine, however, the word for the world is

Oikoumene. *Kosmos* refers to order and arrangement and the harmonious working of a given set of laws. Its broadest application is to the arrangement and working order of the physical universe. Its narrowest application in the Scriptures is to a woman's adorning herself according to a definite pattern to look beautiful (I Peter 3:3). Technically, *oikoumene* has a very similar meaning to that of *kosmos*. In its New Testament application, it refers to a given system of society. It is related to the conduct and the laws that govern intelligent beings. Therefore, it is intelligent men, as they operate in the fields of government, economics, and religion, who are deceived by the Devil. The result is that the only possible way to escape being deceived by the Devil is to live according to the Scripture pattern. In the present age, this can be done only through active participation in the legitimate church of Jesus Christ.

The Devil Cast Out of Heaven

The Devil is cast out of Heaven into the earth. The book of Job definitely teaches that the Devil was active on earth, and that he went into Heaven to accuse such saints as Job. His persecution of Job was limited only by the Lord. The scripture implies that the casting of the Devil out of Heaven at the time of the ascension of Jesus has resulted in his working with greater intensity in the world during the Church Age than he did in Old Testament times. The religious world was never organized against the church in the present age. It was a peculiar fact of the age that the Devil as a roaring lion goes about seeking whom he may devour (I Peter 5:8). To escape this lion one is to be steadfast, not simply in faith, but in the faith, which is the New Testament system of doctrine and practice. This system cannot be observed and carried out by all the saved; it can be done only in the church.

REJOICING IN HEAVEN

Revelation 12:10-12

And I heard a great voice in the Heaven saying, "Now has come about the salvation and the dynamic power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ, because the accuser of our brethren was cast out, the one accusing them in the presence of our God day and night. And these won the victory over him on account of the blood of the Lamb and on account of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their soul unto death. On account of this rejoice ye, heavens and the ones dwelling in them: woe to the earth and the sea, because the Devil has come down to you having great wrath, understanding that he has a very little season. "

Voice of Rejoicing

This section opens with a great voice of rejoicing in Heaven. It is not stated whose voice this is. Earlier in this study, it was suggested that the twenty-four elders in Heaven are intimately connected with the two governments of Israel and the church. Therefore, they have a close relationship to mankind, possibly being glorified men themselves. It may be they who raise the shout of joy when the Devil is cast out of Heaven. Whoever raises this voice of praise must be a man, or men, because the voice speaks of the saints on earth as “our brethren.”

Authority of Christ in Heaven

There are four results in Heaven of the casting out of the Devil. It is said that there has come about the salvation, the dynamic power, the kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Christ. These have all been intended in the mind of God from eternity. They have prevailed on earth in a very limited sense from the days of Adam. But, they are here announced as an accomplished fact in Heaven, and the fact is accomplished in the casting out of the Devil.

Victory Over the Devil

The brethren win the victory over the Devil on account of the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony. The saints won the victory exactly the way New Testament saints do, even though the blood of the Lamb was not literally shed as then. The victory of Old Testament saints is discussed in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. Many saved people in Old Testament times lived victorious lives through faith. The same thing is true in the present age. The difference and the better thing to the saints in the Church Age is in the fact that Israel, as the special body of the people of God, failed and went into apostasy under the old order of things. The church as the special body of the people of God will not fail and go into apostasy during the Church Age. The success of the church as opposed to their failure lies in the fact that church saints have a better rule of conduct and a better ministry of the Holy Spirit than they had. If these things are not true, then such Scriptures as Hebrews 11:39, 40 and John 7:38, 39 are meaningless. They promise a better life and a better ministry of the Holy Spirit than the Old Testament saints had.

Victory in Blood and Testimony

The victory over the Devil is won by the blood of the Lamb, which is the only basis of salvation and justification, and it is the word of their testimony. This testimony is potent and efficient only when it is in accord with the Word of God. Much is being said today

about the remedies for the peril of the world. But little is being said to the effect that personal salvation and then personal living according to the real teachings of the word of God constitute the only remedy there is for ailing and deluded mankind. The new birth is being bypassed, and the word is being wrested to concoct a rule of life based on the universal fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of man. This course is hastening the world toward Armageddon.

The Meaning of Soul

It is said the brethren did not love their soul unto death. In verse eleven, the common version of the Bible has “lives,” whereas the Greek text has “soul.” *Psyche* or “soul” means conscious life, whether physical, intellectual, or spiritual. It is only when applied to spiritual life that soul has the meaning generally ascribed to it. The word also usually bears the implication of happiness, prosperity, and security with reference to whatever phase of life is under consideration. Therefore, the saints are asked to sacrifice security and often their physical lives for the sake of the faith. Many today teach that God will give material security and prosperity to the faithful. This denies the teaching of Jesus that we must forsake all in order to really follow him. Those who deny their soul in the sense of physical prosperity are promised they will not be tested above that they are able to bear, they are promised spiritual prosperity in the world, and they are promised a rich reward in the world to come. But, there is no promise they will all become millionaires in the present world.

The Present Scene in Heaven

The heavens and their inhabitants are to rejoice because the Devil is cast out of their presence. Whatever the time is, when the Devil is cast out, there is no longer the scene in Heaven of the Devil’s going before the throne of God accusing the saints there, as he certainly did in the days of Job. It can readily be seen that this fact greatly changes the atmosphere in Heaven. At the present time, Jesus is enthroned in the utmost height of Heaven. Enoch, Moses, and Elijah are evidently there in glorified bodies. Also, the saints who came out of the tombs after the resurrection of Jesus are likely in Heaven in glorified bodies, for the Scriptures give no indication that glorified people ever become unglorified and die again. It is not seemly to suppose the Devil goes into such a glorious and holy environment and accuses the saints as he did in the Old Testament times.

Woe on the Earth

The same voice which commands the rejoicing in Heaven pronounces woe to the earth and the sea because the Devil has come down to them in great wrath. This intensified wrath is because he realizes he has only a short season. The Devil hoped to win in the conflict against Christ up to the time Jesus rose from the dead and was received up to the throne of God. From that time onward, the Devil knew what the final outcome of the conflict would be. But he continues the struggle in order to bring as many men as possible down to destruction along with himself. He is working more intensely than he did when there was the possibility he would win a decisive victory over Christ, whose appointed office he set out to usurp.

Present Goal of the Devil

The Devil will make one last supreme effort to win over Christ at the end of the present age, when he will be embodied in Antichrist. This means his greatest effort to win will be in the Great Tribulation. But there is a difference between his winning a victory on earth and his winning one in Heaven. When he was accusing the saints in Heaven, he was attempting to establish a legitimate cause there. When he wins a victory on earth, it affects the men who come under his power, but it does not affect heavenly principalities at all. When Christ was enthroned in Heaven as the victorious Son of God and Son of Man, it destroyed any possibility that the Devil should be so enthroned in Heaven. But it left open the possibility that the Devil should be permanently enthroned as the god of this world. Then, it would be this issue that is determined by the conflict of the Great Tribulation.

THE DRAGON, THE WOMAN, AND THE REMNANT OF HER SEED

Revelation 12:13-18

And when the dragon saw that he was cast into the earth, he persecuted the woman who bore the male. And there were given to the woman the two pinions of the great eagle, in order that she might fly into the wilderness unto her place, where she is nourished there a season and seasons and half of a season from the face of the serpent. And the serpent cast out of his mouth after the woman water as a river, in order that he might make her overwhelmed by the river. And the earth came at the cry for assistance of the woman, and the earth opened her mouth and drank up the river which the dragon cast out of his mouth. And the dragon was

wrathful against the woman, and he went away to make war with the remaining ones of her seed, the ones keeping the commandments of God and having the witness of Jesus. And he stood upon the sand of the sea.

Two Great Conflicts Compared

The great peculiarity of this chapter is the repetition of the story of the conflict between the dragon and the woman. Several of the details of the two accounts appear to be identical in their import. Some of these identical details are hatred and persecution of the woman by the dragon, flight into the prepared place in the wilderness, and her being nourished there for three and a half years. Some of the differences in the two accounts are these: First, the goal in the first account is to devour the man child as soon as he is born; in the second account it is to destroy the woman because she bore the man child. Second, in the first account the dragon drags a third of the stars of Heaven and casts them into the earth; in the second account the dragon and his angels are cast out of Heaven as the result of a war in Heaven. Third, the climax of the first account is the birth of the man child and his being caught up to the throne of God; the climax of the second account is the turning of the dragon to persecute the others of the seed of the woman, he having been cast out of Heaven. Fourth, in the first account the woman is nourished in the wilderness three and a half seasons, or years.

The Two Conflicts Applied

The first account has to do strictly with Israel as a nation, her bearing of the Messiah, her flight into the wilderness, and her preservation there during the last half of the Great Tribulation. The second account has to do with what the Scriptures call spiritual Israel. Historically, when the literal nation fled into the wilderness the Devil turned to persecute the remnant of her spiritual seed, which is the church. This persecution will continue until the church is taken out of the world in the rapture of the saints. This is why the conclusion of this persecution is not told. It simply goes on as long as the remnant of the seed of the woman is in the world. Then, since the church is gone out of the world, and God is dealing directly with Israel again, the account tells of her flight into the wilderness at the middle of the Tribulation period, where she is nourished for the duration of this period. This flight seems to be identical with that of the first account.

Israel Persecuted

As a result of the dragon's being cast out of Heaven into the earth, he persecutes the woman who bore the male child. The implication

is this persecution is because the woman bore the child. The Devil did not seek to destroy Israel before the child was born. The theological reason for this is that as long as Israel operated under the Law of Moses the nation constituted no great threat to the plans of the Devil to sink the whole human race into ignorance of the truth of God. It was only Christ and his establishment of truth in the world that thwarted this scheme of the Devil. This is one reason why Jesus called himself the light of the world.

Flight of Israel

There are given to the woman the two wings, or pinions, of the great eagle that she might fly into her place in the wilderness. Perhaps the strong wings of the eagle signify the dispersion of Israel among the nations to preserve her from extinction as the covenant people of God. This people were broken up as a nation, but they have not suffered extinction by being amalgamated into the nations among whom they took refuge. This is also the secondary meaning of her flying into a place prepared for her. The first account says this place was prepared of God. This preparation of her place signifies God's keeping Israel in such an environment among the nations that this covenant people of God would maintain their racial purity. Despite nineteen hundred years of mingling among many races of people, Jews are still Jews.

The Woman and the Flood

As the woman flees into the wilderness, the dragon casts water out of his mouth as a river in the effort to destroy her by the flooding of the river. This figurative language has to do with the many efforts of the Devil to destroy Israel. The most evident of these has been the efforts to exterminate the Jews by violence which they have suffered among many nations. More subtle than this, however, has been the threat of their being destroyed by intermixture or amalgamation with other races. Related to this latter is the constant intellectual and religious inducement held out to them to forget and deny the national and religious ideals and traditions of their fathers. But all of these floods of the Devil have failed to destroy Israel after almost two millenniums of effort, though some Jews deny that Judaism is any more than a religious denomination such as Catholicism or any of the various Protestant groups.

The Earth Helps Israel

The earth opens her mouth and drinks up the river which the dragon casts out after the woman. This again is figurative language. As the Devil seeks to destroy Israel, God works providentially to

preserve the nation, though he is not dealing directly with them as his chosen people. How this conflict works out may be illustrated by modern examples. Certain nations have tried to exterminate the Jews within their boundaries. They have been prevented from doing so by world wars and threats of wars. Thus, God takes the agencies of the Devil and turns them to his own purposes. Israel has been reborn as a nation in their homeland as the result of their oppression in other lands. This is God's way of regathering them from the dispersion. Notice that these things are done providentially; the earth opens her mouth and drinks up the flood cast out against Israel.

The Remnant

When the woman flees into the wilderness and escapes the persecution of the dragon, he is wrathful against her, and he goes forth to persecute the remaining ones of her seed. A definite identification of this seed and the time of their persecution would help greatly in solving a number of other Scripture problems of prophecy. It is said of this remnant that they keep the commandments of God, and they have the testimony of Jesus. The remnant of the seed of the woman is the church. The time of the persecution of this remnant is the duration of the Church Age. From the beginning of the church until the coming of Christ in glory, no group has been found who will keep the commandments of God and bear witness of Jesus Christ except the church. There will be no one to bear faithful testimony to the truth of God during the last half of the Tribulation. It will be a time and condition of almost a hell on earth. This is what makes it a tribulation.

1 he One Standing on the Sand

In the last verse of the chapter, it is uncertain who stands on the sand of the sea. The common version makes it John, the one giving the revelation. The revised Greek text makes it say he stood on the sand of the sea, referring to the dragon. The difficulty lies in the fact that there is only one letter's difference between "I stood" and "he stood" in the Greek text. It is the things which John saw, regardless of where he was standing, that are of vital importance in the discussion.

Chapter 11

The Antichrist and the Anti-Spirit

Revelation 13:1-10

And I saw a wild beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and upon his horns ten diadems, and upon his heads names of blasphemy. And the wild beast which I saw was like a leopard, and his feet as of bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave to him his dynamic power and his throne and great authority. And one of his heads was as slaughtered unto death, and the wound of his death was healed. And all the earth marveled after the wild beast, and they worshipped the dragon, because he gave the authority to the wild beast, and they worshipped the wild beast saying who is like the wild beast and who is able to make war with him? And there was given to him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and there was given to him authority to operate forty two months. And he opened his mouth unto blasphemies toward God, to blaspheme his name and his tabernacle, the ones dwelling in the heaven. And it was given to him to make war with the saints and to win the victory over them, and there was given to him authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation. And all the ones dwelling upon the earth shall worship him, whose name has not been written in the book of the life of the Lamb, the one having been slaughtered from the casting down of the world. If anyone has an ear, let him hear. If anyone leads into captivity, he goes away into captivity. If anyone kills with the sword, it is necessary for him to be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

A View of the Beast

In the former part of this chapter is the first extensive description of the beast with seven heads and ten horns. This same beast is presented in the seventh chapter of Daniel, though the seven heads are not mentioned there. There are several incidental references to

this same beast earlier in the book of Revelation (Rev. 6:1; Rev. 9:1; Rev. 9:16; and Rev. 11:7). A more extended examination of this beast will be given in the discussion of Revelation chapter seventeen.

A Ferocious Beast

The Greek text uses an entirely different word for the beast that John saw from the word used first to designate the four so-called beasts around the throne of God in Heaven (Rev. 4:6). The Greek name of those beasts is *zoon*, meaning a living being. The beast of this chapter is *therion*, meaning a wild, ferocious, or savage beast. Thus the beast that comes up out of the sea is an entirely different being from those about the throne of God in Heaven. Those are of a heavenly nature; this one is of the nature of Hell.

A Monstrous Beast

This beast is a monstrosity when viewed from the standpoint of the animal kingdom. It has ten horns and seven heads. It has a diadem on each of its ten horns and names of blasphemy on its heads. In general appearance this beast is like a leopard, but its feet are like those of a bear, and its mouth is like that of a lion. This beast is not a literal thing, but it is to be regarded as illustrating political and religious powers, as seen in visions by both Daniel and John (see the seventh chapter of Daniel).

The Sea Is Humanity

The beast comes up out of the sea. Often in Scripture figures, waters represent the masses of unorganized humanity (Rev. 17:15). It has been said that circumstances and situations which have arisen have made the great men and the heroes of the ages what they were. The same principle works with reference to Antichrist and his rise to power. As the sea rages and labors in futility within its banks, so the masses of mankind labor and struggle without efficient purpose under the curse and blighting effect of sin. This situation furnishes the opportunity for Antichrist to rise up as a false, deceptive, and materialistic savior to man in the troublous times of the last days.

The Horns

The ten horns are ten kings (Rev. 17:12). These ten kings are discussed in connection with the description in chapter seventeen. Diadems are symbolic of accomplishment, as opposed to crowns, which signify the legal right of office. Thus, the ten diadems on the ten horns signify accomplishments of these kings under the influence of the beast in a time of political turmoil. The diadems are

the more significant in view of the fact that these horns, or kings, do not have a hereditary or legal kingdom of their own. Their position depends entirely on their accomplishments. These kings could very well refer to rulers with dictatorial power over countries that have previously had democratic government. One of these kings could very conceivably be the President of the United States.

The Seven Heads

Whereas horns represent political power or authority, heads, especially seven heads, represent religious power and authority. It is interesting to note that political and religious power and authority are combined in this monstrous beast, who is the Antichrist. This subject is more completely presented in the seventeenth chapter. There are names of blasphemy on these seven heads, implying insult and opposition to God, his word, and true religion. In preparation for Antichrist, the religious world is blaspheming all of these today.

A Picture of Empire

The beast likenesses have the same meaning here which they have in the vision of Daniel. The leopard refers to the prominent characteristic of the Grecian empire, which was speed of conquest. The bear refers to the consuming power of the Medo-Persian empire. The lion refers to the nature of the Babylonian empire, which was the first of the four ancient empires. The Roman empire is not likened to any specific beast because it was a combination of all the evil qualities of the other ancient empires. Likewise, the empire of the beast in the last days will be a consummation and intensifying of all the evil qualities of all the ancient empires, including that of Rome.

Legal Rights and Powers of the Devil

Adam gave lordship of the earth to the Devil, though he had no moral and spiritual right to do so. This is why the Scriptures recognize the Devil as the god of the world. In destroying the legal claim of the Devil through perfectly just and righteous methods, God does not deal arbitrarily.

In this situation, the dynamic power refers to the actual ability of the Devil to do things, and the authority clearly means his lawful right to do things. These are given over to Antichrist in the last days in a greater measure than they have been used in former times. This is why the Tribulation is a tribulation. The effort that the Devil will make through Antichrist is comparable with the effort that God made through Christ during his life in the world.

The Wounded Head

One of the seven heads of the beast is wounded or slaughtered unto death, and the wound of his death is healed. The seven heads are seven empires, wherein there is complete dictatorship in matters of government, economics, and religion. In fact, there is dictatorship in all the phases of the lives of men. These empires in the time order are Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, the papacy when it had political power, the papacy when it does not have political power, and the restored Roman empire in the latter days. The head wound unto death is the papacy stripped of actual political power. The healing of the deadly wound is the rebuilding of the Roman empire, probably under the pope. If this theory is correct, today is the time of the head wounded unto death, but there are indications that the whole world is rushing toward a state of affairs that demands dictatorship. America will never again know the freedom and individual initiative which have made her the greatest nation the world has ever known.

Healing of the Wound

All the earth, meaning all mankind, marveled at the healing of the wounded head of the beast. They ask who is like the beast, and who is able to make war with him. In the forgoing paragraph, it was admitted that the world seems to be rushing irrevocably toward world dictatorship. This is virtually an admission that no one will be able to make war with the beast and turn back the tide of communism and socialism, both of which must end in dictatorship.

There is much evidence even in high places of responsibility of men's turning their ingenuity and opportunity to fraud and oppression of their fellowmen. Politicians are more and more turning their opportunity to serving the public into the channel of serving their own personal interests. The ingenuity which once built successful businesses and enterprises that would benefit all is now being turned to defrauding groups and individuals, including the defrauding of the government. This is an admission that America is in such a moral void that no one will be able to make war against the beast of empire, or the rise of dictatorship. This is all marvelous in that democracy has brought such great blessings to humanity, but apparently democracy will not work any more.

Forerunners of Antichrist

There is given to the beast a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies. The theory followed here is that there are forerunners of Antichrist, both in individuals and in general trends and movements. Today men and nations and religious groups are speaking out in condemnation of institutions and ideals that have

been acceptable in the past. The one world political ideal is being thrust upon all people. Unity of all religions is being advocated more and more as the only acceptable way to serve God, and as a necessity in the intercourse among people all the way from the individual to the international levels. And, all the world is surely moving toward a common economic level. This is all the work of the Devil, and it is surely paving the way for Antichrist to perfect and intensify the whole ungodly and dictatorial system. Political leaders are not concerned with what the Constitution says. Economic leaders are not concerned with methods that have been successful in the past. And religious leaders are no longer concerned with what the Bible says.

The Forty-two Months

The common version makes the fifth verse to say that power was given to the beast to continue forty-two months. The Greek text says authority was given him to do, make or operate forty-two months. The Great Tribulation is divided into two periods of forty-two months, or three and a half years each (Dan. 9:27). In certain ways, Antichrist has authority in each of these periods. Verse seven says it is given to him to make war with the saints and to win the victory over them. Since church saints will not be in the world in the last half of the Tribulation, the war with the saints would of necessity be in the first half of the Tribulation, if these saints are church saints. Some believe they are saints among the Jews after the rapture of the saints of the Church Age. It has been previously indicated that this position is hard to prove; therefore, it is rejected in this study. There are a few who believe the rapture of the saints will not be until near the end of the Tribulation period, but there seems to be far more evidence against this position than for it. The resulting position is that the time of the authority of the beast and his victory over the saints is the first half of the Tribulation period. This makes the victory over the saints identical with the victory over the two witnesses in the eleventh chapter, and they both occur in the first half of the reign of the beast or the Antichrist. Those who believe the rapture of the saints will be at the beginning of the Tribulation are faced with the difficulty of the beast's making war with the saints before he actually appears on the world scene. This is true unless they hold the viewpoint the saints here are not church saints, but Jews who are saved after the first resurrection. There is not sufficient Scripture evidence to support such a view.

Full Authority Given to the Beast

The beast is given authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation. This means he has universal authority over mankind on the earth. It has been said that four in its Biblical numerical value refers to man in his relationship to the earth. This embraces his political, economic, and religious life, along with all other related institutions that stem from these three. Thus, Antichrist becomes an absolute dictator over all the phases of the lives of mankind. Note that it is legal right or authority that he has; it is not a moral or spiritual right. And it is not necessary to suppose all accept this rule willingly. It is believed the church will steadfastly oppose it during the first half of the Tribulation. It is also believed the Jews and others will oppose it during the last half of the Tribulation. Otherwise, who would there be to fight against Antichrist in the battle of Armageddon?

The Beast Worshipers

In the eighth verse, it is indicated that the majority of mankind will worship the beast. But some will not. Some will say it is the saved who will not worship the beast; however, a number of saved people today are worshipping the beast in the sense of their advocating his doctrines and practices in their religious lives. Many people of Protestant denominations are saved, but they support the doctrines and practices of Antichrist in their false churches. These saved people will not renounce their errors when Antichrist actually appears on the world scene. The Jews will not worship him (Dan. 9:27; John 5:43). It is the faithful of the church who will not worship the beast during the first half of the Tribulation. The reason for this view will be given in the discussion of the book of life in the next topic.

The Book of Life

The eighteenth verse says all the ones dwelling upon the earth shall worship the beast, whose name has not been written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the casting down or the foundation of the world. To take into account all the possibilities involved in the Greek text of this verse is a complex problem. There are at least three vital questions involved in the interpretation and application of the verse. First, what is the book of life? Second, what time element does “from the foundation of the world” indicate? Third, what does “from the foundation of the world” modify? Note these questions in separate topics.

A Roll of the Faithful

Throughout the Scriptures, there are various references to

records which God keeps. Moses asked that he be erased from the book of Jehovah to atone for the sin of Israel (Exodus 32:32, 33). Jehovah answered that he will erase the ones who have sinned from his book. It seems clear this book was the roll of the Israelites who left Egypt, and who were intended to enter the land of promise. All who died in the wilderness had their names erased from this book, and evidently those who were born in the wilderness had their names added to it. Actually, this book would likely contain the names of both saved and unsaved. Typically it would contain only the names who were both saved and faithful (I Cor. 10). It is believed this is the real picture of the book of life as it is commonly used in the New Testament. For instance, at Phil. 4:3 the names of the people were not written in the book of life when they were saved, but rather when they were identified with the church. And it became evident their names were in the book of life when their faithful works were seen. Scriptural works are a dependable test of faithfulness, but they are not a dependable test of salvation. It is suggested that the book of life in our present text is the roll of the faithful saved people living at the time of the coming of Antichrist.

Meaning of “Foundation of the World”

On the second question, it may be said that some believe this verse teaches that certain individuals were elected to salvation at or before the foundation of the world, and that their names were enrolled as saved then. It seems that everywhere except in translations of the New Testament the word translated foundation here, *katabole*, designates a wrecking as opposed to a building or a founding. Thus, the “foundation of the world” is actually the casting down of the world order under the wreckage and ruin of sin at the time Adam made the Devil the god of the world. It is the earth, and not the world, which has a foundation. The world is an immaterial thing, being the laws that govern the material creation and the operation of these laws. When the material creation operates harmoniously it is not actually the world, *kosmos*, but its effects in the operation of the material creation. The practical point is that there is no conclusive proof here, which some like to imagine, that the names of some were enrolled as saved before the creation of the earth.

Meaning of “From”

In addition to the uncertain time element indicated in the foregoing paragraph, there is another point of uncertainty. It concerns the meaning of the word, “from,” which is *apo* in the Greek text. This word not only designates a specific point in time, but also it may indicate any time since a specified point in time. If the time

element refers to the writing of the names in the book of life, this writing could be done at the time of salvation, or at the time of church membership, that is, according to the actual meaning and usage of the word. The enrolling of these names is at the time of church membership.

Time of slaying of the Lamb

The third question is, "What happens at or from the foundation or the casting down of the world?" From the word order in the Greek text it is the slaying of the Lamb. That is, the Lamb is slain from the foundation or the casting down of the world order. This corresponds with the facts set forth in Genesis. Probably Christ was a slain Lamb in the mind of God before the creation of the universe. But he was not revealed to man as the slain Lamb until man became a sinning soul. Christ was presented to Adam in the tree of life before the fall, but not as the slain Lamb. What Adam needed before the fall was not a slain Lamb, but rather he needed some virtue of Christ to seal and perpetuate him in his sinless condition. Adam would have lived forever in sin if he had eaten of the tree of life after the fall. Just as this tree would have sealed him irrevocably in sin after the fall, so it would have sealed him in righteousness before the fall. The statement "from the foundation of the world" specifies the time of the slaying of the Lamb, and not the time of the writing of the names in the book of life.

Conditional Salvation Resolved

To say that the book of life is the book of the faithful, is equivalent to saying it is the roll of legitimate church saints. Therefore, the threat of God's erasing the names of someone from the book of the life is the proposition of someone's falling from his faithfulness, not from salvation (Rev. 3:5). The house of Christ is the church, not all saved people (Heb. 3:6). Salvation is not conditioned on faithfulness but church membership is.

THE BEAST OUT OF THE EARTH

Revelation 13:11-18

And I saw another wild beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb, and he talked as a dragon. And all authority of the first beast he exercises in his presence. And he makes the earth and the ones dwelling in it that they should worship the first wild beast, whose wound of his death was healed. And he does great signs, in order that even he may make fire to come down from heaven into the earth in the presence of men. And

he deceives the ones dwelling upon the earth on account of the signs which were given to him to do in the presence of the wild beast, saying to the ones dwelling upon the earth to make an image to the wild beast, who has the wound of the sword and lived. And it was given to him to give spirit to the image of the wild beast, in order that even the image of the wild beast might speak, and in order that he might accomplish that whosoever should not worship the image of the wild beast might be killed. And he makes all, the little ones and the great ones, and the rich ones and the poor ones, and the free ones and the bond servants, that they should give to them a brand upon their right hand or upon their forehead, and that not anyone should be able to buy or to sell except the one having the brand, the name of the wild beast, or the number of his name. Here is the wisdom. The one having mind let him count the number of the wild beast; for it is the number of a man. And his number is six hundred sixty six.

The Beast Out of the Earth

Whereas the first wild beast comes up out of the sea, this second one comes up out of the earth. It was suggested that the first beast rises up among and out of the unorganized masses of mankind; the second beast comes out of the region that is called Sheol in the Hebrew language and Hades in the Greek. In other words, he comes out of what is usually referred to as Hell. Christ and the Holy Spirit both come down from Heaven, though Christ as the Son of Man rose up from among mankind, being born of a woman. The Devil closely imitates God in the embodiment of his son among men. Christ and the Holy Spirit have Heaven as their real and legitimate habitation. Christ came down and established a legitimate habitation for God on the earth. As the result, the Holy Spirit came down to dwell in this legitimate habitation of God and to advocate the cause of Christ among men. The Antichrist and the Anti-Spirit have the region of death or Hades as their legitimate habitation. The Antichrist comes up and establishes a legally right habitation for the Devil among the rebellious majority of mankind. Then the Anti-Spirit comes up out of the region of death or Hades and dwells in this legally right habitation of the Devil, and he advocates the cause of Antichrist among men. The parallelism and the imitation are practically perfect, though the motive and the result are the exact opposite. The purpose of Christ and the Holy Spirit is to bring mankind and the creation to eternal glory. The purpose of Antichrist and the Anti-Spirit is to bring mankind and the creation to the eternal destruction of Hell. The beast coming up out of the earth is significant of the fact that the Scriptures uniformly represent Shaol and Hades as being beneath the earth, in the lower parts of the

earth, and in the heart of the earth. When the witch of Endor called Samuel out of Shaol he came up out of the earth (I Sam. 28:13).

Nature of the Second Beast

This second beast has two horns like a lamb, but he talks as a dragon. The first beast is pictured in his true character, being a monstrosity, having seven heads and ten horns. The works of the first beast are pictured in this second beast, for he represents and advocates the cause of the first beast. Since the work of the first beast is both to imitate and to oppose Christ, it is logical that this second beast should look like Christ, but talk like the Devil. The second beast imitates the first, who in turn imitates Christ. There is no other parallelism between Christ and this second beast. The parallel and contrast are between Christ and the first beast.

Incarnation of the First Beast

The first beast is called a man, and the Scriptures present his works as the works of a man. Thus, it seems evident that the Devil will be embodied as a man in Antichrist. This is in imitation of Christ, who became the Son of Man. The Devil may be born of a woman as Jesus was, or he might enter into an adult man and become incarnated in this way. Preference is given to the latter suggestion for two reasons. First, it appears that the Devil fully possessed Judas Iscariot at the time of his receiving the sop. Second, Scripture and logic seem uniformly to dictate that God is the begetter of life, and the Devil is the begetter of death. It is admitted however that this viewpoint does not explain how the magicians of Egypt turned dead sticks into living serpents (Exodus 7:12).

Form of the Second Beast

The second beast is the Anti-Spirit, or the imitator of the Holy Spirit, and is not actually embodied in the form of a man, as is true of the first one. Christ actually became a man in his coming into the world. But when the Holy Spirit came on Pentecost to take his place and advocate his cause the Spirit did not become a man, but remained as an intangible force and personality in the world. It is believed the same will be true of the two-horned beast when he comes.

Authority of the Son of Man

The Greek text of the twelfth verse says the second beast exercises all the authority of the first beast. This authority is based on the healing of the deadly wound of the first beast. In order to see the full significance, we must resort to parallelism again. Jesus

claimed authority chiefly on two grounds. During his personal ministry, he insisted repeatedly that his authority was recognized in Heaven, and it should be recognized on earth, because he did the will of the Father in all things. As the Son of God, we would expect Jesus to exercise all the authority of God, but John 5:27 says authority was given to him to do judgment because he is the Son of Man. Thus, Jesus was given authority as the Son of Man because he did the things that were pleasing to the Father.

After the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, he was given a fuller authority than he had during his personal ministry. He mentions this full authority in his giving of the commission to the church (Matt. 28:18). Romans 1:4 seems to say from the Greek text that Jesus was ordained as the Son of God in dynamic power in the Spirit of holiness as the result of his resurrection from the dead. Peter says (Acts 2:33) that Jesus, being exalted to the right hand of God, received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father, and poured out the Spirit on the church on Pentecost. This was the beginning of his wielding full authority both in Heaven and on earth. It came as the result of his works on earth, culminating and reaching their climax in his resurrection, ascension and enthronement at the right hand of the Most High God. With Jesus enthroned in Heaven, the Holy Spirit came on Pentecost to exercise all the authority of Jesus.

Source of Authority of Second Beast

The second beast exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, just as the Holy Spirit exercises all the authority of Christ during the present age. The beast gets his authority, first, from the fact that Adam made the Devil the god of the world, and second, from the fact that the majority of mankind will accept Antichrist as their god at his manifestation in the last days. People have been worshiping Antichrist since the earliest days of a sin cursed world. This willing acceptance of mankind seems to be one source of the authority of the first beast.

Mock Crucifixion and Resurrection

The text seems to indicate indefinitely that the wounding of the head unto death and the healing of this wound gives the beast his final authority. This closely parallels the death and resurrection of Jesus, except for one thing. Jesus was a definite personality and a man in his death and resurrection. He was not simply a principle and a system. Herein the parallelism breaks down, for the wounding of the head of the beast was the loss of actual power of empire of the papacy, and the healing of this wound is to be the restoration of political power to the papacy, with the accompanying power to force

men in matters of religion. In the loss of the empire of the pope no man was crucified, and in the restoration of the empire no one appears to be literally raised from the dead. However, it is not impossible to suppose that a man, perhaps the pope, will be slain and raised from death, or appear to be slain and raised from the dead in the last days.

The Works of the Second Beast

The two-horned beast appears to have miraculous power. Three words are used in the Greek text to designate miracles. *Dunamis* means a work done by dynamic power, and this work is a miracle only by context or implication. *Semeion* is a sign, and it likewise is a miracle only by context or implication. *Teras* is always translated wonder in the common version, and it is the only one of the three which actually carries the meaning of a miracle. Signs, or *semeia*, is the word used in our text, evidently referring to supernatural works. But what is the nature of these works? The making of fire to come down from the Heaven is the extent of the signs as described here. The power of the Devil is destructive, and not creative or generative. He can produce death, but not life. He causes diseases, but does not heal them. By his power over the laws of nature, he may make fire come down out of the physical heavens. This miracle is real, and the deception is not in the miracle itself, but in the things the people embrace as the result of seeing the miracle. They believe Antichrist is Christ because of the miracles they see.

The Image to the Beast

The people are told by the second beast to make an image to the beast who had the wound of the sword and lived. In the second chapter of Daniel, the king saw a vision of a great image. This image represented the four ancient world empires. There was combined in this image political, economic, and religious power. And, there was dictatorship in all these fields. The image of our text is slightly different in detail from that of Daniel, though identical as to the total picture. The image made to the beast is a dictatorial religious system subservient to and harmonizing with the principle of political dictatorship. False religion must bow to political power in the last days. This is the essence of the conflict between Communism and Catholicism today. The image of this chapter is only the religious element of the beast; the image of Daniel is the totality of power of the beast of empire.

Life Given to the Image

Power is given to the second beast to give life to the image of the first beast. The Greek text says spirit instead of life. Spirit is here

evidently used in the sense of spirit of life, or the life principle. Hence, the common version gives the right sense of the term, though it is technically incorrect. Before attempting to determine what the giving of life or spirit to the image of the beast is, the image must be identified. The image is not literal; it is a religious system which reflects and supports the principle of political dictatorship. If this view is correct, then it is easy to see what the giving of life or spirit to the image would be. It is the giving of spirit power to the false and apostate religious system so that it may have a show of legitimacy. The spirit power is devil power, of course, but it is mighty enough to work miracles of certain sorts. It is an imitation of Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the church in the apostolic age. Christ gave the Holy Spirit to the church, and the church did mighty works by Spirit power. Antichrist gives the Anti-Spirit to the false religious system, and this religious system does mighty works by the power of the Anti-Spirit. This is prefigured in present day unscriptural miracle working. It is the same principle whether the miracles are real or deceptions. They have the goal of giving a show of legitimacy to the religious system of Antichrist in either instance.

The Non-Worshippers of the Beast

The second beast has the power and authority to visit death upon those who do not worship the image of the first beast. This means those who oppose the authorized religious system will be killed. Again we are faced with the question of just who will not worship the beast when he comes into power. There is a close prefiguring of this situation in the third chapter of Daniel. There King Nebuchadnezzar makes a great image and commands all people to worship it. This decree was supported by the religious powers of the land (see verse eight) and it was enforced by the political powers (see verse three). The penalty of the decree fell on the three faithful Jewish companions of Daniel in their being cast into the fiery furnace. These faithful Jews could be typical of a faithful Jewish remnant in the end time, who suffer persecution. But there are some technical difficulties of this position.

The Remnant of Israel in the Church

It is easy enough to trace a faithful remnant in the nation Israel from Moses to Christ. This remnant was still evident in the church in the time of Paul (Rom. 11:5). However, Paul does not teach the continuance of a definite and identifiable remnant of Jews in the church when he makes his argument about the remnant of Israel. Rather, his point is that in the off casting of Israel, individual Jews are not shut out either from salvation or the church. Jews come into

the church on an equal basis with Gentiles but there is little evidence that a remnant of Jews will maintain their identity as such in the church and throughout the Church Age. In the Church Age Jew and Gentile lose their identity as such and become one body in Christ, which is to say one body in the church (I Cor. 12:13).

Paul expected Christ to return while he was yet living, and he, a Jew in the flesh, expected to be raptured with the saints (I Thess. 4:17). This is equivalent to saying every saved and faithful Jew will be taken out of the world in the rapture of the saints.

The Turning of Israel

Faithful church saints will not worship the beast nor his image as long as they are in the world. Probably when the beast betrays the Jews they will not have finally accepted him as their god. Therefore, they will draw back and refuse to pay ultimate homage to him. The result will be that, whereas the beast sought to destroy the church in the first half of the Tribulation, he will seek just as diligently to destroy the Jews in the last half, though they have not actually turned to Christ as yet. The Jews will turn away from Antichrist at the middle of the Tribulation, but they will not turn to Christ until the end of the Tribulation. The same is probably true of those referred to as the lost tribes of Israel.

The Mark of the Beast

The second beast makes all to receive the mark of the first beast. This mark is some means of definitely identifying people as fully accepting the rule of the first beast. This rule dictates all the phases of the lives of men, being an absolute dictatorship. The stress is on universal authority, and not on universal acceptance. This fact is the over all cause of persecution throughout the Tribulation. The persecution will fall on the church during the first half, and on Israel during the second half of the Tribulation. Death or isolation is the penalty for not receiving the mark of the beast.

Number of the Beast

The number of the first beast is six hundred sixty-six. Six is the number of man as having rejected God and having accepted the Devil as his god. This condition is intensified three-fold in the Tribulation. The reign of the Devil is made perfect in Antichrist in the last half of the Tribulation. This is one reason there will be no faithful witnesses to God during this period. The way we deal with figures, six raised to the third power is two hundred sixteen. The way the ancients dealt with numbers, the third power of six was attained by combining three sixes into one number. The result of course is six hundred sixty-six instead of two hundred sixteen.

Those who really believe the Bible will be able to count the number of the beast, or simply to recognize when mankind has fully rejected God and embraced the Devil as their god in Antichrist. Antichrist is the man who is the ultimate son of the Devil, and he is the man of the number. Those who receive his mark are those who fully accept him as their god.

Resurrection and Judgment Scenes

THE LAMB AND HIS BRIDE

Revelation 14:1-5

And I saw, and behold the Lamb standing upon the Mount Zion, and with him a hundred forty-four thousands having his name and the name of his Father written upon their foreheads. And I heard a voice out of the Heaven as a voice of many waters and as a voice of a great thundering, and the voice which I heard as of harpers harping with their harps. And they sang a new song in the presence of the throne and in the presence of the four living beings and of the elders. And no one was able to learn the song except the hundred forty-four thousands, who were bought out of the earth. These are the ones who were not defiled with women. For they are virgins. These are the ones following the Lamb wheresoever he may go. These were bought out of mankind a firstfruit to God and to the Lamb, and in their mouth there was not found a false thing: They are blameless.

Mount Zion

In the first section of this chapter, the setting is Mount Zion, a name used many times in Scripture to designate the highest hill in Jerusalem and the most ancient part of the city. Scripture also regards it as the holiest part of the city, or the very heart of Hebrew worship. It was the place of David's throne, and will be the place of the throne of Jesus in the kingdom age. In this instance, Mount Zion is figurative, and refers to a special place in the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb. 12:22). If the hundred forty-four thousand are the ones who sing the new song, then there is no doubt the site is in Heaven. For Heaven is where the new song is sung.

The Lamb as the God of Sacrifice

The Lamb stands on Mount Zion with a certain group of people. This group will be noted later. Let us now take a close look at the Lamb. The various names of God are not used at random in the Bible, but they describe a specific office or quality of God. The Lamb, of course, is the God of the sacrifice. The death and resurrection of Christ produced not one but two definite results. One of these was to bring salvation to every believer and to all irresponsible people. The other result is that the formation, operation, and continuation of the church hinges directly on the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus. That is, the church comes as a direct result of these things, though the church was actually formed before the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus. The church did not begin the fulness of its operation until Pentecost, when Jesus had ascended and sent the Holy Spirit upon the church.

Exclusive Position of the Church

Christ gave himself for the church (Eph. 5:25). God purchased the church with his own blood (Acts 20:28). There is to be a better thing which God has foreseen concerning the church which the Old Testament saints did not have (Heb. 2:3). Catholics and others, recognizing these things and have concluded that salvation is in the church. Protestants, in general, recognizing them have concluded that the church is a universal spiritual body of all the saved. Neither of these conclusions is accurate. In reality, the church is made up of saved people who are faithful to New Testament teachings.

Second Hundred Forty Four Thousand

In the seventh chapter of Revelation, a hundred forty-four thousand of the twelve tribes of Israel are sealed. In our text, an identical number stands with the Lamb on Mount Zion. Some Bible students have supposed from this fact that the two groups are identical. With the same logic we could suppose that the church is identical with the nation, Israel, because twelve apostles were set in the church, and there are twelve tribes in Israel. The fact of the matter is that twelve, of which a hundred forty-four thousand is a multiple, is the number of the perfect government of God. He has established two governments on the earth: Israel and the church. The church is being brought to governmental perfection in the present age, and Israel will be brought into governmental perfection in the Millennium. These two facts constitute the only relationship there is between the groups in the seventh chapter and the present chapter. The number in the seventh chapter has to do with Israel as an intact nation; the present chapter applies the number to the

church as the bride of Christ. Remember, that in the resurrection the real church will be separated from the professing church as we now know it. There are unsaved and unfaithful people in the church as we see it; there will be none of either when it stands glorified with Christ on the heavenly Zion. This is why it is described by a multiple of the number of governmental perfection.

Names on Hands and Foreheads

There are numerous references to the names of God, of Christ, and of the beast being written on the foreheads and in the hands of people. This possibly means that the name on the forehead signifies the mind of the person is fully committed to God or the Devil as the case may be, and the name in the right hand signifies the person is ultimately committed to God or the Devil in his works. The names of both the Father and the Son are written on the foreheads of these people, signifying that they are in harmony with the Father and the Son as these two are in harmony between themselves. Jesus prayed for this very result in his prayer for the church in the seventeenth chapter of John.

The Song of the Bride

There is a great voice or sound out of Heaven of a multitude singing a new song. The fact that only the hundred forty-four thousand were able to learn the song seems necessarily to imply that they are the ones who sing it. If it were the song of salvation by grace, or the new birth, every saved person from Abel onward could sing it. It is rather the song of threefold salvation by grace, with the accent on the salvation of the mind attained during the Church Age. It is the select group of the saved, the bride of Christ, who sing this song of their spiritual experiences while they were in the world. Much of the proof of this has already been given. More will be pointed out in connection with the specific description given of this body of people.

Qualifications of the Bride

Specifically, this group meets four qualifications. They shall be listed in substance and then discussed separately. First, they have not committed spiritual adultery. Second, they follow the Lamb wherever he goes. Third, they were bought from among mankind as a firstfruit to God and the Lamb. Fourth, there is no false thing in their mouth, and they are unblameable. Some texts add that they are unblameable before the throne of God, which is exactly what the shorter statement implies.

No Spiritual Adultery

These people are not defiled with women, for they are virgins. Certainly this refers to spiritual adultery rather than literal adultery. Spiritual adultery is set forth as one of the greater sins throughout the Bible. Two notable characters illustrate the principle involved here. The moral life of David was not a praiseworthy thing in a number of details, but there is no record of his sacrificing the spiritual and scriptural principles of his religion. Thus, he was well pleasing to God in all things except the matter of the wife of Uriah, the Hittite. Paul says at Romans 7:18 that no good thing dwelt in his flesh. But he never charges himself with sacrificing the doctrinal principles of the Scriptures. Therefore, he says that with the mind he served the law of God, but with the flesh he served the law of sin (Rom. 7:25). His deliverance from the body of death was in the fact that he walked not after the flesh but after the Spirit. Primarily, this deliverance was not in the new birth, but it was in the rule of conduct that Jesus gave his special people in the church. The import of the whole passage is that Israel did not have such a rule of conduct when they were under the Law of Moses. Therefore, the virgins of our text could not be any but church saints who do not defile themselves with spiritual adultery. They are not perfect in the flesh, but they are perfect in the religious doctrines and practices which they hold.

Following the Lamb

The Lamb, who is Christ, was faultless in all the details of his life in the world. No other man is perfect in the flesh. This group of people follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They are imperfect in the flesh, so the flesh is excluded from consideration, and they follow the Lamb wherever he goes in matters of religious doctrine and practice. They follow him fully in such doctrines as salvation by grace, eternal security, Scriptural baptism, perpetuity of the church, premillennialism, evangelism, etc. Each one of these fundamental doctrines should be emphasized with equal fervor.

A Firstfruits

This group of people is a firstfruit to God and to the Lamb. In the Scriptures the firstfruits bear the double implication of being first both in time and in quality. In the plant world, the first ripe fruits are the most excellent in quality. In spiritual matters Christ is the firstfruits in his being the only begotten Son of God, in his being the source of resurrection, in his being most excellent in spiritual matters, and in his establishing a better rule of conduct for the church than Israel had under the law. Therefore, those who are true to this better rule of conduct which Jesus gave would logically be

the firstfruit both to God and to the Lamb. For the Lamb came into the world to do the will of God in all things, including the idea of establishing and perpetuating the church to the end of the age. The church is the only logical group who could be the firstfruits of James 1:18. The church is the firstfruits in the sense of their attaining greater spiritual heights in the world than any other people. God looked on Israel as a firstfruits, but it is a clear fact in Scripture that the so-called Gentile church came into the spiritual blessings which were first offered exclusively to Israel in the preaching of the kingdom gospel to them alone.

A Faultless People

No false thing is found in the mouth of these people, and they are blameless before the throne of God. Again, we are faced with the issue of whether they are sinlessly perfect. Perhaps, because of the weakness of their own doctrinal position, Protestants have taken one of two positions on the subject of perfection in the present life. The more radical sects simply claim sinless perfection in the flesh. When confronted with flaws in their moral conduct, they take the position that what is sin in other people is not sin in themselves because they are a sanctified people. More moderate Protestants, in general, set up *a* relative standard of judgment of the sins of the flesh.

Perfection in Conduct

The people of our text sinned in the flesh as long as they lived in the flesh. But, they did not sin in religious doctrines and practices while they lived in the world. This is wherein there was no false thing in their mouth, and wherein they were blameless before God. The preacher tells a far bigger lie than his members when he tells them they will go to Hell for lying about the size of the fish they catch. Moral misconduct is never to be condoned, but it is certainly secondary to religious misconduct.

THE MESSAGES OF THE THREE ANGELS

Revelation 14:6-13

And I saw another angel flying in the mid heaven, having the age long gospel to preach to the ones dwelling on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people, saying in a great voice, "Fear ye God and give glory to him, because the hour of his judgment is come, and worship ye the one making the Heaven and the earth and the sea and fountains of waters." And another second angel followed saying, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, who has made all the nations to drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. " And another third angel followed them saying in a great voice, "If anyone worships the wild beast and his image, and

receives a brand upon his forehead or upon his hand, even he shall drink of the wine of the anger of God which is prepared unmixed in the cup of his wrath, and he shall be tormented in the fire and brimstone in the presence of holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up into ages of ages, and the ones worshipping the wild beast and his image do not have cessation day and night, and whoever receives the brand of his name. Here is the patience of the holy ones, who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. ” And I heard a voice out of the Heaven saying, “Write thou, ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth. “Yes,” says the Spirit, “in order that they may cease from their painful toil, for their works shall follow with them. ”

Difficulties of Translation

There are a number of variations from the common version in this translation. The reason for these is three technical points of language which make it impossible or impracticable to give an accurate literal translation. One of these is that the Greek often uses a participial structure where a clause with a relative pronoun better expresses the sense in English. Another is that the Greek often omits a verb that is implied in the text, whereas the English demands the expression of this verb. This third is the selection of the English word which most nearly translates the exact sense of the Greek word. The meaning of many words has changed considerably since the common version was produced at the beginning of the seventeenth century. This point is illustrated in our text in such words as anger, wrath and indignation. No claim is made for superiority in the reading given here, but it is given mainly for comparison and for calling attention to passages which cannot be expressed accurately with certainty.

The Scene on Earth

In the former part of this chapter, the scene of activity is Heaven, where the glorified bride stands with the Lamb on the heavenly Mount Zion; in these verses it is moved to the earth. The sequence of events is this: The two wild beasts appear and perfect their rise to power during the first half of the Tribulation. When it is time for the full revelation of Antichrist, the saints are taken out of the world (II Thess. 2:7, 8). The faithful church saints, who have hindered Antichrist throughout the Church Age, are presented in Heaven as the bride of Christ. This no more implies that unfaithful saved people are left in the world in the Tribulation than it implies that the unfaithful dead are brought back to the earth to go through the Tribulation. Both the unfaithful dead and living are in Heaven

together, but they are not presented along with the bride of Christ because it is only the bride who stands out in sharp contrast to the forces of Antichrist. The saints having been raptured out of the world: the beast comes into full power since no one is left on earth to bear witness to the truth. Hence, the three angels of this text go forth with certain announcements to mankind. The import of their preaching will be noted later.

Those Left in the World

All the saved will have been taken out of the world in the rapture before the occurrence of the events described in these verses. There will be left in the world the nations in general, the unsaved Jews, and the tribes of Israel in the dispersion. No attempt is made here to say what happens to babies and other irresponsibles in the rapture of the saved.

None Saved in Tribulation

From the beginning of this study, the viewpoint has been maintained that there are no saved people in the world during the last half of the Tribulation. This viewpoint stems from what is deemed to be sound logic and the teachings of the Scriptures in general. Three possible eventualities have been suggested to change this viewpoint. One is that multitudes will be saved as a direct result of the rapture of the saints. Where is the Scripture proof of this position? A second is that the unfaithful saved will be left in the world to go through the last half of the Tribulation, which is the tribulation for all but the saints, who get their tribulation in the first half of the period. This position seems to be utterly illogical and inconsistent with positive teachings of Scriptures in general. A third is that Jesus will appear to a remnant of unsaved Jews at the time of the coming for the saints, and that this manifestation to them will produce their salvation. This position seems to be based almost entirely on the fourteenth chapter of Zechariah. The time sequence here is obscure and uncertain making an unreliable proof text for such a point of Bible interpretation. A number of instances are found where men blaspheme God because of the plagues of the Tribulation, but no instance is found where men turn to God because of them. There is no evidence found of the convicting work of the Holy Spirit during this last half of the Tribulation. If people are saved during this period, then the rapture of the saints and the coming of the full reign of Antichrist is not the closing of the door of opportunity at all as it is usually regarded as being.

The First Angel

The first of the three angels flies in the mid-heaven, having an

age-long gospel to preach to all nations. It is interesting to note the import of this gospel. So far as the gospel of salvation is concerned there has never been but one since the fall of man. The same gospel of salvation was preached to Cain and Abel that is preached to unsaved people today. But there are a number of other gospels set forth in the Bible to various groups of men. These gospels have to do with the conduct of the people of God in the various dispensations. One gospel of conduct was preached to Adam after the fall; a different one was preached to Noah after the flood. One gospel was preached to Israel in the law; a far different one was preached to them in God's efforts to deal with them by grace and through faith. The Church Age is the time of the gospel of grace. In this age, the gospel of salvation by grace is preached as in all others. But the stress is placed on a walk by grace in a way that had not prevailed under previous gospels. In this walk by grace, spiritual blessings and guidance are promised in a degree that did not prevail under any previous gospel or dispensation. At the time, the angel preaches this age-long gospel, the church will have been taken out of the world, and along with it, the special reign of grace to a special people of God. Then, this angel comes on the scene preaching a gospel that is different from the gospel that God preached to Israel as he attempted to induce them to walk by faith instead of by law. The substance of this gospel is that men are to fear God, the creator of all things, because of his fearful judgment. It is much like the gospels of conduct that were preached to Adam and to Noah. The theme of the Old Testament gospels was that men were to serve the living God, the creator, as opposed to idols. And, they were to do it with the wrath of God in mind. The theme of the New Testament gospel is that men are to serve the crucified, risen, and glorified Christ according to the New Testament pattern. And, they are to serve with the love and grace of God as their motive. The gospel of the Tribulation goes back to the primitive gospels teaching that men should fear and worship God, the creator, as opposed to the Devil, who is reigning on earth through the Antichrist and the Anti-Spirit at the time.

A Gospel of Warning

The general philosophy of the Bible followed in this study indicates that none will be saved by the preaching of this gospel by the angel. This gospel is not primarily a gospel of salvation, but a gospel of conduct in religious affairs. From this standpoint, it might serve as a warning to Israel, though they are still unsaved, not to commit themselves finally to Antichrist. This might also be true of the other nations that are preserved to go into the Millennium (Matt. 25:31-46). Even though this gospel is probably preached in mockery to a world that has finally rejected Christ and has fully

embraced Antichrist, it is possible that Jews and others may be saved during the preaching of this gospel. It is also possible they will be induced by it to reject Antichrist as the supreme god of the world.

The Second Angel

A second angel follows the first with the announcement that Babylon is fallen. This fall is presented in considerable detail in the seventeenth and eighteenth chapters. Hence, it is better to note it in detail there. Ancient Babylon was a combination of the three fundamental institutions of mankind under one head. These institutions are religion, government, and economics. All other human institutions stem from these. The king of Babylon dictated the lives of the people in all these fields. Restored Babylon falls in the last half of the Tribulation only to be reorganized and intensified under Antichrist. It is communism and apostate Christianity which actually fall. But a kindred system more fearful than they arises from their fall. It is intimated here, and it is clearly set forth in the seventeenth chapter, that religious Babylon bears the ultimate weight of responsibility for the system's being what it is. That is, religion makes politics and economics what they are. Today, religion is in the forefront in the tearing down of the institutions that have best stood the test of time and in bringing in the one world order. Deluded and lying religion says this one world order is accomplished by bringing the lowest in the various fields of endeavor up to the level of the highest: actually, the highest is brought down to the level of the lowest. America is bankrupting herself today attempting to elevate nations which have never elevated themselves, nor will they ever really do so.

The Third Angel

A third angel follows the other two with a message of warning against the worshiping of the beast. There are three details of this warning that we should note. First, the beast worshipers will have the wrath of God poured out on them undiluted. This seems to mean they will be subjected to the plagues of the last half of the Tribulation. Second, they shall be tormented in fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. This indicates they will go into the final Hell or the Lake of Fire. Third, the smoke of their torment goes upward into the ages of the ages. Evidently, this means their torment is to be eternal. In addition to this it is said they do not have rest or ceasing from their torment day or night. This passage teaches an eternal Hell for those who reject Christ and accept the godship of the Devil.

The End of Beast Worshipers

Heretofore, we have touched on the question of whether all beast worshipers will go to Hell. This passage appears to teach conclusively that they will. But this viewpoint leads us into serious difficulties as to what the Scriptures teach elsewhere. From what John wrote in his first epistle about Antichrist, it is evident that everyone who adheres to false religious doctrines and practices is a worshiper of Antichrist to the extent he does these things. There are many saved people among the Protestant denominations, but they all hold to false religious doctrines and practices. And, in these they are worshipers of the beast or Antichrist. They will not go to Hell.

The Jews and Antichrist

Besides this situation, there is another equally vexing. It is evident that the Jews will accept Antichrist as their own Messiah in the first half of the Tribulation period (John 5:43; Dan. 9:27; and Matt. 24:15). Yet many of these same Jews will live through the Tribulation and be saved when Christ comes in glory. In the first of these examples, there are people who are already saved worshipping the beast. In this second one, people worshipping the beast are saved later. And, all this despite the indications in our present text that no beast worshiper will escape Hell. The Scriptures must be allowed to interpret themselves. Let us note an example that sets forth our point.

The Example of Judas

Judas Iscariot seems to have been just like any other unsaved person up to the time of his receiving the sop from Jesus at the supper. Scriptures do not designate Judas as a devil from the beginning, as is often quoted. When Judas received the sop, he was willingly and finally committing himself to be the agent of the Devil. This commitment appears to have been complete and final. As the opposite of this, a sinner makes a final commitment to God when he trusts Christ for salvation. He loses all initiative over the part of himself usually called the soul, but which is really the spirit being of man. Until the mark of the beast is received, a person may worship him without making a final commitment of himself to the beast or the Devil. The receiving of the mark is a final commitment, and no saved person will do this. The saved will already have been taken out of the world at the time the receiving of the mark is required. The Jews will not have been saved, but the beast will have betrayed them, and God will shield them from taking the mark.

Degrees in Acceptance of Antichrist

It also seems likely that many unsaved people of other nations will reject Antichrist when the time of final decision comes. There is a definite reason for this rejection, both by Jews and others. Antichrist will come as a man of righteousness and peace to all except the faithful church. When the church is gone in the rapture, then he is revealed as the son of perdition, or utter destruction (II Thess. 2). When many Jews and Gentiles see him as the very son of the Devil, they will reject him as their god. It is one thing to worship and serve the Devil in delusion; it is a different matter to worship him when the worshiper fully realizes who he is. Many people have worshiped the beast and will worship him who are saved or will be saved later. But none of those who make a final commitment to him when he is revealed in his true character will be saved; they are irrevocably committed to Hell. Remember, this final commitment is made when men are called on to receive the mark of the beast.

Position and Duty of Saved People

Many times in Revelation some of the fearful scenes of the Tribulation are set forth, and immediately afterwards a solemn warning is sounded to the saints of God. The movements that shall reach their climax in the Tribulation have been building up ever since the church was established in the world. Every saved person and every religious body has contributed either to the true faith or to the system of the Devil, which latter shall reach its highest point in the Tribulation. Thus the warnings and promises have to do, not only with those who live in the last days, but with all who live at any time during the church period. Therefore the patience of the saints is those who keep the commandments of God and the pure faith of Jesus at any time they may live during the church period. Throughout the age it is the duty of the saints to recognize the end of the age is coming, to sound a warning, to point out Antichrist and his doctrines to the world, and to recognize and oppose him when he actually comes.

Rest from Labors

With opposition and persecution to follow the church throughout her career in the world, for those who are in the Lord, it is better to die than to live. They will attain rest from their painful labors, and their works follow with them. Many of the saved have only the works of false religious systems to follow with them. They have advocated salvation by works, falling from grace, the universal church, postmillennialism, and other false doctrines. If a person is saved, he dies in the Lord in harmony with this scripture. But, if he has upheld false doctrine and practice, he does not die in the will of

the Lord and does not rest in the approval of the Lord as he awaits the resurrection and judgment of the saved. Many passages of Scripture should be applied here which apostates say teach salvation by works and falling from grace. Only faithful members of true churches die in the Lord in the sense meant in our passage.

Summary of the Three Messages

Let us try again to see the over-all picture of these three angels and their messages. The saints have been raptured, and the last half of the Tribulation has begun. The first angel warns Israel and others not to take the final step in worshiping the beast. The second angel announces the fall of Babylon which takes place as soon as the beast comes into full power. His full power comes as soon as the church is taken out of the world, and his full power is what makes the last half of the Tribulation what it is. The third angel has a message much like that of the first, except that he goes into more detail. Those who finally commit themselves to the beast are doomed to Hell. John closes the picture by warning all how they might contribute to the awful situation or fall into it if they live in the last days. And, he tells of the destiny of those who do not contribute to the system. This destiny is to rest in death and receive a good reward in resurrection.

THE TWO REAPERS

Revelation 14:14-20

And I saw and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sitting like to a son of man, having upon his head a golden crown and in his hand a sharp reaping hook. And another angel came out of the temple, crying out in a great voice to the one sitting upon the cloud, "Send forth thy reaping hook and reap, because the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is matured." And the one sitting upon the cloud cast his reaping hook upon the earth, and the earth was reaped. And another angel came out of the temple which in the Heaven, himself also having a sharp reaping hook. And another angel came out of the altar of sacrifice, who has authority over the fire, and he cried out in a great voice to the one having the sharp reaping hook saying, "Send forth thy sharp reaping hook and reap the grapes of the vineyard of the earth, because its clusters are fully ripened." And the angel cast his reaping hook into the earth, and he reaped the vineyard of the earth and he cast it into the great wine vat of the anger of God. And the wine vat was trodden outside the city, and there went out blood out of the wine vat unto the bridle bits of the horses, a distance of a thousand six hundred furlongs.

The Two Reapings

In the latter section in this chapter, there are two reapers and two harvests. One might logically connect such a reaping with a resurrection, but such does not appear to be the case here. The time connection and the logical sequence is as follows. The fact of the first resurrection is indicated in the presentation of the glorified bride in the heavenly Jerusalem. The rapture of the saints is the signal for the full reign of Antichrist on earth. Then the three angels proclaim their messages to mankind of the state of affairs in the last half of the Tribulation, which will be the Great Tribulation for all the earth. This tribulation is simply presented in different terms and from another view point in the two reapings. These reapings are not a resurrection or a rapture; they are the working out of judgment on earth upon two classes of people. The first of these is unsaved humanity in general; the second is Israel, who is yet unsaved. This reaping goes on throughout the last half of the Tribulation.

The Reaping of the Nations

The first reaper is believed to be Christ for three definite reasons. First, he sits on a cloud of the heavens. The second coming of Christ is associated with the clouds of heaven in Daniel, Matthew, Acts and Revelation. Clouds were also associated with the transfiguration of Jesus, which is a picture of his second coming. Second, this reaper looks like a son of man. This is a designation applied only to Christ, so far as heavenly beings are concerned. Third, it is in, through and by Jesus Christ that the world is to be judged (Acts 17:31). And the reaping is a judgment of people left in the world after the rapture of the saints.

Meaning of Symbols

The golden crown on the head of the reaper signifies the authority which Christ has attained by his works and virtues. Thus far, his works are climaxed in the resurrection of the saved dead. Resurrection power and authority give him the lawful right to wreak punitive judgment on rebellious humanity in the world.

The sharpness of the reaping hook suggests the severity of the punitive judgment that comes on the earth in the Tribulation.

The harvest of the earth is fully ripe or matured. This refers to the fact that a Christ rejecting world has reached the point in rejection that it may be fully abandoned to the judgment of the Tribulation.

The Reaping of Israel

The second reaper is an angel, who comes out of the temple of God in Heaven. There is a peculiar variation in the movements in

Heaven with reference to the two reapings. In the first one, an angel comes out of the temple, the place of final judgment, and commands Christ to reap the earth. In the second one, an angel comes out of the temple with a reaping hook, and an angel who has authority over the fire of the sacrificial offerings commands him to reap. This connects the judgment of Israel in a singular way with God the Father and with the altar of sacrifice. The judgment of the world is mainly punitive in the Tribulation; the judgment of the world is corrective. Many of the nations of the world are destroyed in the judgment of the Tribulation, which Christ brings upon them. But the judgment upon Israel, though very severe, is to bring this nation to accept Christ as their Messiah.

The Vineyard of the Earth

The vineyard of the earth seems to be the nation Israel as it is represented by many parables in both the Old and the New Testament. When viewed from the Old Testament standpoint, the church is an interlude in the bringing of Israel to salvation and glory. This is still true even though it is revealed in the New Testament that the church is to attain the greatest heights both in the present age and in the millennial age to follow.

The Ripe Grapes

The grapes of the vineyard are fully ripe. This has to do with the spiritual condition of Israel at the time of the reaping. It also includes their material condition. The facts may be stated briefly this way: Israel rejected the spiritual and material deliverance which Jesus offered at his first coming. They have gone through the frustration of dispersion in the Church Age. They will embrace Antichrist as their messiah, and when he betrays them they will be left utterly at a loss. This is the point where the harvest of the vineyard is fully ripe. One more judgment, more severe than any which has previously come, will prepare Israel to receive their Messiah.

Treading of the Winepress

The grapes of the harvest are cast into the wine vat or the winepress. There is no distinction between the two. The winepress is trodden outside the city. The city is not designated, nor is the place of the treading of the winepress. It is believed the city is Jerusalem, and the place of the winepress is the site of the battle that is usually called Armageddon. Armageddon, or the mountain of Megiddo, was a place in the northwest part of Israel. In a valley or a plain in this region is where Deborah and Barak destroyed the army of Sisera in the time of the judges. It is almost a hundred miles from

Jerusalem, and it is generally believed this is the literal place where the battle of Armageddon will begin. The spiritual import of the treading of the winepress is the part of Israel in the battle of Armageddon. This battle is the climax of the many plagues that come in the Tribulation. It is the time of the wrath of Luke 21:23 and the tribulation of Matt. 24:21, both having a special reference to Israel.

Armageddon

The description turns from the figurative to the literal where the treading of the winepress produces blood instead of juice. This blood runs up to the bits of the bridles of the horses for a distance of a thousand six hundred *stadia*. *Stadion* is the word for our “stadium.” It was the distance around the race course in the Greek and Roman *stadia*, or stadiums. The *stadion* was from five hundred eighty two feet to six hundred seven feet. The distance stated in the text is two hundred miles, and the depth would be about four feet. If this statement is to be taken literally, it is meant to indicate such a bloodshedding as the world has not previously seen. Armageddon is the fiercest and most destructive battle of the ages. The bloodshed of the text has a special application to Israel. It is only a remnant of this chosen nation that will live through the Tribulation to enter blessings which the Millennium will hold for this people. There is almost no limit to the price Israel must pay for rejecting Christ when he presented himself to them.

This chapter presents the witnessing bride in Heaven and the testimony that is left on earth.

Chapter 13

The Vials of the Wrath of God

REVELATION 15 and 16

THE SIGN OF THE SEVEN VIALS OF WRATH

Revelation 15:1-8

And I saw another sign in the Heaven great and marvelous, seven angels having the seven last plagues, that in them should be completed the anger of God. And I saw as a glass sea mixed with fire, and the ones winning the victory over the wild beast and over his image and over the number of his name standing upon the glass sea, having harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses, the bond servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; righteous and true are thy ways, thou King of the nations; who shall not fear. Lord, and glorify thy name? Because only thou art holy, because all nations shall come and worship in thy presence, because thy righteous deeds were manifested.

And after these things I saw, and there was opened the temple of the tabernacle of witness in the Heaven, and there went out the seven angels who have the seven plagues out of the temple, clothed with clean shining linen, and girded about the breasts with golden girdles. And one of the four living beings gave to the seven angels seven golden vials filled with the anger of God, who lived into the ages of the ages. And the temple was filled with smoke of the glory of God and of his dynamic power, and no one was able to enter into the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels should be completed.

Meaning of the Signs

The three great signs which appear in Heaven pertain to the conflict between the woman and the dragon. This third one pertains to the woman, or Israel, being brought into the position which God promised in the Abrahamic covenant. The vials of wrath bring plagues on all people on earth at the time of the pouring out of this wrath, but the primary goal is to bring Israel to national salvation. Two evidences to support this position will be noted later.

The Plagues on Israel

The vial judgments are strikingly like the plagues that came upon Egypt to induce them to allow Israel to go forth out of the Egyptian bondage. There are differences in details of the various plagues, but the goal is the same: the deliverance of the nation, Israel. The most puzzling difference is the number of the plagues. In Egypt, there were ten; in the present situation there are seven. Perhaps the difference is explained in the results of the two deliverances. The deliverance from Egypt was neither complete nor permanent. However, this statement needs some explaining. The army of Pharaoh was destroyed, and Israel did not return to Egyptian bondage, but Israel has struggled unsuccessfully with the world, of which the Devil is the god until our own day. Thus the plagues in Egypt did not bring complete deliverance. Ten, the number of the plagues in Egypt, is the number of government of the Devil. Until the Millennium, Israel will never attain to an ideal government, though one was offered them in the church. When the Millennium begins, however, Christ will be the God of the world, and Israel will have that perfect government which has been promised them for so long. Ten plagues brought them to the faulty rule of the law of Moses; seven plagues will bring them to the perfect spiritual rule of grace in the Millennium, seven being the number of spiritual completeness.

The Glass Sea

The glass sea is mentioned at Rev. 4:6, where there is a general description of the heavenly scene, including tokens of the victory which God intends to win through Christ. The glass sea is a token of the material creation, which God will deliver from the bondage of corruption. In this chapter, there is a multitude of people standing upon the glass sea, who have won the victory over the wild beast. This victory is won in two different senses. First, all the saved win the victory in that they attain the first resurrection. Second, some win the victory in the sense that they do not worship or advance the cause of the beast while they live in the world. These latter receive special rewards, but this does not seem to be the point of consideration in our text. It is all those who attain to the glorification of the first resurrection who are presented standing on the glass sea. The whole scene is a picture of the glorified redeemed on a sinless earth, either in the Millennium or in the Heaven Ages.

The Song of Israel and the Church

The multitude standing on the glass sea sing the song of both Moses and the Lamb. This is not the song sung by Moses and the Lamb; it is the song of their accomplishments. If it were the song of

salvation, Moses would have no part in it, for salvation is entirely of the Lamb. Moses was the lawgiver to Israel, and the Lamb is the grace giver to the church. The song reveals that the work with reference to the church has already been finished, and the work with reference to Israel is soon to be brought to perfection. Great and marvelous are the works of the Lord, who is about to come into almighty power on earth. This refers to Christ and his millennial reign. The ways of the king of the nations are righteous and true. Through power in connection with righteous principles, Christ wins his right to become the king of the nations. All the nations shall come and worship before Christ in the Millennium because his righteous works are fully manifest to all. Since all the saved will see these things clearly only after they are glorified, all the saved will be able to sing this song. It is a different song from that sung by the bride in the fourteenth chapter. The masses of the saved sing only of the accomplishments of Christ; the bride sings of spiritual experiences enjoyed in the world.

The Deliverance of Israel

The seven angels having the seven vials come out of the temple of the tabernacle of witness in Heaven. The tabernacle and the ark of the covenant are always associated with Israel and the part of the Abrahamic covenant which applies especially to them. This is evidence that the vials of wrath are especially related to the national salvation of Israel. When the temple, the tabernacle, or the ark of the covenant is mentioned we may expect God to deal in some specific way with Israel to bring her to salvation. Another evidence is the fact that the glorified redeemed in Heaven sing the song of Moses as well as the song of the Lamb. Whatever the song of Moses may be, it must be related to the final salvation of Israel. Moses, the lawgiver, prophesied of the age of grace, but when this age of grace was introduced it was offered first to Israel to the exclusion of the other nations (Matt. 10:5).

The Seven Angels

The notable points in the description of the seven angels are three. First, there are seven of them, signifying that they bring a project to its spiritual consummation—that is the salvation of Israel. Second, their raiment is spotlessly clean, signifying the righteousness and holiness of their character and works. In view of what Christ has done it is both just and righteous that they should launch the movement that will bring Israel to salvation. Third, they are girded about the breasts with golden girdles, signifying their full authority to act while the white raiment has to do with moral and spiritual righteousness, the golden girdles have to do with legal

rightness. In his redemptive work, Christ fully established both of these forms of rightness. God does not deal arbitrarily and apart from logical processes either with mankind or with the Devil. Justice only permits and demands these angels to perform their mission.

The Four Living Beings

One of the four living beings gives the vials of wrath to the seven angels. These living beings appear first in the fourth chapter, where there is a general view of the heavenly scene. Whether these are originally angels, or glorified beings of an earthly nature, their office is in the area of the deliverance of mankind and the earth from sin. This being gives into the hands of the angels the agencies to work out the anger of God which has been building up since the fall of man, especially since he began to work to bring Israel to full salvation. God lives into the ages of the ages, and his purpose to bring Israel to glory is unchanging.

The Glory of God

When the temple is opened, it is filled with the smoke of the glory and dynamic power of God. No one is able to enter the temple until the plagues of the seven angels are fulfilled. There are two reasons why men cannot enter into the temple of God. First, because of God's holiness and man's sinfulness man cannot enter into the holy temple except through Christ. Second, at times the wrath of God is so great that no one can come into his presence until he has vindicated himself in the given situation. This latter is the case in our text. Israel and the world must be judged, and Israel must be brought to Christ before anyone may come into the presence of the holy God (Rev. 11:19).

THE PHYSICAL SIDE OF THE GREAT TRIBULATION

Revelation 16:1-9

And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels. "Go ye and pour out the seven vials of the anger of God into the earth." And the first went forth and poured out his vial into the earth, and there became a sore, evil and hurtful, upon those men having the brand of the wild beast and upon those worshipping his image. And the second poured out his vial into the sea, and it became blood as of a dead one, and every living soul died of the things in the sea. And the third poured out his vial into the rivers and the fountains of waters, and they became blood. And I heard the angel of the waters saying, "Righteous thou art, the one being

and who was, Thou Holy One, because thou hast judged these things, because blood of holy ones and prophets they poured out, and thou hast given them blood to drink: they are worthy." And I heard one of the altar of sacrifice saying, "Yes, Lord, the Almighty God, true and righteous are thy judgments. " And the fourth poured out his vial upon the sun, and it was given to it to bum men in fire. And the men were burned with a great burning, and they blasphemed the name of the God who has authority over these plagues, and they did not repent to give glory to him.

Israel and the Vials of Wrath

There is an apparent contradiction in some views expressed concerning the vial judgments. It has been pointed out that there is a close parallelism between these judgments and the plagues which came upon Egypt at the time of the deliverance of Israel from bondage there. The discrepancy is in the fact that the plagues came only upon the Egyptians, and they did not touch the Israelites in the land of Goshen. It has been assumed without scripture proof that the vial judgments come upon the Jews right along with the rest of humanity. The last half of the Tribulation is the time of Jacob's trouble (Jer. 30:7; Dan. 12:1; Matt. 24:21, 22), and it is evident from many passages that during this time Israel will suffer as never before. But, still, a remnant of Israel will flee into a place of hiding, and thus will escape a part of the ravages of the Tribulation. From this latter fact and from the parallelism of the plagues in Egypt and from the lack of definite Scripture proof to the contrary, it is now suggested, but not dogmatically, that the vial judgments come on the world in general to the exclusion of Israel.

Two Groups of Judgments

This section has been entitled "the physical side of the Great Tribulation." The reason for this is that the first four vials are poured out on the material creation. In this way, the first four vials stand in contrast with the last three, which produce intangible or spiritual results. This is in full harmony with the science of Bible numbers, wherein four deals with the physical life of man, and five, six, and seven all have to do with his spiritual life.

The First Vial

The first vial is poured out into the earth. The result is a plague of boils or ulcers, which infest all who have the mark of the beast and who worship his image. It is like the sixth plague that came on Egypt (Exodus 9:10, 11). Although the Jews accept Antichrist during the first half of the Tribulation, they do not finally commit themselves to him in receiving the mark of the beast in the last half

of this period. If this is true, then this plague of ulcers does not come upon the Jews. Other nations who do not take the final step in committing themselves to Antichrist when he is revealed as the son of perdition will also escape the plague of sores.

The Second Vial

The second vial is poured out into the sea, and it becomes blood as of a dead man. This plague is almost identical with the result of the second trumpet. There was not a plague in Egypt like this one. In the trumpet judgment, a third of the sea is turned into blood, and a third of the creatures in the sea die. In the vial judgment, all the sea is turned to blood, and all the living things in the sea die. It is simply a difference in percentage or degree in the two plagues. Probably, in actual fact the two plagues are identical.

The Third Vial

The third vial is poured out on the rivers and fountains of water, and these waters are turned to blood. This is like the first plague on Egypt (Exodus 7:20, 21). The difference between it and the third trumpet is that the trumpet judgment causes the fresh waters to be poisoned. In both instances the fresh waters are polluted. In the trumpet judgment, the pollution actually comes from some invention of man himself. God allows rebellious man to destroy himself.

A Righteous Judgment

The angel of the waters responds to the third vial judgment by saying God, who is and was, is righteous and holy in his visiting this judgment on mankind. They shed the blood of saints and prophets, and this made them worthy of God's giving them blood to drink. This is one of many Scripture teachings that in due time God gives all men exactly what they ask for.

The Office of Angels

The angel of the waters is interesting. At Matt. 18:10, Jesus teaches that the angels of the saints do always look on the face of the Father. Heb. 1:14 says the angels are serving spirits, sent forth to minister to those who are about to inherit salvation. Since angels watch over the people of God, it is both logical and scriptural to believe they also regulate the working of the creation in which the saints live. God made a good creation and set in operation a system of good laws to govern this creation. When Adam made the Devil the god of the world, the Devil came into limited power and authority over the earth itself. His perversion of the original laws of the creation is the cause of all the maladjustments and mal-functions in the creation, such as storms, droughts, floods, insect pests, etc.

The Devil goes as far as God will allow him to go in the perversion of the laws of the creation. How far God will allow him to go hinges on the purposes of God concerning man and on God's respect for the choices man makes for himself. With this setup in operation, it is perfectly logical that angels of God should oversee and regulate the working of the multitude of laws governing the creation. Therefore, there is an angel of the waters, just as there are angels assigned to watch over the lives of the individual saints. The waters need to be guarded from destruction, just as the saints themselves need such guardianship against the Devil.

An Unidentified Voice

Another voice of an unidentified person speaks from the altar of sacrifice and says the judgments of the Almighty God are true and righteous. This testimony suggests that the judgment has to do with the deliverance of Israel. For the altar of sacrifice is generally associated with Israel and her salvation. It also suggests that the judgment is made possible and righteous by the sacrifice of Christ. Christ legitimately destroys all claims of the Devil, and saves all believing mankind. This is why and how God can judge the world in righteousness by that man Jesus Christ, whom he has chosen (Acts 17:31). We are not told who speaks from the altar, but it seems a fair supposition that it is an angel of the altar.

The Fourth Vial

The fourth vial is poured out on the sun, and it burns mankind with a great burning. This burning may be caused by man's throwing the solar system out of balance and bringing the earth nearer to the sun. On the other hand, it could be a direct act of God. There was no plague in Egypt like this one, but the fourth trumpet brings a plague that affects the same area of the creation.

God Blasphemed

Men blaspheme the name of the God who has authority over these plagues, and refuse to repent to give glory to Him. The saints will already be gone out of the world at the time of these plagues, but where is Israel, and what is she doing? The Jews who have returned to Palestine will have fled into a hiding place prepared of God and will escape the plague. The rest of Israel will still be in the dispersion, but it is hard to believe the people who are so soon to turn to Christ will blaspheme God because of this plague. Israel and perhaps other nations will escape this plague.

THE SPIRITUAL SIDE OF THE GREAT TRIBULATION

Revelation 16:10-21

And the fifth poured out his vial upon the throne of the wild beast, and his kingdom became darkened, and they chewed their tongues because of the torment, and they blasphemed the God of the heaven because of their torments and because of their sores, and they did not repent of their works. And the sixth poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates, and the waters of it were dried up, in order that the way of the kings from the east might be made ready. And I saw out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the wild beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet three unclean spirits as frogs; for they are the spirits of demons doing signs, which go forth to the kings of the whole inhabited world, to gather them together unto the war of the great day of the Almighty God. Behold I come as a thief: blessed is the one watching and keeping his garments, in order that he should not walk naked and they should see his shame. And he gathered them together unto the place which is called in Hebrew, "Armageddon. " And the seventh poured out his vial upon the air; and there went out a great voice out of the temple from the throne saying, "It has come about. " And there became lightnings and voices and thunders, and there became a great shaking, such as did not come about since mankind became upon the earth, so mighty a shaking in greatness. And the great city became into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And Babylon the great was remembered in the presence of God to give to her the cup of the wine of the anger of his wrath. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And a great hail as talents comes down out of the heaven upon men. And men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, because the plague of it is great exceedingly.

Spiritual Side of the Tribulation

The first four vials bring in judgments that fall directly on the physical creation, the last three moral and spiritual principles. This trinity of institutions necessary to life on earth are government, economic systems, and religion. In the judgments of the fifth, sixth, and seventh vials governments or political systems are more prominent than the systems of economics or religion. Government ultimately takes precedence over economics and religion. This is because physical power ultimately rests in political power. Moreover, physical power is the final resort of men in a sin cursed world. Thus, the present world brotherhood movement must finally fail. Armageddon, not universal peace, is to be the climax of this age.

The Fifth Vial

The fifth vial is poured out on the throne of the wild beast, and his kingdom is turned into darkness. God is light, and in him there is no darkness (1 John 1:5). This statement is to be applied in both a physical and spiritual sense. The darkness of Genesis 1:2 was not a product of the original creation, but it resulted when rebelling angels brought sin into the universe. Since the fall of man, there has been a strange mixture of physical and spiritual light and darkness on the earth and in the world. All light will be gathered around God in the final Heaven, and all darkness will be cast into the Lake of Fire with the Devil. Because of this, the kingdom of the beast will be turned into darkness when the forces of righteousness are almost completely removed from the earth in the last half of the Great Tribulation. In the present age, even the rankest sinners borrow some intellectual and spiritual light from the righteous. They are also influenced by the convicting Spirit to walk in a little light (John 16:8). But when the saved and the Spirit are gone, there is no source from which sinners can borrow light. Therefore, the kingdom of the beast is plunged into thick darkness.

Men chew their tongues because of the torment of the fifth vial. To the extent the forces of righteousness are removed there becomes the torments of Hell on earth. There seems to be very little righteousness on earth at the time of this vial. Men also blaspheme God because of their torments and because of their sores. These sores evidently refer to the plague of the first vial. It is further stated that they do not repent of their works. This is additional evidence that the forces of righteousness are almost entirely gone out of the world.

When God delivered Israel from Egypt, he also got glory over the idol gods of the Egyptians (Exodus 12:12). The Egyptians were abandoned to judgment when the plagues came on the land. This suggests that mankind is also abandoned to judgment when the vials of wrath are poured out on the world. This situation harmonizes with the suggestion that the locusts of the fifth trumpet are really demon spirits. When the world is dominated by demon spirits, the kingdom of the beast will inevitably be darkness.

The Sixth Vial

The sixth vial is poured out on the great river Euphrates. The waters are dried up to prepare the way of the kings of the east, or from the sunrising. This sixth vial judgment is strikingly like the sixth trumpet judgment. They both have to do with the removal of the Euphrates River as a barrier, or dividing line, between the eastern and western worlds. This barrier is not physical, but it is the intangible forces and principles which have kept the eastern and

western worlds isolated from one another until very recent times. The world brotherhood movement, which will produce amalgamation of races, is a foreboding of the drying up of the waters of Euphrates. However, the partial amalgamation of races will not produce world peace; it will rather produce a quarrel between the two worlds that will culminate in Armageddon.

A second result of the sixth vial is the going forth of three unclean spirits out of the mouths of the persons of the Satanic trinity. These go forth to the kings of the world to gather them to the war of the great day of the Almighty God. At the sixth trumpet, an army of two hundred million men is assembled. This is identical with the assembling of the kings of the world. Six signifies man rejecting God and giving allegiance to the Devil. Utter violence and destruction is the inevitable result.

Keeping Our Garments

At verse fifteen, the retrospective view and admonition to the people of God in every generation of the Christian age is reviewed. No one knows just when but Armageddon is coming. One may either contribute to it, or to the escape of people from it. No saved person will go into Armageddon, but saved people will contribute to other people's going into it. The saved who contribute to the making of Armageddon will walk naked and their shame will be seen at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Many people have died unsaved, and many others will go into Armageddon because saved people taught them salvation by works. Being saved and leading others to salvation is only the first step in keeping our garments. Other steps include keeping all the fundamental doctrines pure so that those of future generations may hear the gospel of salvation by grace. If we err on any fundamental doctrine, we contribute to the delusion of some in every generation that follows us. Think of the damage the apostate church in Rome in the third century has done indirectly in every following generation. Cornelius, the notorious pastor of this church, is still contributing to the condemnation and delusion of multitudes.

The Mountain of Butchery

God gathers the armies of the world into a place called in the Hebrew tongue, "Armageddon." It is the combination of two Hebrew words. *Ar, or har,* means "a mountain." The rest of the word comes from *gadad*, which means either "to assemble as a troop" or "to cut in pieces." It is the causative form of the verb, and the context indicates it is God who does the causing. The result is that God causes the armies to be assembled in the region of this mountain in the northwest of Palestine, and he causes them to be cut in pieces. Armageddon means "the mountain of troops," or "the mountain of butchery."

The Seventh Vial

The seventh vial is poured out upon the air, and there comes such a shaking, or earthquake, as has not been since mankind has been upon the earth. The seventh vial brings a climax in the study of Revelation. The climax began with the opening of the seals. The two special numbers of completeness, or perfection, are three and seven. With the seventh vial the three sevens are completed. The seventh vial, judgment, is the essence or consummation of the twenty judgments that have gone before in the opening of the seven seals, the blasting of the seven trumpets, and the pouring out of the first six vials. The highest point of the wrath and judgment of God is reached in this seventh vial. The seventh seal and the seventh trumpet were left in an inconclusive condition, and each seventh judgment runs into the following ones. Such is not the case, however, with the seventh vial judgment. It brings the whole complex situation to its close. Details of its immediate results continue through the nineteenth chapter, but the pouring out of this seventh vial is a summation of the last half of the Great Tribulation, and it is at the point where Christ comes to set up his own reign upon the earth. His coming is not mentioned in connection with the vial judgment because this coming is not a part of the judgment; it is a result of the judgment. The coming is described in the nineteenth chapter.

Shaking of Our Solar System

Many scriptures refer to an earthquake which comes at the end of the present age. There are also references to the shaking of the heavenly powers, the plaguing of the sun and the moon, and the falling of the stars from heaven. This great upheaval seems to come at the instant Christ makes his appearance in glory with his saints. Viewed figuratively, this shaking of the universe refers to the dethronement of the Devil as the god of the world in preparation for the enthronement of Christ in this position. But this upheaval seems to demand a literal interpretation. In this sense, it refers to the rearranging of the solar system in such a way that ideal climatic conditions will prevail on the earth during the Millennium. The earth was completely wrecked by the fall of angels before the creation of man (Isa. 14). It was tentatively restored in the six days of creative work of the first chapter of Genesis. It was thrown into its present state of maladjustments and sterility by the fall of man (Gen. 3:17-19, 2:8, 9). The first Adam had the opportunity to bring the earth into permanent righteousness by his choice; the second Adam will bring it into this permanent righteousness by the completion of his work of redemption.

Wrath of God on the Creation

The earthquake is only one of four physical responses to the pouring out of the seventh vial. The other three are lightnings and voices and thunderings. Four refers to man in his relationship to the earth. Then the four responses express the wrath of God because of the wreckage man has made upon the earth. The vehemence of God's movement to free the creation from this wreckage is indicated in the visitation of the seventh vial judgment.

The Judgment of Babylon

The great city is divided into three parts, apparently by the earthquake. At Rev. 11:18, this same city is mentioned, and the position was taken there it is Jerusalem, because it is the place where the Lord was crucified. However, in many such passages the figurative or spiritual interpretation takes precedence over the literal one. That is, spiritual Babylon in literal Jerusalem literally crucified the Lord. But spiritual Babylon, with headquarters in Rome since the third century, has been spiritually crucifying the Lord throughout the Church Age. This difficulty was surmounted in the eleventh chapter by supposing the capital of apostate religion will be moved from Rome to Jerusalem in the last days. This is a perfectly logical supposition if a union of Judaism, Catholicism, and Protestantism is to be accomplished. A union of religions seems to be necessary to the worldwide acceptance of Antichrist, but it appears that religious Babylon is to be destroyed by violence rather than by peaceable conquest. Probably, the right explanation is that religious Babylon will form a worldwide union under Antichrist in the first half of the Tribulation. Then, Antichrist will destroy the whole exiting system and set up a new one early in the second half of the Tribulation. If this be the case, then logically the religious capital will be removed to Jerusalem, and it will be the city that is divided into three parts.

Three Steps in Judgment of Babylon

There are three judgments to come upon religious Babylon. The first is when the various groups are forced to sacrifice their distinctive principles in order to accomplish a world union. A movement to this end is very evident among Protestants and Jews at present, though Catholics seem to be standing out firmly. The second judgment will be when Antichrist destroys united religious Babylon at the beginning of the last half of the Tribulation. This is the Babylon which is lamented in the seventeenth chapter. Antichrist then builds another Babylon which is simply an intensification of the destroyed one, and this is the one remembered by God in the nineteenth verse of the text. This situation is the

eighth king, who is one of the seven, coming in at Revelation 17:11. This last form of Babylon is destroyed in Armageddon and by Christ at his coming in glory. This seems to be the time when the city is divided into three parts, the cities of the nations fall, and great Babylon comes into the wrathful remembrance of God.

Catholics, Jews, and Protestants

In the worldwide union of false religious systems in the last days, Catholicism need not make any concessions. Judaism and Protestantism will make all the concessions in order to effect this union. Jews have come to the point that they will do almost anything to escape persecution, and Protestants are illegitimate children of Catholicism in the first place. So, there is no real difficulty in the matter of the present firm stand of Catholicism.

Shaking at the Coming of Christ

At the close of this chapter, great Babylon comes into wrathful remembrance before God, the mountains and islands are destroyed, a great hail comes down on men, and they blaspheme God because of the hail. All these seem to come at the time Christ makes his appearance in glory, and the great battle is brought to an end by the appearance of Christ with his glorified saints. It appears that the upheaval in the creation will be immediately before Christ makes his appearance in the air with his saints (Matt. 24:29, 30).

Remote Results of Vial Judgments

The seventh vial gives a general view of the destruction of Babylon and the end of the present age. But details connected in one way or another with the fall of Babylon continue through the nineteenth chapter. The binding of Satan and the enthronement of the saints with Christ on earth in the twentieth chapter are direct results of the vial judgments. And in a more remote sense, all these things are direct results of the opening of the seals and the blasting of the trumpets.

Chapter 14

The Judgments of False Religions and the World System REVELATION 17,18

THE WOMAN AND THE BEAST

Revelation 17:1-6

*And there came one of the seven angels who have the seven vials, and he talked with me saying, "Come thou, I will show to thee the judgment of the great harlot who sits upon many waters, with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the ones dwelling upon the earth were made drunk out of the wine of her fornication. " And he led me away into a wilderness in spirit. And I saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet colored wild beast, filled with names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And. The woman was clothed about with purple and scarlet, and was bedecked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand filled with abominations and the unclean things of her fornication, and upon her forehead a name written, mystery, **BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF THE HARLOTS AND OF THE ONES COMMITTING ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.** And I saw the woman drunken out of the blood of the saints and of the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. And I marveled with a great marveling, beholding her.*

The Spiritual Wilderness

The visions of these chapters are introduced to John by one of the angels who have the seven vials of wrath. Since it is right for these angels to pour out the vials of wrath, it is perfectly logical that one of them should show John the details of why this terrible judgment should come upon mankind.

At the beginning of the study of Revelation, it was pointed out that John was on the isle of Patmos when he received his vision of this prophecy. In Holy Spirit power, he was transported to various regions of the universe to receive various details of the over all vision. Here John is carried by the Spirit into a wilderness region. This does not indicate a desert region on earth, it indicates a region which was devoid of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. He was simply carried into the spiritual, or unspiritual, region of false religion and dictatorial government. Absence of the Spirit of God is often associated with desert regions, whereas water is often used typically of the Holy Spirit in the Bible.

Some Types in the Woman

The woman is said to be a great harlot. This refers to her dealing in an illegitimate way with matters of religion. She sits upon many waters, meaning she holds spiritual sway over many peoples. She is seen in a wilderness region, signifying the absence of the Spirit of God in her spiritual realm. She wears the raiment and the ornaments of a queen, such as scarlet, purple, gold, and precious stones. The golden cup signifies the authority she exercises in spiritual things. The abominations in the cup are her unscriptural teachings and practices. Her name is a mystery because every illegitimate religious thing is summed up in her, yet she sits as a queen upon the earth. She is the personification of the Babylon of which she is an integral part. She is drunken on the blood of the saints and the true witnesses of Jesus, while she claims to be the true witness of Jesus.

The Beast and the Harlot

The beast, or Antichrist, must be destroyed before Israel comes into national salvation. The harlot of apostate religion must also be destroyed before Israel comes into the glory of the full terms of the Abrahamic covenant.

From the Greek word used to name the beast, *therion*, he is wild, ferocious, and lawless by nature. His scarlet color probably refers to his bloodthirsty character. This beast is filled with names of blasphemy indicating his role is religious as well as political. Political powers have an inclination to violate the field of religion and usurp its rights. The beast has seven heads and ten horns showing him to be both religious and political in his realms of activity. The heads present the religious aspect and the horns the political.

The Blood of Martyrs

The woman is drunken on the blood of the holy ones and on the blood of the witnesses, or martyrs, of Jesus. There are two ideas as to who are involved in this statement. The name and the religious system of Jesus were revealed when Jesus came and established the church. From this point of view, one might suppose it is only the blood of church saints that has made the woman drunken. But Jesus told the Jews that all the blood of righteous men from Abel onward would be required of the generation of Jews who crucified him (Matt. 23:35). From this viewpoint, the woman would likewise be accountable for all the blood of righteous men who have been slain since Abel. The principle of a walk by faith, which goes back to Abel, was incorporated in the church: the principle of the harlot of Babylon, which goes back to Cain, is incorporated in apostate Rome in the present age. As the New Testament uses the terms the saints are faithful church servants; the witnesses of Jesus. There are many saved people identified religiously with the harlot who sheds the blood of saints.

DESTRUCTION OF THE WOMAN

Revelation 17:7-18

And the angel said to me, "Why didst thou marvel? I will tell to thee the mystery of the woman and of the wild beast who bears her who has the seven heads and the ten horns. The wild beast which thou saw was, and is not, and he is about to come up out of the abyss, and he goes away into destruction. And the ones dwelling upon the earth shall marvel, whose name has not been written in the book of the life from the casting down of the world, seeing the wild beast that he was and is not and shall become present. Here is the mind having wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, where the woman sits upon them. And there are seven kings. The five have fallen, the one is, the other has not yet come, and when he comes it is necessary for him to remain a little while. And the wild beast which was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and he goes away into destruction. And the ten horns which thou saw are ten kings, who not yet have received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings one hour with the wild beast. These have one counsel, and their dynamic power and authority they shall give to the wild beast. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall win the victory over them, because he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and the ones with him called and elect and faithful." And he says to me, "The waters which thou saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples and crowds and nations and tongues. And the ten horns which thou

saw and the wild beast, these shall hate the harlot, and they shall, make her desolate and naked, and her flesh they shall eat, and they shall bum her in fire. For God gave into their hearts to do his counsel, and to do one counsel and to give their kingdom to the wild beast, until the words of God shall be completed. And the woman whom thou saw is the great city having a kingdom over the kings of the earth."

The Great Mystery

The beast and the woman are said to be a mystery. The beast was and is not. Yet, he is to come up out of the abyss in the future. After this he goes into destruction. This is the beast of empire. He lived in the ancient empires of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. Viewed in the present setting, the beast does not exist from the fall of the Roman empire in the fifth century until the last days, when the principle of world empire is revived again. He is destroyed by Christ at his coming in glory. This is a difference between the beast as he is viewed here and as he is viewed in the thirteenth chapter. In the former instances, the beast exists throughout the Church Age, but he has been manifested in religion and has been dominated by false religion since the fall of the Roman empire. The head wounded unto death, but the beast himself not being dead, has been the manifestation of the beast since the pope lost his literal power of empire. In the thirteenth chapter, the union of church and state is pictured in the beast. In the present chapter, church and state are separated, religion being represented by the woman, and empire being represented by the beast. Although they have unity of purpose, they are separate characters. In the thirteenth chapter, the beast is actual world empire in operation. In the seventeenth chapter, the beast is the principle of world empire, still alive and working chiefly through false religion though world empire itself does not actually exist.

The Book of Life

The eighth verse of the present chapter is strikingly like Revelation 13:8 in some details. It is strikingly different in others. The former verse seems to indicate the Lamb was slain from the foundation or casting down of the world. If so, then it says nothing about when the names are written in the book. However, the present verse seems definitely to connect the writing of the names with this foundation or casting down of the world. This does not necessarily mean the names of people are written in the book before they are born. It very likely means, from the Greek preposition, *apo*, that the names of people began to be written in the book of life

from the time the world order was cast down into sin. Then we can very readily suppose the name of any given individual is written in it when he is saved.

Death and Resurrection of the Beast

Another interesting point of comparison is that in the thirteenth chapter the beast is impressive because he wins the victory over the saints. In the present chapter, he is impressive because he died and was resurrected again. Of course, these points are closely related because it is the resurrected beast that wins the victory over the saints. From this angle, both pictures of the beast refer to the last days when the beast is fully revealed. The many people who worship the beast when he works under cover as a deceiver will draw back from him when he is revealed as the son of perdition in the last half of the Tribulation.

Scope of the Book of Life

There is a way to reconcile all the scriptures on the subject of the book of life. The national election, or enrolling in the book of life, of Israel, was revealed when the Abrahamic covenant was given. Individual Israelites are elected, or enrolled in the book of life, when they meet the terms of the election. Likewise there is a group election of the church as another special group of the saved. Individuals of this group are enrolled in the book of life when they meet the conditions of church membership. Both of these groups will receive most of the blessings of membership in the Millennium. However, both groups receive some special blessings in the present world order, and both will maintain their special positions in the Heaven Ages. This is why there are special rolls of these two groups now. apart from the rest of the saved. At the end of the Millennium, all the saved are fully prepared for Heaven, and all the saved are consequently enrolled in the book of life (Rev. 21:15). From this standpoint the book of life in every instance is not the roll of the saved, but of those who enter into the full life. When Israel was the covenant people of God, they enjoyed blessings and guidance which other saved people did not have. While the church is the covenant people of God, church members enjoy even greater blessings than Israel. At the end of the Millennium, all the saved will enter into full fellowship and blessings, though both Israel and the church will still maintain their distinction as groups in the Heaven Ages.

The Seven Heads or Mountains

In order to get the full picture, many passages of scripture must be taken both literally and figuratively. For example, only one

generation of Israel literally came to Mt. Sinai, but all who were under the law came figuratively to this mountain (Heb. 12). It is the same with reference to the seven heads, or mountains, where the woman sits. Literally, she sits on the seven hills of Rome. Figuratively, she sits upon or over the political kingdoms of the world. The principle of the ancient empires lives today in Catholicism and in the political kingdoms influenced or dominated by Catholicism.

The Seven World Empires

The seven heads of the beast are seven kingdoms, including their kings. The five that are fallen are Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and the Holy Roman Empire of the pope. The sixth, which now is, is the papacy which had no literal empire, but holds spiritual power over many kingdoms. This is also the head that is wounded unto death. The seventh, still to come, is the restoration of empire, either under the pope or under a political dictator. Since it will be the healing of the wounded head, the seventh king may be the pope. After a short time, this king and kingdom is supplanted by Antichrist, who is the eighth king, and his kingdom is the eighth. He is of the seven in that his kingdom is like the others, and it is a consummation of all of them.

The Ten Horns

The seven heads of the beast are seven kings, and the ten horns are ten kings. The seven heads are not mentioned in the beast vision of Daniel, because political power prevailed in the ancient kingdoms, including Rome, up to the fifth century. Since then, seven heads become prominent because the harlot of Rome has either influenced or dominated political power. The ten horns did not disappear when the seven heads came into prominence, because religion did not destroy political government, but it rather dominated it and looked to it for support. This is because force of arms naturally and inherently dwells in political government, not religion. The seven heads are kings dominated by religion; the ten horns are kings dominated by political motives.

In the last days, the ten kings help Antichrist destroy the old beast system in order that he may build the final beast system. When the woman is compared with the beast, the woman is religion, and the beast is government; when the seven heads are compared with the ten horns, the heads are religion, and the ten horns are government.

The ten kings do not have a kingdom as yet, but they receive authority as kings one hour with the beast. This probably means these kings are rulers who have usurped authority. They may be

rulers of democratic nations which are subjected to absolute rule in the last half of the Tribulation. These kings assume the powers of dictators, and then give their dictatorial power to the beast.

The Drunken Woman

In verse six, the woman is represented as being drunken on the blood of the saints, indicating that she prevails against them. In the fourteenth verse, the kings make war with the Lamb, who overcomes them. Religious Babylon, the woman, shall persecute the saints throughout the Church Age, holding advantage against them as long as they are in the world. The beast then holds the advantage over the woman until the end of the Tribulation when Christ comes with his glorified saints and wins the victory over the beast and the ten kings. It is when Christ comes as Lord of lords and King of kings that the decisive victory is won over the beast and the whole Babylon system.

Victory of the Faithful

Those with Christ when he comes in glory are called and elect and faithful. The saved will already have received judgment before Christ at the time of this coming. If the description has to do with them at the time of the coming, then it could describe all the saved, for it seems all will be faithful then. But if it describes them as they lived in the flesh, then it is confined to the faithful church, for only the church is faithful during the Church Age. Likely, all the saved are present with Christ when he comes in glory, but only the faithful church is described as being called, elect, and faithful. It is the bride of Christ who suffered most at the hands of the beast, and it will be the bride who participates most in the victory over him.

End of the Harlot

The scripture says the kings will hate the harlot because God gave it in their hearts to carry out his counsel concerning the harlot. Since God works according to principles of logic, using human instrumentality, the hatred will be seen as a rivalry for power between religion and government. The kings will hate the harlot because of the political power which the pope has wielded over the nations of the world. This situation makes it almost certain that the harlot system will be destroyed by violence rather than by being amalgamated into a new religious system. The latter has been suggested as a possibility heretofore.

The Great Usurper

The woman is the great city which has a kingdom over the kings of the earth. During most of the Church Age Mohammedanism and

Judaism have opposed Christianity. But neither of these claims allegiance to Christ, nor do they give any recognition to his church. On the other hand, about 251 A.D., the Romish system rose up in the midst of the church, claiming to be the church. This papal system has claimed the historical background, the scriptural authority, and the spiritual power which Christ gave his church. It has brazenly violated every fundamental doctrine Christ gave his church. With political power on its side most of the time it has been viciously and unchangingly arrayed against the remnant who have kept the faith of Christ. There is no reasonable nor scriptural doubt that Rome, the seat of the pope, is the harlot of this text.

THE WAILING OF THE KINGS AND THE MERCHANTMEN

Revelation 18:1-24

After these things I saw another angel coming down out of the heaven, having great authority, and the earth was lighted from his glory, and he cried out in a mighty voice saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and it has become a dwelling place of demons and a place of keeping of every unclean spirit and a place of keeping of every unclean and hateful fowl, because out of the wine of the wrath of her fornication all the nations have drunk, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchantmen of the earth became rich out of the dynamic power of her wantonness. And I heard another voice out of the Heaven saying, "Come ye out of her, my people, in order that ye should not become sharers in her sins, and that ye should not receive of her plagues, because her sins have accumulated into the heaven, and God has remembered her unrighteous deeds. Repay ye to her as she paid, and double ye the doubles according to her works: In the cup which she mixed mix ye to her double: By whatsoever she glorified herself and lived wantonly, by so much give ye to her torment and grief. Because in her heart she says, I sit a queen and I am not a widow and I shall not behold grief: On account of this in one day her plagues shall come, death and grief and famine, and she shall be burned in fire: Because mighty is the Lord God who judges her. And the kings of the earth shall wail and lament over her, who committed fornication and lived wantonly, when they see the smoke of her burning, standing afar off on account of the fear of her torment. Saying, 'Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon the mighty city, because in one hour thy judgment is come.' And the merchantmen of the earth shall wail and lament over her, because their merchandise no one buys any longer, merchandise of gold and silver and precious stones and pearls and fine linen and purple and silk and scarlet, and thyne wood and every ivory vessel and every vessel of precious wood and

of brass and of iron and of marble, and cinnamon, and odors and ointments and frankincense and wine and oil and fine flour and wheat and cattle and sheep, and horses and chariots and bodies and souls of men. And the fruits of the desire of thy soul have gone away from thee, and all the sumptuous things and radiant things have perished from thee, and no longer by any means shall they find them. The merchantmen of these, who became rich from her, shall stand afar off on account of the fear of her torment wailing and lamenting, saying, 'Woe, woe, the great city, who was clothed about with fine linen and purple and scarlet, and bedecked with gold and precious stones and pearls, because in one hour such a rich one was made desolate.' And every ship pilot and everyone at the place of boats and sailors and whosoever work on the sea, stood afar off and cried out, seeing the smoke of her burning saying, 'Who is like the great city?' And they cast dust upon their heads and cried out wailing and lamenting, saying, 'Woe, woe, the great city, in which all the ones having the boats in the sea were made rich from her great price, because in one hour she was made desolate.' Rejoice over her, thou Heaven, and the saints and apostles and the prophets, because God has judged your judgment of her." And one mighty angel took up a stone as a great millstone, and he cast it into the sea saying, "Thus shall Babylon, the great city, be cast down headlong, and it shall not be found any more. And a voice of harpers and musicians and pipers and trumpeters shall not be heard in thee any more, and every technician of every trade shall not be found in thee any more, and a voice of a mill shall not be heard in thee anymore, and the light of a lamp shall not shine in thee any more, and the voice of the bridegroom and the bride shall not be heard in thee any more: Because thy merchantmen were the great ones of the earth, because in thy sorcery all the Tuitions were deceived, and in her was found the blood of the prophets and saints and all the ones slaughtered on the earth."

Religious Babylon

A dictatorship dominating the entire lives of people, Babylon has been seen as composing a trinity of institutions; religion, government, and economics. This view seems to be adequately supported by the general teachings of the Scriptures and by the history of the ancient empires. However, when we come to the present passage, the woman, who is false religion, is still Babylon, and the kings commit fornication with her, and the merchantmen are made rich by catering to her desire for luxurious living. In both of these instances, the kings and the merchantmen are separate from the woman, Babylon, although they associate with her. The explanation is that Babylon as viewed here is a religious system

embodying all the principles of the ultimate Babylon, and the kings and merchantmen do stand apart as heading two institutions of the Babylon system.

A Habitation of Demons

Babylon became a habitation for demons, unclean spirits, and unclean fowls. These all refer to evil spirits, evil personages, and evil principles in the field of religion. There is found in the field of so-called Christianity every principle and practice of false religion that is known on earth. These have been accumulating in the harlot system since her beginning. But the condition becomes more intense in the last days. The third verse seems to indicate the kings, nations, and merchantmen are partly responsible for the woman's delivering herself over completely to demon spirits, etc. This is the idea of religion building a system that appeals to the world and the worldly.

A Warning to the Saints

The admonition to the people of God to come out of Babylon is evidently retrospective. The Thyatira church of the Dark Ages is warned against allowing Jezebel to teach among them and seduce the servants of the Lord. Jezebel and the Babylon of our text are the same. Since the rise of false churches, the true churches have associated more or less with them. Some churches have gone so far that they have become apostate themselves; others have drawn back before they went too far. It is the latter group that is admonished to come out of Babylon. If they do not, then they become a part of her and suffer her fate. In America, many formerly evangelistic Protestant groups are moving very rapidly into the infidelity of modernism.

Babylon is to be given full measure, and even double, for her deeds. She has glorified herself and lived in sinful luxury; she is to have a double portion of torment and grief in repayment for it.

Claims of the Harlot

The woman says she is a queen, she is not a widow, and she shall not see grief. This refers to her claiming the place of legitimacy in the realm of Christianity. Also, she has so firmly established herself in the fields of government and economics that there seems little danger that she will ever come to grief. She is no widow in the sense that she says she has Christ for her husband, though she has betrayed him in every detail.

This woman has so firmly entrenched herself in the world that it seems no earthly power can unseat her. Therefore, God Himself moves to bring judgment on her. Using human instrumentality in

the persons of the ten kings. This woman is a very important device the Devil uses in his effort to unseat his arch rival, Christ.

A Trinity of Oppressors

It is difficult to see and express some of the details of the interdependence between the woman and the kings and merchantmen. It is easy to see how the kings furnish political protection and the merchantmen furnish wealth to the woman, but what does the woman do for the kings and merchantmen? If the principles which Christ set in his church had prevailed in the world of affairs, the nations would have had democratic governments and honest and charitable economic institutions. Christ taught the absolute separation of church and state, but he taught principles that should have been carried over automatically from the field of religion into those of government and economics. The kings and merchantmen would not like such a system; therefore, the woman gave the religious precepts and examples which they could carry over into their own fields and maintain dictatorships and economic oppression as never before. She has set the example of oppression as never before. She has set the example of oppression and greed instead of restraining them in her legitimate field of operation.

Why the Kings Wail

Since Antichrist will immediately rebuild Babylon after he destroys the harlot. Babylon, the following question poses itself: Why should the kings and merchantmen wail inconsolably at the destruction of the woman, if the same system is to be rebuilt immediately? The answer lies in the matter of the distribution of power. The so-called Holy Roman Empire has never had absolute power either politically or spiritually. She has dominated many nations and religious groups, but never all of them. Some nations have stood out politically against this dictatorship. It is evident that the power, wealth, and honor will all accrue to Antichrist when he comes into the fulness of his kingdom in the last half of the Tribulation. It is the loss of their part of these that causes the kings and merchantmen to wail at the destruction of the harlot, who had committed fornication with them.

Seat of Babylon in the Last Days

There is some uncertainty as to whether the destruction of Rome is literal, or figurative, or both. There is no doubt that the seat of religious Babylon has been in Rome since the early Christian centuries. However, Revelation 11:8 seems to indicate the seat of religious Babylon will be moved to Jerusalem in the last days. This may be accomplished through some kind of religious alliance or

union between Judaism and Catholicism in the last days. One can hardly suppose Revelation 18:21-23 literally refers to both Jerusalem and Rome. It seems the safer position to take these verses figuratively, and as they refer to the complete destruction of the system, as opposed to the destruction of the city in which the system is located. There seems to be no scriptural objection to the idea of the annihilation of Rome, but there is objection to the idea of the annihilation of Jerusalem. It is very likely Rome, as the headquarters of the system, will be destroyed, and later the system itself will be destroyed.

Chapter 15

The Coming of Christ in Glory

REVELATION 19

THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB

Revelation 19:1-10

After these things I heard as a great voice of a great crowd in the heaven saying, "Hallelujah, the salvation and the glory and the dynamic power of our God, because true and righteous are his judgments; because he judged the great harlot who destroyed the earth in her fornication, and he avenged the blood of his bond servants out of her hand. "And a second time they said, "Hallelujah; and the smoke of her goes up into the ages of the ages. " And the twenty four elders and the four living beings fell and worshipped God who sits upon the throne saying, "Amen, Hallelujah, "and a voice went out from the throne saying, "Praise ye our God, all his bond servants, the ones fearing him, the little ones and the great ones. "And I heard as a voice of a great crowd and as a voice of many waters and as a voice of mighty thunderings saying, "Hallelujah, because our Lord God Almighty reigns as king. Let us rejoice and be glad, and let us give the glory to him, because the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife has made herself ready, and it is given to her that she should be clothed about with fine linen shining clean; for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. " And he says to me, "These are the true words of God." And I fell before his feet to worship him. And he says to me, "See thou do it not; I am thy fellow bond servant and that of thy brethren who have the witness of Jesus; worship thou God. For the witness of Jesus is the spirit of the prophecy."

A Change in Setting

The nineteenth chapter begins with the phrase, "after these things." The things immediately preceding these are the destruction of the harlot of Babylon and the lamentation by the kings and the merchantmen of the earth. The destruction of Babylon is on the

earth; the things seen in the present passage are in Heaven. Thus the scene changes, although the time element is approximately the same.

Three Main Events

According to the philosophy of interpretation followed in this study, the events and movements of the nineteenth chapter all occur during the last half of the Tribulation. There are three main scenes presented in the chapter; the marriage of the Lamb in Heaven, the coming of Christ in glory to the earth, and the ending of the battle of Armageddon on earth.

Rejoicing in Heaven

Since the elders and the living beings are mentioned later, it would be logical to suppose angelic beings are not included in the great crowd in Heaven. The group gives a threefold ascription of praise to God for his judgment of the harlot. This is the perfect praise that can come only from saints who have been made perfect in the resurrection. The group is all those of the first resurrection; that is, all the saved.

The judgments of God are said to be true and righteous because he judged the harlot. She is charged with destroying the earth with her fornication, and the blood of the bond servants of God is required at her hands. The harlot here is the Babylon principle that goes back to the beginning of false religious systems with Cain.

The Harlot in Hell

The smoke of the burning of the harlot goes upward into the ages of the ages, or eternally. Since the ages of the ages follow one another in endless cycle, there is no end to the ascending of the smoke of the burning harlot. In denying the doctrine of a place of eternal punishment, some have said the woman is soon consumed in the fire, and only the smoke of a temporary burning continues to ascend into the reaches of the universe. This infidelic quibble is not worthy of consideration by serious believers in the fundamental truth of the Scriptures.

Institutions in Hell

A more serious question is whether a system or an institution as such goes to Hell, and how it suffers there. It appears that both Israel as a nation and the church as an institution will go to Heaven and maintain their identity there forever. Ezekiel speaks of nations as such being in *Sheol*. The nations that forget God shall be turned into Hell, or the Hebrew *Sheol*, (Psalm 9:17). Just as the church will

live forever in the people who constituted it in the world, so the harlot of false religion will live forever in Hell in the unsaved people who constituted it in the world. The harlot will be remembered forever in Hell as the institution that caused multitudes to go there, and every individual will remember all his contributions to the institution while in the world.

The Elders and the Living Beings

In addition to the great crowd who give praise to God for his judgment on the harlot, the twenty-four elders and the four living beings also appear on the scene. They fall and worship God, who sits on the throne, saying, "Amen." These elders first appear in the general picture of Heaven presented in the fourth chapter. They are tokens of Israel and the church. These elders, being enthroned in Heaven are glorified men, not angels. On the other hand, the living beings are in and round about the throne of God, but they are not enthroned in their own right. They are angelic beings related to the salvation of the different kinds of conscious life on the earth. They represent the flesh of man, the wild beasts, the domestic beasts, and the fowls of the air. They approve the judgment of God as righteous and just. Before the final consummation every intelligent being in the universe will admit the justice of the dealings of God with his creatures. This includes the Devil himself and all the unsaved, who go to Hell.

The Justice of Judgment

After the response of the elders and the living beings, an unidentified voice goes forth from the throne, commanding all the bond servants to praise God. The judgment of God on the harlot has been proven just by the works of Christ. Although the harlot is totally evil, God does not judge her or the Devil, who inspires her, until Christ has decisively won the victory over them on righteous principles. This principle explains the prolonged struggle of the ages between righteousness and evil in the world.

For a second time in this passage, there is a response of praise of a great multitude in Heaven. This multitude is all the bond servants of God. Since an angel identifies himself among them in the tenth verse, this multitude likely includes all the redeemed and all the holy angels.

The Marriage of the Lamb

Thus far, the rejoicing has been because of the judgment of Babylon. Now the occasion of rejoicing is the marriage of the Lamb. The eyes of the beholders are turned again from earth to Heaven, for it is in Heaven that the marriage of the Lamb takes place.

Full Supremacy of God

The great crowd proclaims that the Lord God Almighty reigns as king. This refers to God's resuming the authority he exercised on earth before the fall of man. Since the fall of man, the Devil has been the god of the world. Because he has maintained religion among men in the Babylon system, the Devil has a legal right to be god of the world. When this Babylon system is fully exposed and destroyed, Christ, with his bride, will become the God of the world. The Almighty God has always been supreme, but Christ has not always reigned supremely on earth. He will in the Millennium. Men in the flesh will still have their sovereignty of choice in the Millennium.

Qualifications of the Bride

Two things are said about the preparation of the bride of the Lamb. She has made herself ready, and the fine linen of her attire is the righteous works or deeds of the saints. Many things have been said about the qualifications of the bride, some of them evidently untrue. The Scriptures will sustain these points. First, one must be saved to be in the bride of Christ. Second, he must have lived during the Church Age, for it is only during this age that the bride is chosen and prepared. Third, he must keep the fundamental doctrines of the New Testament. These points are of such importance that we shall note them separately.

The New Birth and the Bride

One must be saved or born again to be in the bride of Christ. Since the fall of man, men have been spiritually dead by nature, and must be born spiritually to have a point of contact with God, to have any fellowship with him, and to have a right motive for obedience. All the Old Testament saints were saved the same way we are saved today, but God chose the whole nation of Israel as his people. They were born as his people when they were born into the world. The inevitable result was that some of this chosen people were saved, and some of them were never saved. There were sinners in this kingdom of God. When Jesus came and began to prepare a new people of God, he told Nicodemus one must be born again to become a part of this people. The natural birth would not make him a member of the kingdom of God.

The Church Age and the Bride

One must live during the Church Age to become a part of the bride of Christ. Just as the church itself is a special blessing confined to the present age, so the reward of brideship is also limited to this age. The patriarchs will be judged according to their

works, and will have a place in the millennial kingdom, but the position will not be in the bride. The potter has power over the clay to make of it whatever pleases him, and the clay should not argue with God, the potter. Such men as Melchisedek and Job had no part in either Israel or the church, but they will receive their due reward. Abraham was the father of the faithful, but he will not be in the bride of Christ.

Faithfulness and the Bride

To be in the bride of Christ, one must keep the essential New Testament doctrines. This is equivalent to saying he must keep church doctrines and practices. The Law of Moses demanded righteousness in the flesh of Israel (Heb. 9:10). Under the law, Israel, the people of God, walked after the flesh. The New Testament rule of conduct is a spiritual walk. The flesh can no more be purified than it could be when Israel tried it under the law. Christ gave a spiritual rule whereby the flesh could be bypassed and one could walk in the Spirit, though he is still in the flesh. This walk in the Spirit can be nothing else but a walk according to the New Testament rule in religious doctrine and practice (Rom. 7 and 8).

The bride of Christ will be composed of those who have kept such fundamental doctrines as salvation by grace, eternal security, scriptural baptism, scriptural observance of the Lord's supper, the local church, premillennialism, etc. This is the only way the church can attain a standard of righteousness which no one else has ever attained. It will be a righteousness of conduct superior to that of any other people that will distinguish the bride of Christ in the judgment and in the Millennium.

Guests at the Supper

There is a widespread belief that a multitude of saved people who are outside the bride of Christ will be called to the marriage supper of the Lamb. This belief is based on ancient marriage custom. In the ancient marriages one woman was the bride; in the marriage of the Lamb millions of pimple will constitute the bride. Since there is this vast difference, we are justified in supposing that only the members of the bride are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Angels Not To Be Worshiped

The angel forbade John to worship him, saying he was the fellow bond servant of John and of the brethren who have the witness of Jesus. Men and angels are vastly different in several respects, but they are alike in that both angels and faithful saved men serve God. This is the likeness that the angel claims. The angel says John is to

worship God, for the witness of John is the spirit of the prophecy. The whole book of Revelation is written that God might be glorified in and by Christ, and Christ might be glorified of God. Therefore, none of the glory belongs to angels or men, but all of it belongs to the Father and the Son. The gospel of John, the great Bible treatise on this subject, tells how the Son manifested the Father to the world and glorified him in his character and works. In turn, the Father proclaimed him as his Son, and he committed all judgment into his hands because he was the worthy Son of Man. The gospel of John is the revelation of the works of Christ in progress; Revelation is the showing forth of the works of Christ in consummation.

THE COMING OF CHRIST IN GLORY

Revelation 19:11-16

And I saw the Heaven opened, and behold a white horse, and the one sitting upon it called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. And his eyes are a flame of fire, and upon his head many diadems, having a name written which no one knows except himself, and clothed about with a garment baptized in blood, and his name is called the Word of God. And the armies which are in the heaven were following him upon white horses, clothed with fine linen white clean. And out of his mouth goes a sharp sword, in order that with it he should smite the nations; and he shepherds them with an iron rod; and he treads the winepress of the wine of the anger of the wrath of the Almighty God. And he has upon his garment and upon his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

The Army on White Horses

In the second section of the chapter, the scene changes from Heaven to earth. In the heavenly scene, the saints have been glorified, the judgment of the saved has taken place, and the armies of Jesus have been fully organized. (The judgment of the saved and the organizing of the armies are practically synonymous terms.) Now John, at the beginning of this passage, sees this mighty and glorious army coming to the earth with Jesus at its head.

A Figurative Description

Jesus is said to be riding on a white horse. This is a picture of warfare in Bible times, but it is far from a picture of a modern conquerer. Besides this, when this glorified army comes from Heaven, spirit power will be the agent of travel; not literal horses. Therefore the white horses of Christ and his saints are figurative.

and not literal. This is in harmony with the view of the coming of Antichrist and his minions in the sixth chapter, where horses are mentioned.

Righteous Conqueror

The rider on the white horse is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. It is not so much the might of God that gives him the ultimate victory as it is his righteousness, worked out in and by Christ. God is not an arbitrary dictator. Jesus wins the victory in the saved by the righteous methods of peace before taking the sword in his hand to conquer by force those who insist on following the methods of force and violence.

The Holy Christ

The eyes of Jesus are a flame of fire. This is another figurative statement setting forth the wrath of God because the Devil and mankind have almost destroyed the earth. The many diadems upon the head of Jesus are tokens of every work Jesus has done in saving men and in winning a righteous victory over the Devil. For instance, the victory in the wilderness temptations is the source of some of these diadems. He has a name written which no one knows but himself. This refers to experiences in the work of redemption of which no one knows but Jesus. He is wearing a garment baptized in blood. (The King James translators call this word "dipped" clearly revealing that they knew what the Greek word for baptism means, that is, "a dipping" or "an immersion.")

The first garment with which Jesus clothed himself was the robe of righteous works during his life in the world. He then clothed himself with the garment of the sacrificial and substitutionary death. He vindicated himself as the Son of Man in his life; he vindicated us to become his brethren in his death. Thus, he is clothed with the token of the redemption of mankind.

His name is called THE WORD OF GOD. He established his integrity as the Son of Man while he was in the world. Likewise, he established the integrity of the promises of God.

The Glorified Saints

The armies which are in Heaven follow Jesus upon white horses. They are clothed in fine linen-clean-white. These armies are composed of the glorified saints, meaning all of them. There is difficulty reconciling this group with the bride of Christ mentioned in the eighth verse. The difference is that the eighth verse points to a specific group of the glorified redeemed; whereas the fourteenth verse evidently points to all who come with Christ when he comes to set up his reign on the earth. The two groups' garments indicate

that the righteousness of all saved people is really the righteousness of Christ. This is still true whether it is the imputed righteousness of salvation and glorification, or the righteousness of works as the people of God.

A Figurative Sword of Judgment

A sharp sword goes forth out of the mouth of Jesus with which he is to smite the nations. And he shall rule them with an iron rod. He treads the winepress of the wine of the anger of the wrath of Almighty God. These are figurative statements referring to Christ smiting the armies under the beast and establishing his own reign upon the earth.

Four Titles of Christ

In this chapter, Christ is called by four names, or descriptive titles. The first is the Lamb, in which relationship he takes the church as his wife. Christ has purchased the church of God with his own blood (Acts 20:28). This is in addition to the fact that Christ has purchased salvation to every believer. The second title of Christ is that he is Faithful and True. These titles describe the nature of his works in the world whereby the victory is given to him when he comes to rule the earth. The third title is the Word of God, referring to his integrity of purpose and action while he was in the world, as the result of which all authority and power is given to him to rule the earth righteously. The fourth title is a result of the things described in the other three. This fourth one is KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. Names and titles of God are not bandied about in an irresponsible and meaningless manner in the Scriptures. Every one has a specific meaning pertinent to the situation in which it appears. Christ is named KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS because justice demands that he assume this position as the result of his works and virtues exhibited in the world. The title refers to his thousand years' reign specifically.

THE END OF ARMAGEDDON

Revelation 19:17-21

And I saw one angel standing in the sun, and he cried out in a great voice saying to all the fowls which are flying in the midheaven, "Come ye, assemble ye unto the great supper of God, in order that ye may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders of thousands and the flesh of mighty ones and the flesh of horses and of the ones sitting upon them, and the flesh of all free men and of bond servants and of little ones and of great ones. " And

I saw the wild beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war with the one sitting upon the horse and with, his army. And the wild beast was seized and with him the false prophet who does the signs in his presence, with which he deceived the ones receiving the stamp of the wild beast and the ones worshipping his image; living, the two were cast into the lake of fire which burns in brimstone. And the others were killed with the sword of the one sitting upon the horse, which goes forth out of his mouth, and all the fowls were filled out of their flesh.

The Feast of the Fowls

An angel who stands in the sun gives the invitation to the fowls of the heaven to come and partake of the great supper of God. The sun is often used as a type of Christ in the sense of light, power, and glory. Then the angel who stands in the sun stands in the authority and majesty of the victorious Christ. The invitation is equivalent to a decree of God that the armies of Antichrist will be destroyed, and they will be eaten by the fowls of the heaven.

The Time of Armageddon

John saw the beast and his cohorts assembled to make war with the one sitting on the horse and with his army. The beast and his armies assemble some time before Christ appears on earth with his army. There is no way of knowing when the beast armies are assembled or how long the battle of Armageddon lasts. The definite movement begins immediately after the middle of the Tribulation, and the battle ends when Christ comes in glory at the end of the Tribulation. This is all we know as to the time element connected with Armageddon. The beast of Antichrist is really opposed to Christ throughout his career, though Christ does not actually appear on the scene until the close of the period of the reign of Antichrist. Probably, it is from this standpoint that John saw the armies assembled to make war with the one sitting upon the horse. On the other hand, there is no objection to the view that the beast desires literally to meet Christ in battle. In this instance, the time would be the day that Christ comes in glory with his saints.

Defeat of the Beast

When Christ appears on the battle scene with his army, the wild beast and the false prophet are seized and cast living into the Lake of Fire. The battle is brought to an end when Christ appears with his glorified saints.

Relative and Final Defeat and Victory

At the beginning of the Millennium, the wild beast and the false prophet are cast alive into the Lake of Fire. The armies of the beast are simply slain with the sword of the victorious Christ. There seems to be no return from the Lake of Fire, even for judgment. The wild beast and the false prophet receive their final judgment at the beginning of the Millennium. The beast armies, who are simply rebellious men, are slain, their spirits go into Hades to await the judgment of sinners, and they are then judged and cast into the Lake of Fire. The Devil, who is the Anti-God, will receive his judgment at the end of the Millennium along with all sinners. There is a beautiful parallelism in this whole situation. Christ and the Holy Spirit come into their complete victory as separate personalities at the beginning of the thousand years reign, and they reign victoriously throughout the period. Their adversaries, the Antichrist and the Anti-Spirit, are suffering complete defeat at the same time. During this time, the saints will have relative victory as they reign with Christ, and as they are being finally prepared for Heaven and complete victory and glory. The unsaved will be in the region of death in relative defeat, awaiting judgment, the Lake of Fire, and final defeat. God will be awaiting the full accomplishment of the work of Christ at the end of the Millennium, at which time God will begin to reign in absolute supremacy in the Heaven Ages (I Cor. 15:26-28). This passage teaches that Christ will win a complete victory, and then God will come into an absolute supremacy which he has not enjoyed since sin came into existence in the universe. At the same time God comes into absolute supremacy, the Devil suffers absolute defeat, eternal in its duration. The Devil, the Beast, and the false prophet are then equal in defeat. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are equal in victory. And they come into a unity of office as they have been in unity of final purpose from eternity. It is only in the sense of his performing a separate office that Christ sinks into the background at the beginning of the Heaven Ages. As the eternal Son, he remains in full prominence with the Father.

The Great Slaughter

There is no reason not to take a literal view of the fowls and the beasts eating the victims of Armageddon. The thirty-ninth chapter of Ezekiel states that the Israelites will be seven months burying the dead and seven years burning the weapons of the battle. It is also stressed that it is for the purifying of the land of Israel. The number seven signifies three things in the situation; the complete victory of Christ over the Devil and his army as a militant force; the complete defeat of the army of the Devil as a militant force; and the

purification of the land of Israel, and probably the whole earth, for the reign of peace and righteousness. The victory is to cause the other nations to glorify God.

From the time of the Abrahamic covenant, the Old Testament Scriptures state this motive of God concerning Israel. One of the many examples is Exodus 7:5, where the Lord would make himself known to Egypt in the deliverance of Israel from bondage and in their full establishment in the good land flowing with milk and honey. God never fully glorified himself among the nations in his giving of full victory to Israel because of the unfaithfulness of Israel. He will accomplish this goal in the Millennium.

The Army Opposing Antichrist

The Scriptures state that the rest of the army of the beast, who are left alive at the coming of Christ, will be slain by the sword of Christ. This indicates the complete destruction of this army. Israel will stand against Antichrist. The thirty-eighth chapter of Ezekiel mentions Sheba, Dedan and Tarshish as opposing him. These seem to embrace the commercial and democratic nations of what we now know as the Western world. The nations will be aligned in Armageddon approximately the way they are now aligned for or against Communism. The prophecies say God will punish all nations in Armageddon. But not all of them will be destroyed in it. The Communist armies will be destroyed. The remnants of the Communist nations will be submerged in other nations, unless these Communist nations are totally annihilated. There will be left, Israel and such democratic nations as Britain and America. To enumerate these nations would involve a detailed study of nations from the standpoints of origin, history, prophecy, and present position and trends in world affairs. If such a study were made, there would still be doubt as to very many details.

The Millennial Reign

REVELATION 20

INTRODUCTION

A Change in the Time Element

In the twentieth chapter, there is a definite changing of the time element for the first time since the sixth chapter. All of the intervening matter deals in a general way with the seven years of the Great Tribulation. From time to time, details have been pointed out which evidently go before the Tribulation or beyond the Tribulation as to the time of their occurrence. However, these are incidental to the main theme.

Meaning of Millennium

The present chapter deals mainly with the Millennium. The word millennium is a combination of two Latin words which mean “a thousand years.” Six times in this chapter the Greek text uses the expression, *chilia ete*: the first word means “a thousand,” and the latter means “years.” Thus, the Millennium is referred to six times in this chapter. It is strange that so many Bible students either deny the doctrine of the Millennium entirely, or relegate it to some period of time during the Church Age. Let us note again the three main theories concerning the Millennium held by Bible students in general.

Nonmillennialism

Many Baptists of past generations have held to nonmillennialism. This means they simply do not believe there is to be a thousand years’ reign of peace on the earth after the Church Age is ended. One reason for this is that the doctrine of the Millennium involves so many complicated details that preachers have not felt capable of dealing with them. Therefore, they have simply sidestepped the question and have left the impression they were teaching one

general resurrection and one general judgment for all, after which the saved would immediately go to Heaven and the unsaved would go to Hell. This general resurrection and judgment is what some Bible teachers have actually believed, but many others have unintentionally left this impression by their avoidance of the question. This theory demands an unnatural and unwarranted spiritualizing of all the reality out of this twentieth chapter of Revelation. It also involves spiritualizing many pages of Old Testament prophecy dealing with the Abrahamic covenant and promises to Israel which seem to demand a literal interpretation. We do not have much of literal truth left in the Bible if we spiritualize the Millennium out of existence.

Postmillennialism

The postmillennial theory is that the reign of peace is not ushered in by a literal second coming of Christ to the earth, but is attained by a growth of humanity into righteousness in the present world. This theory must ignore or deny the many prophecies that perilous and exceedingly evil times will come as the age draws to its close. It demands that we believe man will do a thing which he has never done in the history of the world—change his ways and advance in righteousness. Judgment is the only implement, and the church is the only institution that has ever turned men from sin to righteousness. And, the church is not to prevail in the sense of converting the world. Therefore, it is the judgment at the second coming of Christ that will usher in the Millennium. Postmillennialism is probably more infidelic than nonmillennialism.

Premillennialism

Premillennialism is the only conclusion we can reach if we take the Baptist viewpoint of the literal truth of the Scriptures in general. By what token can we take anything but a literal viewpoint of this chapter if we believe there is any literal and unchanging truth in the Bible at all? Some seek to avoid the millennial doctrine by assigning the reign of peace to some period of the Church Age. But when has the Devil been chained in the bottomless pit during the Church Age, either literally or spiritually? When have peace and righteousness covered the earth as the waters cover the sea? The answer from both history and the Scriptures is never.

Divisions of the Chapter

This chapter is the great Millennium chapter. There are four main events recorded in it: (1) the binding of Satan, (2) the thousand years' reign of peace, (3) the loosing of Satan, and (4) the White Throne Judgment.

SATAN CAST INTO THE ABYSS

Revelation 20:1-3

And I saw an angel coming down out of the Heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he seized the dragon, the ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and he bound him a thousand years, and he cast him into the abyss, and he shut him up and set a seal upon him, in order that he should not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years should be completed. After these it is necessary for him to be loosed a little time.

The Binding of Satan

John says he saw an angel come down out of Heaven with the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. These are for the purpose of removing the activities of the Devil from the earth. As in many other instances, we are not told what particular angel this one is. Some angels minister to the saved in the world. Others go on various missions for God. There seem to be three orders of angels appointed to operate in the three fields of spirit, intelligence, and material. If we accept this view of the division of labors, we will logically suppose this particular angel is of the order of Michael, which ministers in the realm of spirit. Though the Devil originally had his area of activity in the realm of the material, he aspired to become the chief power in the realm of spirit. God did not arbitrarily destroy this effort, but he rather set about to defeat it by righteous methods in Christ. Since the Devil has been allowed to operate as a chief in the realm of spirit these thousands of years, his claim in this field is respected until he is finally overcome by the works of Christ. When Christ shall have utterly defeated him, then Michael will be the chief angel of the group who minister in the defeat and binding of Satan. Remember that spirit power takes the precedence over intelligence and physical might in the final conquest of evil and final establishment of righteousness.

Nature of the Prison of Satan

When we consider the question of whether Satan is literally bound with a chain and whether he is literally confined behind bars and locks, we encounter again the difficulty of trying to plumb the infinite with finite minds. The finite mind cannot explore the infinite. For example, in his resurrected body Jesus entered a room when the doors were shut. The best we can do is to say he walked through the walls. This is impossible to the finite mind, but not impossible in the spirit realm of infinity. All we can say is that Satan is effectually and completely bound and debarred from the

earth, whether with literal chains and bars or not. We do not know what is required to constitute a prison house in the region of infinity. An entirely different set of laws operates there which we know nothing about.

Names of the Devil—The Dragon

In this passage, the Devil is called by four different names or descriptive titles. The student should remember that God is also called by many different titles, each referring to some characteristic or office of God. The same is true of the Devil. The dragon seems to be a mythical sea monster of ancient times. The myth evidently grew up around such creatures as the whale, the shark, the octopus, etc. The aim of the Bible is not to establish or deny the existence of the dragon. It is rather to describe the Devil as being like what the people thought the dragon to be. This is nothing more nor less than the best effort possible to describe things in human language which men can understand. The Bible does the same thing in a thousand instances with no intention of teaching untruth. In the minds of the people the dragon was ferocious, loathsome, and monstrous. The idea is that the Devil is all these things.

The Ancient Serpent

The second descriptive title of the Devil is the ancient serpent. No doubt, this is a reference to the guise in which he appeared to Eve in Eden. More accurately, it is a reference to how the Devil is represented in the serpent after the curse came on him. The serpent is crafty, loathsome, poisonous, and utterly degraded. Yet, there is a fascinating beauty and grace about him. In all these things he is a fitting illustration of the Devil.

The Opposing Slanderer

The third name of the arch enemy is the Devil. This word is a combination of two Greek words which in the combination mean two things: one is “the accuser” or “slanderer;” the other is “the one set in strict opposition.” The Devil is all these things to God, to Christ, to mankind, to the creation, and to all righteousness. It is the prominent New Testament name of the author of sin.

The Destroying Adversary

The fourth name in the passage is Satan. This is the Old Testament Hebrew name of the Devil. It means “an opponent,” “an adversary,” or “a destroyer.” In this word, the full character and aim of the Devil are summed up. He is opposed to everything God approves, and his goal is to destroy all the good works of God.

Heaven is the expression of the final will and intention of God; Hell is the expression of the final will and intention of the Devil, though it does not appear that it is his intention to be the chief victim of Hell.

The Region of the Dead

In the common version of the Bible, the place where Satan is bound and shut up is called the bottomless pit. Apparently, the Hebrew language calls this place *tehom*, “the great roaring abyss.” The Greek word is identical with the English abyss. It is a place and a condition of utter wreckage and confusion. At Genesis 1:2, the earth is described as *tehom*, or in a condition of utter wreckage and confusion. After the recreation of the first chapter of Genesis, the abyss seems to have been banished to the pit of Sheol. Sheol was the abode of the dead in Old Testament times, and the pit was the region in Sheol where the unsaved were held in separation from the saved. It is most fully described in the second chapter of Jonah. In the New Testament, Hades seems to be identical with Sheol; and the abyss, or bottomless pit, is identical with the pit of Sheol. According to these suggestions, in the sixteenth chapter of Luke, Lazarus would be in the Sheol of the Old Testament and in the Hades of the New Testament. The rich man would be in the pit of Sheol of the Old Testament and in the abyss of Hades of the New Testament. The saved were moved out of this region entirely when Jesus ascended to Heaven, but this does not affect the picture presented here. The abyss, or bottomless pit, where the Devil is bound during the Millennium is no more nor less than the lower region of Hades, where the unsaved dead are awaiting the resurrection. Remember, this region is in infinity, and therefore we cannot locate it on a map nor measure it in miles as we do places on this earth. This is why it is a condition as well as a place.

Peace on Earth

The text says Satan is bound, shut up in the abyss, and a seal is set upon him that he should not deceive the nations any longer until the thousand years are ended. Since the fall of man, the Devil has been the god of the world, reigning under restraint from God. Sin and death have been the dominating principle in the entire material creation. Not only are all nations at peace among themselves, but also the whole creation is at peace. It will literally be fulfilled that the lion and the lamb shall lie down together; the child shall play safely in the presence of what is now the deadly serpent; the desert shall blossom like the rose; righteousness shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

The Loosing of Satan

It is stated in the Greek text that it is necessary for Satan to be loosed a little time at the end of the thousand years. The necessity of his being loosed presents an interesting question. We can either deny it or seek an explanation for it. Usually, it is best not to deny plain literal statements, and such is what we seem to have here. This matter is to be taken up later in the chapter; so let it suffice to say here that the Devil is loosed to prove that some men will still choose him instead of Christ even after Christ has given them a heavenly reign on earth for a thousand years.

THE SAINTS REIGN WITH CHRIST

Revelation 20:4-6

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them, and the souls of those who were beheaded on account of the witness of Jesus and on account of the word of God, and who did not worship the wild beast nor his image and they did not receive the stamp upon the forehead and upon their hand; and they lived and reigned as kings with Christ a thousand years. And the others of the dead did not live until the thousand years should be ended. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one having part in the first resurrection; upon these the second death does not have authority, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and they shall reign as kings with him the thousand years.

The Reigning Saints

In this passage we are faced directly with the question of the relative positions of various groups of saved people in the Millennial kingdom. The fourth verse does not say who will sit upon the thrones mentioned. We may or may not suppose the other groups described in the verse constitute the enthroned ruling group. Together with the fifth verse, it is evident all the saved will be included in the reigning group, for none are excluded from it except the unsaved, who do not live again until the end of the thousand years. But there may be a distinction between the enthroned group and other groups who reign in various capacities without being enthroned. Daniel 7:22, 27 says the kingdom shall be given to the saints. The word saint, or holy one, does not appear to embrace all the saved; rather, it refers to separated and faithful saved people. As to groups, it is applied to Israel and the church. But it is only the church which will be judged to have been faithful at the time of the enthroning. Besides this, Matthew 19:28 says those who have

followed Jesus will sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Some consider this a promise to the apostles as such; it seems much better to apply it to all New Testament saints who have followed Jesus in Scripture teachings and doctrines. Therefore, preference is given to the view that it is the faithful church as his bride that is enthroned with Christ. Remember, Jesus loved the church, gave himself for it, and purchased it with his own blood. This is not church salvation, but it certainly is a clear distinction of the church from all other saved people.

Classes of Saved People

With reference to reigning with Christ in the Millennium, two things should be remembered: all the saved will be glorified and will have all trace of sin removed from their being; and, every saved person will be judged and rewarded according to his works. It should also be remembered that this judgment and rewarding will be modified by the ability and opportunity of the individual while he lived in the world. This latter fact automatically divides the saved into a number of distinct groups. The first group that comes to mind is composed of those who have died in infancy and those who are mentally incompetent. They are saved without even taking the initiative of making a choice for themselves. They have done no godly works, but they have not neglected any opportunities either. Who will presume to say what their position will be in the kingdom? Next, there are people who lived under five distinct dispensations in Old Testament times. With each new covenant and dispensation, additional revelation was given to certain groups of people. Israel had far more revelation than the people who lived from Adam to Noah. Inevitably, then, they will have far more responsibility as they stand in judgment before God. By the same token, people who live during the Church Age will have far greater responsibility than Israel had under the law, for a far better covenant and revelation is given to the church than was given to Israel. Who is capable of judging all these people according to their works, opportunities, and abilities? The answer is: no one but God. The church saint can get far closer to Heaven in this life than any believer since Adam, and this fact will affect positions in the Millennium. If we say God is unjust in this distinction, Paul says the clay should not argue with the potter about how it is formed. Let us recognize these evident facts and not be too presumptuous in our judgment of the saved. It is our business to be found faithful in what we have, and it is the business of God to do the judging. It is also his business as to what dispensation we live in. It is no discredit to Moses that he did not have a church, but he certainly missed a great deal in life by not having one. The greatest weight of condemnation will fall upon

those saved people who reject church truth in the present age. This is the sorer punishment of Hebrews 10:29.

Non-Beast Worshipers Reign

It is specified that those who do not worship the beast are the ones who reign with Christ. If we should apply this in the narrowest sense, we would come up with the conclusion it is only the saved who live in the last days that will reign with Christ, for it is only they who literally reject the reign of the beast. This is why the position is taken that beast worship goes clear back to Cain in the spiritual sense. It is also intimated that only martyrs will reign with Christ. This is why it is believed all who would die for the faith are placed on a level with those who did die for it in the judgment of God. This situation stresses again the idea that people will be judged according to their abilities, opportunities, and knowledge, as opposed to what they may or may not have actually done. God looks on desires and intentions, and his viewpoint is not confined to looking on tangible accomplishments and results.

Various Positions in the Millennium

All of the saved up to the first resurrection are definitely included in the Millennial reign in these verses. This fact does not destroy the idea that one might be a door keeper, while another is enthroned with Christ. The reigning is viewed as including all glorified saints who perform any kind of service in kingdom affairs. Certainly, there will be a vast difference between a faithful Baptist preacher and a Protestant preacher who has perverted practically every Bible doctrine. But this Protestant will still be included in the reigning group, though his station will be very low. The subjects of the reign will be the nations still living in the flesh, including Israel. Those saved in the Millennium will be glorified when they are a hundred years of age, and the unsaved will die when they are a hundred years of age. This idea is based on the Greek text of Isaiah 65:20. Thus, saved people will be passing over out of the flesh into the glorified group constantly during the thousand years reign.

No Saved in the Second Death

All the saved people, described in various terms in this passage, escape the authority of the second death. Elsewhere, we are told the Lake of Fire is the second death. This Lake of Fire is that eternal place of punishment of the unsaved. The saved are chastised in grievous ways in this life, and it appears that some will receive scathing rebuke at the judgment seat of Christ and suffer loss as to

rewards; but, no saved person will ever experience the Lake of Fire. It is for the Devil, his angels, and men who wilfully reject salvation.

SATAN LOOSED A LITTLE TIME

Revelation 20:7-10

And when the thousand years are ended, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and he shall go forth to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to assemble them unto the war, of whom their number is as the sand of the sea. And they went up upon the breadth of the earth, and they encircled the stronghold of the saints and the beloved city; and fire came down out of the heaven and devoured them; and the Devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where also the wild beast and the false prophet are, and they shall be tormented day and night into the ages of the ages.

Some Still in Rebellion

One of the strange events of the Bible is the loosing of Satan upon the earth again after he has been bound for a thousand years in the abyss and Christ has ruled the earth in peace and righteousness during the same thousand years. We must find the explanation in the choice which God has always granted to man. It is evident from the creation story that Adam was given both the ability and the opportunity to choose his destiny in Christ. After the fall and the removal of the tree of life from the reach of man, he would have had the ability to choose, but not the opportunity. However, Christ was immediately presented to him as the slain Lamb, and thus his privilege of choice was restored, which was taken away in the removal of the tree of life. Down through the ages, God has granted every responsible sinner the opportunity of choosing his eternal destiny in Christ. From Adam to the Millennium, the Devil has been the god of the world, and sin and death have been the ruling principle. But God has kept the way of man's choice open in Christ, nevertheless. During the thousand years reign, Christ will be the God of the world, and peace and righteousness will be the governing principle. But men in the flesh will still have their sovereignty of choice, and they will have the depraved nature which they inherit from Adam. Thus, in the Millennium, some will accept Christ from the heart and be saved; others will reject him and remain in sin. When the Devil shall be loosed out of the abyss for a short time, the unsaved will turn to him very much as they do in the present age. This situation should teach us that the choice of man himself is the

final deciding factor as to his eternal destiny, for Satan is able to gather a mighty army after Christ has reigned among men for a thousand years. If religious and political leaders today could see this one fact, they would not be so optimistic about bringing in peace and righteousness by their own efforts.

Gog and Magog

When Satan is loosed at the end of the Millennium, he will go forth to gather Gog and Magog for war. Magog was a grandson of Noah through the line of Japheth. Josephus says that when the nations were formed after the flood, Magog settled on the northern border of the nations in Asia. Ancient Greek writers called this people Scythians. However, both names seem to have been applied to all remote nations of northern Asia and Europe in Bible times. Thus, Magog, Scythian, and barbarian all referred to the northern nations of Asia and Europe, which were largely isolated from the civilization that prevailed in the region of the Bible land. The thirty-eighth and thirty-ninth chapters of Ezekiel speak of Gog as a prince and Magog as a land of the remote north. This prince and his people are to come against Israel in the last days. Gog, from the Hebrew language, seems to describe a high, mighty, and prideful person. It appears that Gog is the beast or Antichrist, and Magog consists of Russia and the other nations which will embrace communism in the last days. However, these nations are to be destroyed in Armageddon just before the Millennium. The Gog and Magog of our present text are at the end of the Millennium. There is no difficulty in the matter of these two Gogs and Magogs a thousand years apart if we remember that in Bible times Gog might describe any vicious and barbarous military leader, and Magog might describe any ungodly, barbarous, and warlike people. The position is taken here that the Gog and Magog of Revelation are not the same as the Gog and Magog of Ezekiel.

A Great Army

At the end of the Millennium, the Devil gathers an army in number as the sand of the sea. They come to Jerusalem and set themselves in array against it. But, apparently, there is no battle, for fire comes down out of Heaven and devours them. It seems they go only so far as to fully declare their evil intent, and this after there has been a thousand years' reign of peace on earth. Logically, this ultimate movement of evil men finally proves to the intelligences of the universe that the condemnation of sinners to the Lake of Fire is the only recourse that God has concerning them. They demand to taste the final fruits of sin regardless of what their environment may be.

An Army But No Battle

One very perplexing situation here is the army of Satan going to battle against the glorified saints. The text certainly says they encircle the camp of the saints and the beloved city, which evidently is Jerusalem. Who are in and around this city? Christ will be enthroned in Jerusalem, and he will be surrounded in various capacities and various degrees of nearness by all the glorified saved. In addition to these, there will be saved Israel dwelling in and about the city. Also, it seems that saved people from all over the earth will come to Jerusalem to worship. From these things one would not think unsaved people would dare to come against the mighty Christ and the mighty host of his undying saints. But will the unsaved be able to see the glorified saints? Will they have any evidence of their presence except what the saved say about them? No one saw the transfigured Christ but three disciples, and no one saw the resurrected Christ except his chosen disciples. Is spiritual perception necessary to see a glorified body? It appears that all men will see Christ and the saints when he comes in glory, but this may be a special manifestation which will not continue to be seen by the unsaved. Perhaps Israel and other righteous nations yet in the flesh is all that the army of Satan will see when they come against Jerusalem. Once again, we are reminded that we know very little about the infinite realm of the future.

The Lake of Fire

The Devil is cast into the Lake of Fire along with the beast and the false prophet. He is tormented there into “the ages of the ages.” This is how the Scriptures express eternity. The beast and the false prophet are still alive and burning after a thousand years in the Lake of Fire.

Aims and Destiny of the Devil

Writers of the past have pictured the Devil as being the victorious tormentor of the unsaved in Hell. This is far from being a true picture of the situation. The Devil is to be the chief victim of the Lake of Fire. It is impossible to know how much this rebellious and ambitious angel foresaw of the results of the victory or defeat in the project that he set out to accomplish. He was a spirit being of infinity to begin with, and this means he did not have the limitations of knowledge that men have. On the other hand, we are forced to conclude there are certain bounds and limitations even in the realm of the infinite. Did the Devil foreknow he would end up as the chief victim of the Lake of Fire? It seems very doubtful indeed. In the first place, he hoped to succeed. If he had succeeded, he would have gained the position intended for Christ. In such an event, he would

either have dethroned God; or, he would have made him the God of evil. One of these two things is what the Devil originally intended to do. The real rivalry of the Devil is against Christ, and no attempt is made to say what the result would have been if he had succeeded; but, it seems inconceivable to suppose the Devil started out on his career with full knowledge of what the end of it would be. We are now thinking of him when he was a holy angel who had not yet made his choice. When the Scriptures describe him as being in a great rage because his time is short, it is after the works of Christ are so far advanced that it is evident Satan must suffer ultimate defeat. This is long after he made the choice that settled his destiny before the creation of man. When he made his choice, he saw himself as the supreme god, or as the one occupying the position of Christ with God, and this is why he dared to choose the career he chose.

Destruction of the Army

When the Devil assembles his army at the end of the Millennium, God summarily destroys this army with fire from Heaven. Why has he not always dealt thus with the forces of evil? It seems this has been one of the great questions of men down through the ages. Why, for instance, did God not destroy Cain when he went out from the presence of the Lord with wrath in his heart and murder on his hands? The answer lies in the fact that God is not only merciful and longsuffering in his dealings with his creatures, but also he proves the justice of his dealings to all the intelligences of the universe. At the end of the Millennium, the Devil will ultimately have proven the evil of his nature and the destructiveness of his rule. All the same time, Christ will ultimately have proven the righteousness of his nature and the beneficence of his rule. On the basis of this evidence, God is justified before all intelligent beings in casting the Devil into the Lake of Fire and destroying his army on the earth.

THE WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT

Revelation 20:11-15

And I saw a great white throne and the one sitting on it from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and a place was not found for them. And I saw the dead, the great ones and the small ones, standing in the presence of the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of the life; and the dead were judged out of the things written in the books according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and

they were judged every one according to their works. And death and Hades were cast into the Lake of Fire. This is the second death, the Lake of Fire. And if anyone was not found written in the book of the life, he was cast into the Lake of Fire.

Various Judgments

Down through the ages there have been many judgments upon mankind. Some of the more notable ones are the flood, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the captivities of Israel, and the nations in Armageddon. In all of these instances, God sends chastisement or destruction upon people without calling them formally before himself for trial. There are two judgments which are different from these and many others that might be enumerated. These two are commonly called the Judgment Seat of Christ and the White Throne Judgment. These are different from others in that the subjects of judgment are formally called before God and are finally judged and sentenced according to their works. Though they are alike in the finality of their purpose, these two are vastly different in some of their details. The Judgment Seat of Christ is immediately after the rapture of the saints and before the Millennium. The White Throne Judgment is at the end of the Millennium and after the loosing of Satan for a little time.

Two Final Judgments

The Judgment Seat of Christ is called in the Greek *bema*, which is a judgment seat on which an inferior ruler may sit. The only inferiority of Christ at the time is that fact that his works have not yet been completed, and he has not won complete victory as yet. At the White Throne Judgment, the throne is called *thronos* in the Greek, signifying the seat of a ruler with absolute power and authority. At the time, the works of Christ will fully justify God in sitting as an absolute ruler. At the first judgment, Christ is judge of the works of all saved people up to the time of the judgment. At the second one, God is judge of all unsaved people, and they are also judged according to their works. Both judgments are of people made immortal in the sense that they cannot die any more. Both judgments are eternal as to their consequences. The unsaved will suffer forever in Hell according to their works in the world. It seems evident that rewards of the saved will continue with them forever in Heaven. The main proof of this is the fact that both Israel and the church will maintain their identity forever in Heaven. The book of life proves the unsaved are unsaved. Glorification proves the saved are saved.

Two Renovations of the Earth

At the time of the White Throne Judgment, the earth and the heaven flee from the presence of him who sits on the throne: this is God. There appear to be two renovations of the physical creation between now and the final Heaven Ages. At the time Christ comes in glory, there are earthquakes and a shaking of the heavenly powers. This shaking of the heavenly powers refers to the sun, the moon, the stars, and the earth itself. Apparently, this upheaval returns the physical creation to the conditions that existed before the fall of man and the cursing of the earth. In other words, it is the returning of the whole earth to the conditions that existed in Eden, which means ideal climatical conditions. This statement is modified by the fact that there will come plagues upon the lands of the people who will not go to Jerusalem to worship God in the Millennium (Zech. 14:16-19). This fact teaches us the earth will not be finally committed to the ways of holiness in the Millennium, though righteousness, peace, and plenty are the general rule. The fruits of sin will have an access to the earth in the judgments of God on rebellious people.

The Final Renovation

At the end of the Millenium, the very fundamental nature of the earth itself will be changed into an unchangeable eternal condition. If II Peter 3:10 is viewed alone, it seems to indicate the complete renovation takes place at the second coming of Christ. But, if we view it in the light of its full context and in the light of other Scriptures, we still come up with the conclusion that the full renovation of the earth comes at the end of the Millennium, not at its beginning. It is of this thousand years period, specifically, that Peter says a thousand years is as one day with the Lord. From this standpoint, the day of the Lord begins with the Great Tribulation and continues to the beginning of the Heaven Ages. There is no inconsistency at all if we see the day of the Lord as the full period of final conquest of the Lord. Besides these things, we shall see in later chapters that the sun, the moon, and the sea will not exist in the final state of the earth. These will exist through the Millennium. Therefore, it is at the end of the Millennium and the beginning of the Heaven Ages that the present earth and physical heaven flee from the presence of God, who sits on the throne. It is not believed the earth will be destroyed, but it will be made a fit dwelling place for a holy God and a holy people.

Judgment of the Dead

The dead, both the great and the small, stand in judgment before the white throne. The dead here evidently means both the

spiritually and the physically dead. Up to now no unsaved person has been raised from death, nor has any unsaved one been finally judged. They all stand before the white throne together. Some may ask for proof there are no saved people in this judgment. All of the saved are raised and judged at the Judgment Seat of Christ during the Great Tribulation (I Thess. 4:14-17; II Cor. 5:10). Multitudes will be saved during the Millennium after the saved of the past have been glorified and judged. Why should these not be raised from death and judged at the time of the White Throne Judgment? The answer is that there appears to be no proof the saved die during the Millennium. Isaiah 65:20 seems to teach they do not so die. Besides this, it would be hard to prove there will be any cause for death of saved people during the reign of peace. Therefore, the evidence is that all the saved will have been glorified at the time of the White Throne Judgment.

The Books

At the White Throne Judgment, books are opened; and, another book is opened which is the book of life. It is clearly evident from the twelfth verse that the books contain the record of the works of the unsaved, who are being judged. The book of life is a difficult problem from the nature of its usage in the Scriptures. There is a widespread idea that it is the roll of the saved. There is a serious objection to this idea in that there is the threat of names being erased from the book at Revelation 3:5. The Bible nowhere makes the threat that saved people will fall out of salvation. It is suggested that up to the Millennium the book of life is the book of the faithful. With the Millennium, all the saved become faithful. Hence, the saved and the faithful become identical groups, and the roll of the saved is also the roll of the faithful. Therefore, the roll of the saved is present at the White Throne Judgment as evidence that the names of the unsaved are not written therein.

The Dead Brought Forth

It is specified that the sea, death, and Hades give up the dead who are in them. It seems to be necessarily implied that the graves also give up the dead who are in them. That is, it is an all inclusive statement. It means to teach that all the unsaved dead will be called before the white throne for judgment. When Jesus was telling his disciples about his coming, they asked where he would come. He spoke two parables to teach them his coming for his saints would be universal. One of these was that as the lightning is seen clear across the heavens, so his appearance would be seen everywhere by the saved. The other was that wheresoever the fallen body is there will the eagles be assembled, teaching them that none of the saved

living or dead would be overlooked. It will be the same with the unsaved. Some bodies fall into the sea, and the remnants of them are scattered the length and breadth of the sea, but they will be assembled and raised from death at the proper time. Death, as used here, appears to be a general term including both physical and spiritual death. Hades is specifically the prison house of the spirits of the unsaved, as in the sixteenth chapter of Luke. Thus, the teaching is that the entire realm of death, including the earth and Hades, gives up the dead in them to stand before the White Throne Judgment. There is no escape for sinners in the universe when God calls for them to stand in judgment.

End of Death and Hades

At the time of this judgment, death and Hades are cast into the Lake of Fire. Death is the result of sin, and after the White Throne Judgment, there will be no more death as we now think of it. Paul says the last enemy to be destroyed is death (I Cor. 15:26). And this enemy is clearly destroyed at the time of the White Throne Judgment. Sin and righteousness will be completely separated. There will be two reasons why the saved do not die any more: first, they are glorified, and therefore they are not subject to death; and second, they are completely separated from sin, and thus there is nothing in them or their environment to cause death. But what about the unsaved, who live in the presence of all sin forever? We must note the difference between death and the second death. Death in the ordinary sense is the separation of body and spirit and the destruction or dissolution of the body. The Scriptures clearly reveal that the spirit remains alive and conscious in death. The Scriptures reveal again that resurrection works a radical change in the unsaved as well as in the saved. We say the saved are glorified in body and therefore not subject to death any more. The unsaved are not glorified, but they are made immortal, indestructible, or undying in the physical sense. This change is wrought by Christ in the unsaved as well as in the saved (I Cor. 15:22). The result is, though the unsaved suffer the second death forever, no one dies any more in the way we think of death. Therefore, death and Hades, relics and receptacles of death, are cast into the Lake of Fire because there is no further need for them. They go into the Lake of Fire on the same principle as sin in general and every hurtful thing.

The Angels of the Devil

The question has been raised as to where the angels of the Devil are during the Millennium. It seems the Scriptures say nothing specifically on this subject. However, logic dictates clearly where they will be. They will be chained in the abyss along with the Devil

himself. If the angels of the Devil, or demon spirits, are not other angels who rebelled and fell with Lucifer, then we apparently have no adequate explanation of the origin of these messengers of evil. Apparently, they have been present with the Devil throughout his career on the earth. When the Devil is cast out of Heaven, his angels are cast out with him (Rev. 12:9). Luke 8:31, Matthew 8:29, and Mark 5:10, strongly imply that the demons fully expect to be sent into the abyss at some future time. Therefore, we conclude that the angels of the Devil suffer exactly the same fate as that of their lord during the Millennium.

Why Men Go to Hell

Why will many people reject salvation and remain in sin and rebellion against God in the Millennium? Sin as a positive and aggressive force is banished from the earth during the Millennium. Righteousness and peace are the positive working principles, and everywhere there are evidences to prove righteousness is better than evil as a way of life. In spite of these facts, many people still stand in rebellion against God. This proves beyond a doubt that an evil course in life does not originate in the environment of man, but it has its origin in man himself. No man has ever been condemned because of his environment, but his condemnation has come from what is in his own heart. If this is not true, then God is a respecter of persons, and fatalism is ultimately true. The writer will not remotely admit either of these as possibilities. Man is depraved by nature, but he has the ability and the facilities either to accept or reject the fruits of this depraved nature. His choice, and not his environment, determines his final destiny. And, the choice has always been kept open in Christ (John 3:18).

Chapter 17

The Holy Jerusalem

REVELATION 21, 22

Chapter and Verse Divisions

These two concluding chapters of Revelation and the Bible are treated together because there is no logical division between them where they are divided in the common version. If there is to be a chapter division, it should be between the fifth and sixth verses of the twenty-second chapter, for there is where the division in thought is. Every experienced Bible student knows that in many instances the chapter and verse divisions are arbitrary and absolutely without logic. Every Bible student also knows that the chapter and verse divisions are not a part of the original record at all, but they are a work of relatively modern times. Originally, each book of the Bible was considered as a connected whole, and every part of each book was viewed as related to and dependent on every other part in the arriving at the sense of each part and of the book as a whole. The chapter and verse divisions are very convenient for the purpose of citing references, but they have contributed greatly to the erroneous method of interpreting verses apart from their immediate and remote context. It is a common thing, even among Baptists, to interpret a verse in such a way that it will contradict its immediate context, or at least ignore its context. This is usually done to force the given verse to conform to a theological pattern which is already in the mind of the interpreter. Above all else, in this study an effort has been made to induce the student to see Revelation as a connected and logical whole, all of whose parts are vitally related to one another.

Five Topics in These Chapters

There are really only three main topics of discussion in these two chapters, but they must be divided into five different topics in order

to discuss the verses consecutively. The three topics are: first, a view of the New Jerusalem; second, retrospective promises and warnings; and third, testimony to the authority of the book of Revelation. When these topics are presented as the Scriptures give them, we have the following topics: first, a preliminary view of the New Jerusalem; second, retrospective promises and warnings; third, an extensive view of the New Jerusalem; fourth, other retrospective promises and warnings; and fifth, testimony to the authority of the book of Revelation.

Beyond the Tribulation

As we come to these concluding chapters, the beast, the false prophet, the Devil, demon spirits, and all sinners have been cast permanently into the Lake of Fire, which is the second death. Thus, we have under consideration only those peoples and powers who shall go into the eternal Heaven Ages. Of course, as mentioned, there are two sections of the chapters which are retrospective, and they have an application to us who live throughout the Church Age. In view of the coming Heaven Ages, they give promises to the saved and faithful, and they give dire warnings to both the unsaved and the unfaithful saved.

The Heavenly Environment

When we study the Heaven Ages, we are necessarily left in great uncertainty as to many details. The reason for this is our lack of knowledge of the physical conditions that shall prevail in the heavenly situation. We cannot comprehend a creation that does not have the curse of sin upon it. The heavenly creation will go one step beyond Eden and beyond the creation in the Millennium in that it will be impossible for sin or any of its effects ever to touch it. It will be an ultimately glorified creation. We do not know the difference between time and eternity. We do not know the difference between the limitations of the finite creation and the lack of limitation of the infinite creation. We do not know how the laws that govern our physical lives now compare with those that will govern them in Heaven. For instance, will we draw body energy and sustain physical life from eating food, breathing air, etc? We simply do not know. Jesus ate food in his glorified body, but he performed feats in his glorified body that were absolutely contrary to the laws of the creation as we know them. The Scriptures drive us to the conclusion there is very much of reality in Heaven, but it is a reality of which we can know very little in our present state of life. This leaves us in the predicament of not knowing how to apply the description of the New Jerusalem which we have in these chapters. By faith we understand it will be far better than we are able to imagine.

A PRELIMINARY VIEW OF THE NEW JERUSALEM

Revelation 21:1-5

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea is not any more. And the holy city, new Jerusalem, I saw coming down out of the Heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall tabernacle with them, and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be with them, and he shall wipe every tear out of their eyes, and death shall not be any more, neither grief nor outcries nor suffering shall be any more; because the first things have passed away." And the one sitting upon the throne said, "Behold I make all things new." And he says to me, "Write thou, because these words are faithful and true."

Destruction of the Former Creation

In his vision of the consummation of things, John says he saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and earth had passed away. This subject has been noted previously, but there are certain other details we need to note here. II Peter 3:10-13 speaks of this same destruction and remaking of the physical heavens and earth. The destruction is to be wrought by fire. It is paralleled and prefigured by a former destruction of the world order by water. Some believe this former destruction was before the creation of man, and it is briefly stated at Genesis 1:2. Others believe it was the flood of Noah's day. In either instance, Peter lays the stress, not on the destruction of the earth itself, but on the destruction of the laws which governed the physical creation. For he says it was the *kosmos* which was destroyed, and not the *ge*. The *kosmos* was the creation working under definite laws. The *ge* was the earth itself as a physical fact. Both the earth and the working laws of the creation were destroyed before the creation of man. In the flood, the laws of the creation do not appear to have been destroyed by the flood. But, if the *kosmos* which Peter mentions refers merely to systems of human society, then the *kosmos* was destroyed by the flood. The reader may have it his own way, for no attempt is made here to defend one position above the other. However, it is believed the former destruction fits the parallelism of our present situation better.

New Physical Laws

The main point in the foregoing discussion is that Peter does not appear to say the chemical elements of the physical creation will be destroyed in the remaking of the heavens and the earth. The word

which is translated “elements” at II Peter 3:10, *stoicheia*, is commonly used in the New Testament, and it has a meaning quite different from the chemical elements of the creation. It means “simple as opposed to complex; imperfect as opposed to perfect; elementary as opposed to complete.” It describes the toddling walk of a baby as opposed to the sure stride of a strong man. The result is we are certain the laws of the creation as we know it will be destroyed, and a new set of perfect laws will govern the creation in the Heaven Ages.

No More Sea

It is said the sea will not be any more. At Genesis 1:2 the earth and the waters seem to be mixed in utter confusion. At Genesis 1:6, some of the waters seem to be driven outside the atmosphere of the earth, and the others are confined to the earth. In the ninth verse, the waters left on the earth are gathered together into one place, and both the seas and the dry land appear. It is possible Genesis 2:5, 6 indicates there was only enough water on the surface of the earth in the original creation to meet the needs of this creation. But from Adam onward, there have been the seas, which serve chiefly three purposes: (1) they are the source of the rainfall that comes on the earth; (2) the living things in the seas are an important source of food for men; and, (3) the seas are the great purifying agent from the much pollution that is produced on the earth. We can only speculate that none of the offices of the sea will be needed in the Heaven Ages; hence, there will be no more sea when these begin.

Three Views of the Bride

The view has been expressed that we have two distinctive presentations of the bride of Christ at Revelation 14:1-5 and 19:7, 8. What is the relationship of the New Jerusalem as the bride to these former situations? The fourteenth chapter presents the bride in Heaven shortly after the first resurrection. The nineteenth chapter presents the same group as the bride immediately before they come with Christ to set up his reign upon the earth. The time element in the fourteenth chapter is about the middle of the Tribulation period; and, in the nineteenth chapter, at the close of this period—a space of about three and one half years apart. The New Jerusalem as the bride is a thousand years later at the end of the Millennium and the beginning of the Heaven Ages. In the former instances, the bride is composed of the faithful of the church, or the faithful of the Church Age, which means the same thing since there are no faithful outside the church during the Church Age. The New Jerusalem as the bride seems to be composed of the church and the nation Israel. Probably, it also includes such characters as Abel, Noah, Job, Melchisedek,

Hiram of Tyre, the queen of Sheba, and others who were faithful to what they knew of God, but who did not come under either of the two great covenants which God has made with special groups of people; that is, Israel and the church. Perhaps we could get a safer list of the faithful outside these two groups from the eleventh chapter of Hebrews.

How Many Groups in Heaven

The philosophy on which the foregoing suggestions are made is this: at the close of the Church Age, only the church will have been found faithful to the covenant that is delivered to them. At the end of the Millennium, Israel will have been faithful to their covenant in all its details. Thus, Israel will be worthy of being included in the bride at the end of the Millennium. Despite this, both these groups will maintain their identity in the Heaven Ages. Actually, this viewpoint leaves the predicament of not knowing whether there will be a third group in Heaven who were faithful to the revelation which they had, or whether all the saved outside Israel and the church will be just one group. The present Scripture situation would seem to indicate Heaven will be inhabited by three distinct groups: Israel, the church, and the rest of the saved. Logic would seem to dictate that there will be four groups: Israel, the church, the faithful in what they had, and the unfaithful to what they had. If the view has been intimated earlier that all the saved will inhabit the New Jerusalem, that view is here renounced, for there will be kings and nations who will walk in the light of the city and bring their glory into it. The real issue is whether such characters as Noah will be in the city with Israel and the church, or whether they will be outside with the nations. Noah was under a covenant and made definite religious attainments, but he was not under either of the special covenants, which are with Israel and the church. It has been pointed out that there were others who were faithful to the revelation they had, but they were not under the special covenants. Will they be inside the city or outside with those who were unfaithful in the world? No attempt is made to answer this question.

Place of the New Jerusalem

There has been much controversy about whether we go to Heaven, or whether Heaven comes to earth when the final Heaven Ages begin. Those who say we will go to Heaven to live forever seem to base their view on two things. First, the Scriptures clearly teach that we will go to wherever God is at the first resurrection for a time. Second, they argue that the earth is no fit dwelling place for the glorified redeemed. Those who argue that the earth will be the eternal home of the redeemed also have two chief arguments to

support their position. First, the earth will be fully purged and glorified to make it a fit dwelling place for God and the redeemed. Second, the present passage, and perhaps others, teaches that the New Jerusalem comes down to earth, and there is no indication of its ever being removed from the renovated earth. There is also the question of why the earth is purified and made permanent if it is not as a habitation for the saved. There is still further the point that God put man on the earth for permanent habitation there when he made him, and God finishes all things that he begins except the salvation of rebellious sinners and the glorification of rebellious angels. Thus, the coming down of the New Jerusalem is the permanent moving of the heavenly powers to the glorified earth. The earth will be the eternal home of the redeemed.

No More Tears

It is stated that God will wipe, or erase, every tear from the eyes of his people. From this statement some have derived the idea that there will be tears in Heaven. The general picture is that there will be no cause of sorrow in Heaven; hence, there will not be any tears. Tears can be erased by the removal of the cause of tears just as readily as they can be removed by the wiping away of tears that actually exist. Thus, we logically conclude that there will not be any tears in the heavenly environment because there will be no cause for them.

No More Death

In connection with the erasing of tears from the eyes of the people of God, some other things are enumerated as being removed from the presence of the people of God. There will be no more death, for every cause of death shall have been removed by the works of Christ. All death along with its causes and effects will have been cast into the Lake of Fire. Then the common version says there will be no more sorrow, crying, or pain. These words are close synonyms both in the English and the Greek languages. They are meant to cover all the field of sorrow, pain, and torment, including the causes and effects of these. In other words, all ills are removed and all good remains. The reason given is that the former things are passed away. These former things include all things which the Devil has touched and perverted since the beginning of his influence in the created universe. There seems to be an absolute and eternal separation between the good and the evil as the Heaven Ages begin. It might be observed, incidentally, that there will be no tears because there will be no crying.

All Things Made New

The fifth verse presents God as sitting upon the throne and saying he makes all things new. There is a world of import in this situation when we see all of its implications. Let us review again the position of God and his intentions and goals. Before the creation, God stood as an absolute sovereign with no one to oppose his will. In his sovereign will, he determined to make the creation and bring it into eternal harmony with himself through the works and virtues of the eternal Son. As soon as he had made angels and men, he had creatures who could and did oppose his will. It was not his desire or intention that they should set themselves in opposition to his will, but he gave them the ability and opportunity to do so, in that he gave them their privilege of choice in Christ. It was his will that they should choose the sealing virtues of Christ and be sealed forever in the heavenly estate. But, since angels and men rebelled against God, he has had opposition to his absolute rule of righteousness. And, just as the Scriptures indicate in many places, there have been principalities, powers, and thrones set up in opposition to God, both in heavenly places and on earth. God has always sat as the supreme sovereign, but for the sake of legal rightness, he has allowed these opposing thrones and principalities to stand until such time as they are absolutely defeated by Christ on principles of perfect righteousness. When the righteous works of Christ shall have been completed in detail and in totality, then all opposing principalities will be banished to the Lake of Fire, and God will stand as the absolute ruler. He will make all things new in that he will bring all things pertaining to the heavenly situation into that permanence and glorification which he intended from the beginning of the creation. We probably cannot understand it, but holy angels and holy men will retain their individuality and personality, but their wills will be in agreement with that of God in all details. It is in this environment that God decrees he will make all things new. It is all accomplished through the righteous works and infinite virtues of Christ, the eternal Son of God, who became the Son of Man. When we see these things, we will have no inclinations towards fatalism, but we will marvel anew at the wisdom, grace, power, and virtues of God as exhibited through Christ. And, we will exclaim with Paul, "Who hath known the mind of the Lord; who will explain him?"

RETROSPECTIVE PROMISES AND WARNINGS

Revelation 21:6-8

And he said to me, "They have come about. I am the Alpha and

the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one thirsting out of the fountain of the water of life freely. The one winning the victory shall inherit these things, and I will be to him a God, and he shall be to me a son. But to the timid and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and fornicators and sorcerers and idolators and all falsifiers, their part is in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

Alpha and Omega

It is God who sits on the throne and speaks to John in the sixth verse. He further identifies himself as Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. The words, beginning and end, are meant to explain the usage of Alpha and Omega, these being the names of the first and the last letters of the Greek alphabet. The allusion is another reminder that God existed before all things, and that he will still be the supreme sovereign when the creation is finally resolved into its eternal heavenly estate.

The Prophetic and Retrospective Views

At the beginning of the sixth verse, the common version says, "It is done." The best Greek texts say, "They have come to pass," or "They are come about." There is a peculiar mingling here of the prophetic vision with the retrospective view. In the vision, John is seeing the accomplishment of the Heaven Ages. In retrospect, he is receiving admonitions and promises that pertain especially to himself and to all who will hear during the Church Age, for the whole vision is given to the church throughout the Church Age. This point is stressed many times in Revelation.

The Water of Life

God promises to give the water of life freely to those who thirst for it. Evidently, this is a figurative promise of spiritual blessedness to those who seek it. There are many promises pertaining to salvation in the Bible which cannot be restricted to any given phase of salvation to the exclusion of the other phases. Certainly, the new birth is one step in the receiving of the water of life. But such passages as Hebrews 2:3; 11:39, 40; John 17; and many other New Testament scriptures definitely teach there is a greater salvation in consciousness in the Christian experience during the Church Age than was enjoyed by the saints of Old Testament times. Thus, we take of the water of life freely during the present life if we are faithful. The final stage of receiving this water is eternal and complete in the Heaven Ages. It seems this whole ground is covered in the promise that those thirsting shall take of the water of life freely. It embraces the salvation of the spirit in the new birth, the

salvation of the mind in life, and the full salvation including the body which begins with the resurrection.

The Victory

The overcoming, or winning of the victory, likewise comes in three stages. We win the victory in gaining eternal life when we experience the new birth. Some win a great victory by living a life of faith in the present world. For this there is assurance, peace, and joy in the present life and a reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ. The third stage in the victory comes in the resurrection of the body, and it seems to be final and complete. Furthermore, it appears that man is passive regarding this stage of the victory. Hence, the practical challenge to us is to be saved and then live a life of godliness in order to be accounted as victors. The overcoming consists in believing and doing what the Scriptures teach as these teachings apply to us. This means serving Christ in true church capacity after we are saved.

Sons of God

The eighth verse says the victor shall be a son of God. The child relationships are expressed by several words whose meanings are definite. For instance, there is the born child, the novice, the child in training, the heir, and the mature son. The mature son is the one meant here. Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:5; and Ephesians 1:5 teach that we come into the position of mature sons when we come into the church. Galatians 4:6, 7 and Hebrews 12:5-8 teach that we come into the spirit of sonship by growth in grace, which is accomplished in the church. But by the time we reach the Heaven Ages, all the saved will be in both the position and the spirit of mature sons. This is probably what the promise means specifically, though it certainly has a retrospective application to the present life.

Sinners in the Lake of Fire

Eight manners of sinners are enumerated, and it is said they will have their part in the Lake of Fire, which is the second death. Some utterly false notions are based on such Scripture statements as this. Some build the doctrine of salvation by works on them. They say if a saved person commits these sins he loses his salvation. Such ideas are pure presumption, and they are not in accord with the plain teachings of Scripture. All men, both the saved and the unsaved, sin as long as we are in the flesh. James 2:10 says the one who offends in one point of the law becomes guilty or liable to the penalty of all the law. So, by nature we are all these things and more before the law of God, and our just destiny would be the Lake of Fire. But the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanses us from all sin (I John 1:7).

Those sinners mentioned in our text are simply the ones who do not have their sins cleansed in the blood of Jesus by repentance towards God and faith in Jesus Christ. There is no salvation by works nor falling from grace in the whole situation, nor in the entire Bible for that matter.

Rewards for Our Choices

There are promises of the good things Heaven has in store for those who go there, and there are dire warnings for those who go to Hell. These things are revealed to us while we live in the world and have the opportunity to decide our destiny by our choice in Christ. In view of these revelations of what the future holds, the most important thing in life is that we accept Christ as our Savior. But our responsibility is not ended when this is done, for there is also the matter of seeking to turn others to righteousness after we ourselves are saved. We can do this efficiently only by upholding the full body of revealed truth to the unbelieving world; and this will require the best of our time, courage, wisdom, and steadfastness. Furthermore, there are rewards for faithful service in the present life, in the Millennium, and even in the Heaven Ages.

AN EXTENSIVE VIEW OF THE NEW JERUSALEM

Revelation 21:9—22:5

And there came one of the seven angels who have the seven vials which are filled with the seven last plagues, and he talked with me saying, "Come thou, I will show to thee the bride the wife of the Lamb. " And he led me away in spirit upon a mountain great and high, and he showed to me the holy city Jerusalem coming down from the heaven from God, having the glory of God; the light of it was like a precious stone, as a jasper stone clear as crystal, having a great and high wall, having twelve gates, and names written upon them, which are of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel. On the east three gates, and on the north three gates, and on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city having twelve foundations, and upon them twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And the one speaking with me had a gold measuring reed in order that he might measure the city and the gates of it and the walls of it. And the city lies four cornered, and the length of it is equal to the width. And he measured the city with the reed unto twelve thousand furlongs; the length and the width and the height of it are equal, and he measured the wall of it a hundred forty-four cubits, the measure of a man, which is of an angel. And the building of the wall of it is jasper, and the city is

pure gold like to clear glass. The foundations of the wall of the city with every precious stone are adorned. The first foundation is jasper, the second is sapphire, the third is chalcedony, the fourth is emerald, the fifth is sardonyx, the sixth is sardius, the seventh is chrysolite, the eighth is beryl, the ninth is topaz, the tenth is chrysoprasus, the eleventh is jacinth, the twelfth is amethyst. And the twelve gates are twelve pearls: every one of the gates of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold as transparent glass. And I did not see a temple in it; for the Lord God Almighty is the temple of it, and the Lamb. And the city does not have need of the sun nor of the moon that they should shine on it, for the glory of God lighted it, and the lamp of it is the Lamb. And the nations shall walk through the light of it, and the kings of the earth shall bear their glory into it; and the gates of it shall not be shut by day, for there shall be no night there; and they shall bear the glory and the honor of the nations into it. And not by any means shall there enter into it any common thing and the one doing abomination and false things; but, rather, the ones written in the book of the life of the Lamb. And he showed me a river of water of life shining as crystal, going forth out of the throne and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it and of the river, hence and thence, is a tree of life making twelve fruits, every month giving the fruit of it; and the leaves of the tree are unto the healing of the nations. And every curse shall not be any longer. And the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his bond servants shall serve him, and they shall look on his face, and his name shall be upon their foreheads. And night shall not be any more, and they do not have need of the light of a lamp and the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall shine upon them, and they shall reign as kings into the ages of the ages.

Two Views of the New Jerusalem

In the beginning of the twenty-first chapter, John tells us he saw the New Jerusalem coming down from God and that God on the throne spoke certain things to him. The present passage says one of the seven angels having the vials filled with the seven last plagues showed him the more complete vision of the New Testament Jerusalem. It was also one of these seven angels who showed John the judgment of the great harlot in the seventeenth chapter. This fact suggests that there is a parallelism between the two scenes. The parallelism is by contrast. In the seventeenth chapter, all the forces of false religion are gathered together in the harlot system, and they are visited by dire judgment. In the present situation, all the forces of true religion are gathered together, fully prepared for the Heaven Ages, and they come into their eternal inheritance.

False religion has its great day in the present age, and true religion has its great day in the Millennium. The peculiar distinction of the church is that it wins its victory in the present age while the Devil is having his greatest religious triumph in the world.

The Wilderness and the Mountain

When John saw the judgment of the great harlot, he was carried in the Spirit into a wilderness or desert region. This signifies that he went into a region of spiritual desolation in order to see the full environment in which the harlot operates and will be judged. When he was to see the full bride, or wife of the Lamb, he was carried in the Spirit upon a great and high mountain. This signifies the exact opposite of the other situation. He was carried into a region of infinite spiritual richness—even into the environment of Heaven itself.

Classes of the Saved

A much-discussed question is the nature of the judgment of the saved and the time and durations of the rewards we may receive. Of necessity, our views of such matters are too elementary to be trusted very completely. Israel and the church will maintain their identity as groups in the Heaven Ages. This means that the individuals composing these groups will have definite distinction as members of the groups. The rest of the saved seem automatically to divide themselves into three groups. First, there are those who die in infancy, who are saved unconditionally, and who have no choice either as to salvation or service. Second, there are those with little revelation of truth, who are automatically banished from the highest service because they do not know how to serve faithfully. Third, there are those saved people who reject the revelation as to service which they have. How will these three groups be disposed in the heavenly situation?

Factors Determining Rewards

The Bible insists many times that God is no respecter of persons, but we can apply this only to the opportunity of salvation itself. As to choosing his special peoples and giving revelations to and through them, it seems God has acted within his own counsels and pleasure. From this angle, he loved Jacob and hated Esau before they were born or had done any good or evil of themselves. And, whether it is according to his sovereign pleasure or whether it is according to a necessary sequence of events, we must admit that the church has a fuller revelation, a better working plan, and a surer guidance than the men of Noah's day had. These things being true, we must conclude that God's judgment of his people and the rewards his

people receive hinge on several different factors. Some of these are: the dispensation in which we live; the local environment in which we live, as helping or hindering our faithfulness; the amount of revelation or correct religious teaching which we have; and, the personal traits of character which we have inherited, which either help or hinder Christian faithfulness. One person is not due much credit for the fact it is easy for him to exercise faith, and another is not to be much blamed because he is a great doubter by nature. It seems that God rewards his people on the basis of native ability, general environment, and personal opportunity. But the rewarding is also based partly on personal experience and actual attainment while we live in the world. Therefore, we must conclude God makes, or allows, distinctions among his people in the world, and these distinctions will follow us into the Heaven Ages. Probably, the right explanation of this whole matter is that sin is the ultimate cause of limitations of ability and opportunity that men have in the world. In this case, God is not a respecter of persons in any sense, but he does the best possible with the material he has to work with and in the environment in which he must work in dealing with men.

Israel in the City

The New Jerusalem is built in the form of a square with a high wall about it. There are three gates in each of the four sides of the wall, and the name of one of the tribes of Israel is written on each gate. The tribes are not identified as to position in this situation. It has a great similarity to the position of the tribes as they encamped around the tabernacle during their wilderness journeyings; see the second chapter of Numbers. It also bears a resemblance to the city described in the forty-eighth chapter of Ezekiel. But the disposition of the various tribes in these two situations is not the same. It seems all we can say definitely about Israel is that she is identified with the city with all her tribes intact. This appears to mean that Israel as a nation will maintain her identity in the Heaven Ages, and her people will have their habitation inside the city.

The Church in the City

The wall of the city has twelve foundations, and the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb are written on these foundations. This definitely identifies the church with the city, for the apostles and the church are so intimately tied together that there seems to be no way of separating them.

Meaning of the Gates and the Foundations

Since the names of Israel are written on the gates of the city, logically those who go into the city must go through Israel. This

may signify two things. First, people must be saved by the plan that was given to the world through Israel. Second, Israel must come into the full salvation of the Millennium before anyone can go permanently into the New Jerusalem.

The wall is built on the foundation of the apostles, or the church. This signifies that, whereas Israel did not preserve the truth delivered to her, the church has preserved the body of truth delivered to her. And it is by the truth preserved in the church that Israel is to be brought into salvation as a nation. Israel crucified her Messiah, but the church has preached this Messiah to the world under such opposition as the people of God never experienced in any previous age.

Dimensions of the City

According to the dimensions given, the city is about thirteen-hundred seventy-nine miles in length, breadth, and height, being built in the form of a cube. If we reduce the city to the approximate living conditions which exist in apartment buildings in our cities, and if we suppose four-hundred billion people have been born down to the present, which estimate seems high, then there is room in the city for approximately three-thousand times as many people as have been born. These figures are only rough estimates, of course, but they are sufficiently accurate to give us some conception of the immensity of the city. They also disprove the infidelic claim that the city is not large enough to accommodate the people who are supposed to go to Heaven.

Gold and Precious Stones

In the description of the city, much is said about pure gold and precious stones of many sorts. Probably, all of these have a typical significance for us, but it is a matter too complex to go into here. We cannot understand the real meaning until the resurrection anyway. Generally, these are identified with Eden, the garden of God, in the twenty-eighth chapter of Ezekiel. They are also associated with the tabernacle and temple worship of Israel; see Exodus chapter 28. In the world as we know it, gold and precious stones arouse the base passions of covetousness and greed in men. They will be appreciated for their beauty and permanence in the heavenly situation.

No Temple

There is no temple in the city because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. In the worship of Israel, the tabernacle, and later the temple, was the place where God met with his people in Spirit form. The building itself was all the people

actually saw. In the heavenly city, God will be with his people in a physical body, and his glorified people will have a spiritual perception which we do not have in the present world. Therefore, we will not need a physical site for a spiritual meeting with the Lord, for he will actually be with us. Hence, there will be no more need for a temple.

No Darkness

In the description of the holy city, the sun and the moon do not light the new earth because God and the Lamb are the light of it. There is no night because darkness seems to be a product of sin, and it disappears from the scene along with sin. No defiled thing enters into the city, because all such will have been consigned to the Lake of Fire. Of the puzzling subject of the book of life, the Scriptures will harmonize if we suppose it is the book of the faithful; and all the saved will be enrolled as faithful at the time we enter into the Heaven Ages.

The Street and the River

The way the King James version reads, we seem to have one tree of life standing on both sides of the river, which would be a physical impossibility as we know things. What the Greek text appears to say is that the tree of life stands between the street and the river, which, of course, makes sense. Apparently, the street and river run parallel and the tree stands between them.

The Tree of Life

We must regard the tree of life as real and literal, but with a reality probably different from what we now know. The tree bears twelve manners of fruit, corresponding with the twelve months of the year. But if there is no sun or moon, why should there be months? Such problems as this is why we keep referring to a reality which is foreign to things as we know them. The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations, and this very fact seems to imply that the fruit of the tree is for food. Why should the glorified saints need food and healing? Let him answer it who can. But the tree of life was in Eden before the fall, and Genesis 3:22-24 indicates man could have gained eternal life by eating from it. Thus, we conclude that eternal life will be replenished from time to time by our eating of the fruit of the tree of life. It is easier to say such situations as this are purely figurative, but this plan will take all reality out of Heaven if followed to its ultimate conclusion. If we say the tree is literal, we must also say the river of water of life is literal. But, there seems to be no reason why we should not accept them both literally.

The Throne of God

There is no temple in the New Jerusalem, but there is the throne of God. The time of God's meeting with his people through mediums is past; hence, there is no more temple. But the time of God's absolute, eternal reign is just begun; therefore, there is more cause for a throne than ever before in the history of the universe. Note that the Lamb also sits on this absolute and eternal throne. It should be remembered that every intelligent being is in full and willing harmony with God in this enthronement, and this is why it is spoken of as an absolute rule.

The True Bond Servants

The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in the New Jerusalem, and his bond servants shall serve him. Perhaps this is the clearest representation of the meaning of the bond servant in the Bible. No doubt, these bond servants are the redeemed, for they have his name written on their foreheads. First, they are his bond servants because he has paid the full and righteous price for their ownership in the redemptive work of Christ. Second, they occupy fully the position of bond servants in that they serve their Lord according to his will in every detail. Third, they are in the true spirit of bond servants in that their highest wish is to do exactly what their Lord would have them do. This is the ideal relationship between the master and servant. Israel is often called a bond servant since they served God under the Mosaic code of laws. But this relationship was far from ideal because the people were unfitted to serve under the rule they had. But the people are fully fitted to serve God in the Heaven Ages.

The Reigning as Kings

The fifth verse of the twenty-second chapter says they shall reign as kings into the ages of the ages. It is a bit indefinite as to just who these are. They are the bond servants of the Lord, they have his name upon their foreheads, and they walk in the light of the city. But whether they are confined to those who live in the city, or whether they include all of the saved, it is hard to say. Once again, let us note the matter of the reality of Heaven. Two extreme positions are often taken on this subject. First, some spiritualize all the reality out of Heaven so that it becomes an unreal dreamland. Second, some attempt to give it a reality like reality as we know it. Apparently, both of these are wrong. The implication is that there are kings and nations outside the city who come into the city to worship and bring their glory into it. This looks much like the nations coming to Jerusalem to worship during the Millennium. But how the details of the two situations compare it seems impossible to

say. So, we are left in doubt as to whether there will be a group in the holy city reigning over the kings and the nations, or whether all the glorified redeemed will be in the position and attitude of reigning kings. It could be that life in Heaven will be much as life would be to us now with all the bad features removed and all the good features remaining and intensified. If there is not something permanent about the things that make life attractive to us, it is strange that we should love these things so much.

RETROSPECTIVE PROMISES AND WARNINGS

Revelation 22:6-15

And he said to me, "These words are faithful and true, and the Lord, the God of the saints of the prophets, sent his angel to show to his bond servants the things which are necessary to come about in haste. And behold I come quickly. Blessed is the one keeping the words of the prophecy of this book. " And I, John, am the one hearing and seeing these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. And he says to me, "See thou do it not. I am thy fellow bond servant and of thy brethren, the prophets, and of the ones keeping the words of this book: worship thou God." And he says to me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the season is near. The one being unrighteous let him be unrighteous still, and the one being defiled let him be defiled still, and the one being righteous let him be righteous still, and the holy one let him be holy still. Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me to give to every one as his work is. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. Blessed are the ones washing their robes in order that their authority may be over the tree of life; and by the gates they may enter into the city. Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the murderers and the idolaters and every one loving and making a falsehood."

Two Time Viewpoints

Revelation 22:6-15 is retrospective in its import. As we advance through Revelation, there are two time patterns that we must keep in mind. One of these is general, the other is specific. Some situations embrace a time element that might be anywhere from the beginning of the creation to the entrance into the Heaven Ages. In fact, the working of the beast principle, for instance, embraces all time from the fall of man to the casting of the beast into the Lake of Fire at the beginning of the Millennium. On the other hand, as we advance through Revelation, there is a definite progression in time

from the beginning of the Great Tribulation to the consummation of the ages at the end of the Millennium. Mainly, this progression in time is only through the Tribulation period itself, for it is during this period that the consummation of the ages is largely brought to pass. However, in the development of the book, this time progression actually extends on through the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth and into the timeless Heaven Ages. From this standpoint, we have arrived at the Heaven Ages, but the present passage departs from this point in time and returns to the time when John received the revelation. This was near the beginning of the Church Age, while John actually lived in the world. What he says in this section has to do mainly with his own era of the Church Age. For it is to the church and the Church Age that Revelation has a practical application. In other words, for the benefit of the church, Revelation draws back the curtain on near and remote events of the future. Then, with various aspects of these future events before us, John goes back in time to warn and admonish us as to how we should conduct ourselves in life. This is the main import of the present passage for study. Actually, it is the Heaven Ages viewed from the vantage point of the Church Age. Though it is a very complex matter, an effort has been made throughout this study to keep these two time viewpoints distinct.

An Angel Speaks

Apparently, the one who speaks with John in this passage is the one of the seven angels having the vials of the wrath of God (Rev. 21:9). At Revelation 22:12, 13, it appears that Christ himself is the speaker. It seems to be the same situation which we have many times in the Scriptures wherein an angel speaks as though it were God himself speaking. Apparently, it is the angel speaking for Christ in these verses.

The Imminent Coming

It is said the things shown to John will come about in haste and that the Lord is to come quickly. This is a point that is set forth repeatedly in the retrospective passages in Revelation. The import is that just as soon as the logical and necessary movements are worked out during the Church Age, Christ will move to bring the world to its consummation. This means the second coming of Christ is imminent at all times, and that he will come just as soon as world conditions are right for his coming.

Christ as Lord

There is a variation in the reading of Revelation 22:6. The revised texts say, "the Lord the God of the spirits of the prophets," instead

of, “the holy prophets.” In the various names of God in the Old Testament, Jehovah generally refers to Christ acting in authority and power. In the Greek New Testament, *kurios*—Lord—is the word that stands instead of Jehovah. Thus, the idea is the same as that depicted at the beginning of Revelation. It is the Christ who lived, died, rose and ascended to Heaven in victory who gives the vision to his bond servants, the saints of the Church Age.

The Seven-Fold Blessedness

The seventh verse says those who keep the words of the prophecy of the book are blessed. Seven times Revelation pronounces blessedness upon those who are faithful to keep the prophecy (Rev. 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7; 22:14). Seven times, also, the faithfulness of Christ, his word, and his witnesses is asserted (Rev. 1:5; 2:13; 3:14; 17:14; 19:11; 21:5; 22:6).

John Induced To Worship

On two occasions, John sought to worship an angel. The first instance is at Revelation 19:10, where he is shown Christ with his bride coming to take up his reign on the earth. The second instance is at Revelation 22:8, where John has just seen the final bride of Christ, the holy Jerusalem, coming down to earth. In the first instance he sees the Millennial reign instituted; in the second he sees the heavenly reign instituted.

The Prophecy Not Sealed

John is told not to seal up the prophecy of the book. At Daniel 8:26 and Daniel 12:4, the prophet is told to seal up the prophecy of the last days, because the prophecy is for many days. But John is not to seal up the prophecy, because the season for its fulfillment is near, or imminent.

Because the season is near and Christ will come quickly, the unrighteous, the defiled, the righteous, and the holy are to remain as they are. This is a difficult statement to interpret, but it seems to indicate the course of religion in the world will not undergo any radical changes during the Church Age. This age is different from any other in that the church is to continue unchanged to the end of the age, bearing faithful witness to the truth of the gospel. But, it will not convert the world, nor reform it politically and socially. It also suggests that people will become more intense in their religious or irreligious positions as the age advances. Infidelity in many forms is more intense now than ever before, and world conditions are driving the faithful to a firmer stand as the age advances to its close. Jesus drew a line of clear distinction between true and false

religion. This line has been somewhat obscured in modern times, but it will be redrawn clearly again in the last days.

The Washing of Robes

Those are blessed who wash their robes in order to enter by the gates into the city. There are many statements in the Bible which are better viewed relatively than absolutely. This seems to be one of them. There are three steps, or stages, in the purification of people to enter into the holy city. The first one is to be born again (John 3:5). The second one is to live a righteous religious life (Eph. 5:25-27). The third one is the redemption of the body, which comes in the resurrection (Rom. 8:23). It seems all these are involved in the washing of the robes, but there is a special application to those who wash their robes by faithful living in the present world.

The Outer Darkness

Somewhere outside the city are the dogs, the sorcerers, the fornicators, the murderers, the idolaters, and every liar. The fifteenth and sixteenth verses clearly divide humanity into two groups. Those of the first enter into the holy city; those outside are described as all manner of sinners. We must say these two groups are the saved and the lost. Are these unclean ones just outside the holy city, or where are they? The Bible often speaks of a place of outer darkness. This sometimes means the earth in the last half of the Tribulation period, but the real meaning seems to be the darkness outside the presence of God. In other words, the outer darkness is the Lake of Fire, where all the unsaved will be banished from the presence of God. They will be in this outer darkness, not because they were by nature dogs, sorcerers, etc., but because they refused to be cleansed in the blood of Christ from the sin that made them such things. The earth will be the eternal home of the redeemed, but the Bible does not tell us where the Lake of Fire will be. Ancient writers believed one must cross a deep, wide, and fearful chasm to reach the final abode of the unsaved. It seems we are unable to improve on this idea. Remember this passage is retrospective, and it admonishes all to prepare for the holy city and escape the outer darkness.

TESTIMONY OF AUTHORITY OF THE BOOK

Revelation 22:16-21

“I, Jesus, sent my angel to bear witness to you of these things in the churches. I am the root and the generation of David, the shining dawn star.”

“And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come thou.’ And the one hearing let him say, ‘Come thou.’ And the one thirsting let him come, the one willing let him receive the water of life as a gift.”

“I bear witness to every one hearing the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone shall add unto them, God will add unto him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his paid from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book.”

The one witnessing these things says, “Yea, I come quickly.” Amen. Come thou, Lord Jesus.

The grace of the Lord Jesus with all.

Testimony in the Churches

At the close of Revelation, the testimony to the authority of the book is essentially the same as at the beginning. Jesus sent his angel to bear witness of these things in the churches. In the first chapter, Jesus sends his angel to bear witness to John, who in turn is to write the things which he sees in a book and send them to the seven churches. These churches are to read and keep the things which they receive. Much stress is laid on the fact the book of Revelation is to and for the churches. It is the book of mysteries to the apostate religious world. No one can believe or understand much of Revelation unless he has a fundamental and literal belief in the Scriptures in general.

The Dawn Star

Jesus here describes himself as the root and kind, or generation, or offspring, of David, and the shining dawn star. David was the first king of Israel whom God actually received as legitimate and acceptable to him. It was with David that God made the unconditional kingdom covenant (II Sam. 7). The conditional part of this covenant dealt with Solomon and his immediate seed; the unconditional part of it pointed a thousand years into the future to Christ. It is with reference to his kingship over Israel that he is called the Son of David. The shining dawn star means the same as when Jesus said he is the light of the world. It is intensely interesting, however, that Helel, or Lucifer, or Satan, is called the son of the day dawning at Isaiah 14:12; and, he says he will ascend above the (other) stars of God in the thirteenth verse. This makes it appear that Christ supplants the fallen angel who became the Devil as the dawn star.

The Bride Says Come

There are three who say, “Come,” and there are two who are to respond to the invitation. The Spirit, the bride, and the one hearing

are to say, “Come,” and the one thirsting and the one willing are to come. The Holy Spirit performs a number of different offices in the world. One of these is directly related to the church, and it is that office in which the Spirit came upon the church on Pentecost; see the second chapter of Acts. Of this office, John 16:8 says the Spirit will convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. It is this office in which the Spirit says, “Come,” because it is so closely allied with the bride, or the church. The bride seems to be the faithful of the church. There are many saved people who are members of scriptural churches, but who are not faithful to the full revelation and to the opportunities which they have. They are not saying, “Come,” in the full and accepted sense; therefore, they are not of the bride. The bride is composed of those who are doctrinally and practically pure in their religious lives (Eph. 5:25-27). This restricts the bride not only to church membership, but also to faithfulness in the church. The evidence is there are many saved members of scriptural churches who are spiritual adulterers; these adulterers are not a part of the bride, though they are saved and scripturally baptized.

The Hearer Says, “Come.”

In addition to the Spirit and the bride, the one hearing is also to say, “Come.” This is usually interpreted as meaning every saved person is authorized to tell unsaved people to come to Christ and be saved. This is only the secondary application of the passage. The primary application is that every obedient child of God is to say, “Come.” The invitation is not only to be saved, but also it is to come into the church, where the individual may come into the full knowledge of the truth. The New Testament invitation is twofold: first, to sinners to be saved; then, to saved people to come into the church and worship and serve there. It is inconsistent and unscriptural for Baptists to insist that the Great Commission is given only to the church, and then say most of the admonitions, instructions, and promises of the New Testament are to all the saved. Again, let it be pointed out that the only new thing in the New Testament is the church and details pertaining to it. Salvation by grace on the merits of the blood of Christ is as old as the fall of man in Eden. The dispensation of grace has to do with God’s dealing with his special people in the world by the plan of grace, as opposed to the plan of law, whereby he dealt with Israel from Mt. Sinai to the cross. The present special people of God is the church, and saved people outside the church are outside the new covenant of grace just as much as saved people outside Israel were outside the covenants made with Israel. In our passage, the bride is the church from the institutional viewpoint, and the ones hearing and saying,

“Come,” are individual members of scriptural churches. They are saying, “Come and be saved.” Then they say, “Come into the church and have the life saved for Christ also.”

Two Invitations To Come

There are two qualifications stated concerning the ones invited to come. The invitation is to the thirsting one and the one willing to come. Some will interpret this as simply the one thirsting and willing to be saved. However, the New Testament invitation is twofold throughout. First, sinners are invited to come to Christ in repentance and faith and be saved. Second, every saved person is just as urgently invited to come to the Scripture rule of faith and practice in the living of his life as a saved person. A saved person outside the church, which is also outside the realm of obedience, receives very little of the water of life while he lives in the world. The water of life is the assurance, peace, joy, and hope which an obedient child of God has in the world. Every saved person should have these blessings for a time after he is born again, but they will not remain unless he follows the line of Christian obedience and service.

A Solemn Warning

There is a solemn warning to every one hearing the word of the prophecy of this book. Some regard the book as the entire Bible. It seems safer to regard the book as Revelation. Again, some regard the warning as applying to all humanity, but logic appears to forbid this viewpoint. Men lived and died for more than four thousand years before Revelation was written. Since it was written, it has been accessible to only a small percentage of mankind. The great masses of the heathen nations probably could have had the Scriptures, but they have not had them. Does the warning of our text apply to them? Probably not. All men have had ways of knowing the great fundamental doctrines of total depravity, salvation by grace, and eternal security, but much of the human race has not had the opportunity to know such specific doctrines as are taught in Revelation—such as the plagues that are to come in the Tribulation period and the blessings that are to come in the Millennium. Therefore, it is believed the warning of our text is to those of the Church Age who have an open Bible in their hands. It would have a special application to religious people who ignore or explain away such doctrines as the literal second coming of Christ preceded by Antichrist; the perpetuity of the church; the premillennial coming of Christ; the Millennial reign; and eternal Heaven and Hell. It is an especially terrible warning to the apostate religious groups in these last days in which we live.

Adding to the Prophecy

There is a peculiar grammatical structure in the clause, "if anyone shall add to them," in the eighteenth verse which makes "them" indefinite as to its antecedent. It does not agree in gender with either "words" or "prophecy" or "book," and it does not agree in number with "prophecy" or "book." But it is apparent from the nineteenth verse that "words" is its antecedent. Therefore, the meaning is that no one is to add to the words of the prophecy of Revelation. The penalty is that the plagues of the book will be added to the one so doing. This seems to mean he will suffer the plagues of the Great Tribulation, for it is chiefly the plagues of the Tribulation that are written in the book of Revelation.

Those Suffering in the Tribulation

Again, we are faced with a vexing question which we have met several times before. Just who will suffer the plagues of the Tribulation? As to the last days themselves, all the saved will be taken out of the world in the rapture before the worst plagues begin. Thus, it would be the saved who escape the plagues and the unsaved who would suffer them. However, this viewpoint fails to answer two questions which inevitably present themselves. First, why should the unsaved of the Tribulation period suffer so much more than the unsaved of past generations? Second, why should saved people who add to the prophecy of the book escape the penalty for so doing? As to the first question, we have a parallel in the generations before the flood. No doubt, sinners dying shortly before the flood contributed as much to the coming of the flood as did those actually living when the flood came and destroyed them all. Yet, the former group escaped the actual judgment of the flood, while the latter suffered this judgment. These facts teach us that sinners will receive the reality of their judgment after they leave this present world. What happens to them in death, and later in the Lake of Fire, transcends by far any judgment which any of them may suffer in the present world. This fact also gives us the clue to those saved people who add to the prophecy of the book. It is believed saved people have done this all down through the Church Age. None of them will suffer the worst plagues of Revelation. But all men, both saved and unsaved, are to be judged as their works shall have been. Therefore, probably in the unveiling of truth that comes in death, at the judgment seat of Christ, and during the Millennium, the saved who add to the book will receive judgment for their deeds. If these things be true, then it is still the unsaved living in the world at the time of Tribulation who will suffer the plagues thereof.

Taking from the Prophecy.

In the matter of God's removing one's part from the tree of life and out of the holy city, we are faced with the same problem. But the issue is so clear and insistent here, that there is no chance of evading it or modifying it. We must either explain it scripturally, or we must admit our inability to do so. The question is simply: Who will have their part taken from the tree of life and from the holy city? The easiest way is to say all the unsaved will have their part taken from these, and all the saved will have their part retained in them. This is the way Baptists have dealt with this matter when it comes up in many situations in the Scriptures. But the issue here, as in many other situations, is not whether or not people are saved, but it is whether or not they have dealt in integrity with the word of God and with the testimony of their lives. In the present instance, the issue is whether people have taken from the prophecy of Revelation. The position has been taken that many saved people down through the ages have added to and taken from the word of God in their religious beliefs and practices. People add to and take from the word of God when they practice sprinkling for baptism. This is only one of a hundred examples that might be given. Yet, as Baptists, we admit that many such people are eternally saved, just as we ourselves are. The answer that all saved people will keep the commandments of God, which we have used to get us over difficult situations, simply will not stand the test. The Bible is full of evidence to the contrary. Moses, as a saved man, taught a theological untruth when he smote the rock the second time in the wilderness, and Peter taught such an untruth when he taught circumcision is necessary to salvation. Moses died in the wilderness for his error, but he did not lose his salvation for it. We must seek a better solution for our present dilemma.

Division Between the Saved and the Lost

At Revelation 22:14, 15, a contrast seems to be drawn between those who have authority over the tree of life and enter into the holy city on the one hand, and all manner of sinners, who are cast into outer darkness on the other hand. This situation was left in a rather indefinite state, but with two possibilities suggested. One was that only the faithful enter the holy city and have right to the tree of life. The other was that all the saved enjoy these privileges, and only the unsaved will be outside the city and barred from the tree of life.

Those Inside and Those Outside the City

We must take a more definite stand with reference to the present passage. It has been shown that saved people do add to and take

from the word of God. It is evident from many passages that so doing deprives us of blessings in the present life and rewards in the coming ages. Revelation 19:8 would cause us automatically to suppose the washing of robes in the fourteenth verse is the doing of good works. But these with washed robes are set in contrast with the dogs, sorcerers, adulterers, etc. of the fifteenth verse; and the two groups apparently include the entire human race. In other words, one group enters the city, and the other group is described as dogs, etc. Either we have dogs and sorcerers in Heaven, or we have all the saved entering the city and partaking of the tree of life. It is freely admitted that there will be rewards in the Millennium, and probably in the Heaven Ages. But this does not destroy the fact that salvation is entirely by grace in the first place, and all the power and virtue of it come from Christ, and not from us. It does not change the fact that in the new birth, in resurrection, and in Millennial training, all the saved are completely prepared for Heaven. Any other position belittles the saving power of Christ, and it magnifies a saving virtue in mankind which does not exist. Therefore, the washing of the robes and the right to the tree of life ultimately come to all the saved, so that all the glory goes to Christ, and none of it to worthless man. Let it be noted that this passage is a final summation of the whole Bible, and it is not given to teach the specific way or extent of salvation, as some have made it to do.

The Tree of Life and the Book of Life

Now let us attempt a summary that covers the eighteenth and nineteenth verses. As the Scriptures do everywhere, the fourteenth and fifteenth verses divide humanity into two groups as to final destiny. The saved enter the holy city, and sinners are outside in the Lake of Fire (Rev. 21:8). Sinners miss salvation and its present blessings, and they gain eternal torment. Saved people who add to and take from the word miss the blessings of salvation in life, and they have chastisement instead. They miss rewards in the future, and they suffer loss instead. This latter refers to the Millennium. In the Heaven Ages, there is still this lack of rewards that might have been earned in life, but their salvation will have been made complete in Christ, and they enter into the holy city right along with all the other saved. These are the general and uniform and harmonious teachings of the entire Bible, and we cannot consistently take an obscure passage like the present one and array it against the testimony of the whole Bible. We must rather interpret it in harmony with this uniform testimony, or leave it alone entirely. Having people fall from grace, or having saved people numbered with dogs and banished from the heavenly city makes the whole Bible a jumble of confusion and contradictions. Let

it be insisted that Heaven and Hell are the only two final abodes of man; and, the new birth is the deciding factor between the two.

Three Witnesses in Revelation

Throughout Revelation, three witnesses are prominent. First, the book begins by laying down the fundamental fact that it is the revelation of Jesus Christ. Therefore, Jesus is the ultimate witness throughout. Second, in the large majority of situations, various angels act as messengers between Jesus and John. Thus, angels are the second type of witness in the book. Third, John is the witness called, enlightened, and authorized to deliver the message to the churches. In effect, in the twentieth verse, John says that the angel says that Jesus says, "Yea, I come quickly." It is evident then that it is Jesus who is to come quickly. It has been pointed out previously that the saints should be looking for and expecting the coming of Jesus at all times throughout the Church Age.

The Lordship of Jesus

The response of John is the ardent prayer that the Lord Jesus should come. The title, Lord, refers to the one who acts in full authority and power. Jesus never assumed his full office as Lord while he was in the world, though he exhibited himself in this office in the cleansing of the temple, the miracles of healing, and the commission and promises given to the church. Every right thinking Christian looks forward with longing and anticipation to the time when Jesus shall come in his full office as Lord.

The Last Verse of the Bible

As to the closing verse of Revelation, the latest revised Greek text says: "The grace of the Lord Jesus with all." If we add all the variations to this text, it reads as follows: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ with all of you, the holy ones. Amen." Thus the book closes in the same vein in which it opens and continues throughout. It is addressed to the churches. They are to receive and keep the things written therein. In receiving and keeping the things written therein, they are numbered with the saints or holy ones, and the grace of God is with them on these conditions. May God grant that more Baptists will see the truth, discard Protestant philosophy of religion, and partake in a greater measure of the grace of God, which is reserved for a scripturally separated people.

