

**TEACHING AND
SERMONS FROM
THE BOOK OF
THE
REVELATION
OF JESUS
CHRIST**

by

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“Hooray For Jesus!”

Chapter 1

REVELATION – INTRODUCTION AND CHAPTER 1

To begin with, this final book of the Bible is titled “Revelation” not “Revelations”, as it contains one singular revelation. The Greek word for revelation *apokalupsis* is where our English word “apocalypse” originates from, and such a word brings to mind chaos and destruction and the end of the world, but that is not the theme nor the main point of this book, for the simple meaning of the word “revelation” is “an unveiling, an uncovering, to make manifest” which tells us there is something revealed and manifested before us in this book of Revelation. Now what is the revelation, what is unveiled or uncovered? **V1** gives us the answer, as it states the title and focus of this book, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*. The person of Jesus Christ in his true majesty is revealed, uncovered and manifested to us in this book. Contrary to what your Schofield study Bible may title it, this is not the “Revelation of John the Divine”, the Apostle John was the one who received it, but it is not his revelation. This book is about Jesus Christ, for within this book he is shown to us as the Priest-King, the Lamb of God, the Judge of all the earth, the Bridegroom of the church and the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. This entire book centers around Jesus and we are given the privilege of seeing him glorified in heaven and seeing the fulfillment of his sovereign purposes in the world, it shows us what is to come and the events that lead up to believers being united with him in eternity. And that is why this book is to be studied and understood, to give encouragement to believers, for it is not a sealed book, like some believe, thinking it is full of indecipherable meanings, where some have even avoided its study by claiming it’s too hard to understand, but instead we read the Lord’s instructions to John about this book in *Re 22:10 And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand. And if it is God’s word and it’s about Jesus Christ should we not delve into its depths to find out more about our wondrous Savior and our future with him? In fact ch1:3 states there is a special blessing for the reading and hearing of this book, Re 1:3 Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.* So we are going to do our best to delve into the depths of this last book of the New Testament.

Now as most of you know, the Apostle John, the beloved apostle, is the human author of this book, penning it around A.D. 96. He was the last of the surviving apostles, the others having been martyred for their faith while John had been imprisoned on the isle of Patmos for his beliefs. This was during a time of great persecution against the church. Jerusalem had been destroyed in 70 A.D., Nero had brutally persecuted Christians beginning in 68 A.D. Thousands had died or had been tortured or both, and many of the faith had become greatly discouraged. Then in 94 A.D. another cruel emperor took control, Domitian, and he too persecuted those of the Christian faith, as it was he who had John banished to the isle that was 40 miles off the coast of Ephesus. Yet it was here that John received the vision and the divine inspiration to write down the Revelation of Jesus Christ in order to give encouragement to believers during these trying times as well as those to come; in order to give them an optimistic outlook, as John is given instruction to write this book as a message of hope and strength, encouraging believers to look for the final victory in Christ when he returns to rule and to reign, as that is the overriding theme of the book: the return of Christ to defeat all evil and to establish his reign. And Jesus’ return is key, as the statement by Christ himself *Behold I come quickly* is one of the key phrases of this book. We see Jesus speaking of his coming multiple times in verses such as...

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

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

Re 2:16 *Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.*

Re 2:25 *But that which ye have already hold fast till I come.*

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

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

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

Re 16:15 *Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.*

Re 22:7 *Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.*

Re 22:12 *And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.*

Re 22:20 *He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.*

Jesus is returning, he is coming quickly to set things right, to judge sin, in order for righteousness and peace to come into the world, he is the blessed and lively hope we are to look for. In the book of Genesis everything went wrong but in Revelation Jesus makes everything right. In Genesis we saw the creation of the heaven and earth, in Revelation we see the destruction of heaven and earth and the creation of a new heaven and earth. In Genesis the sun, moon and stars give light to the earth, in Revelation these are replaced by the glory of the Lord *Re 21:23 And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.* In Genesis we have the fall of man and the loss of paradise, in Revelation we have the restoration of man and paradise returned. In Genesis man was driven from the Tree of Life, in Revelation he is invited back to it. In Genesis we have Satan's rebellion, in Revelation his final defeat and destruction. In Genesis sin enters the world bringing sorrow and pain and death, in Revelation a time is brought about when there is no more sorrow, crying, pain or even death. In Genesis we have man's disobedience and the Tower of Babel, in Revelation we have the final destruction of Babylon and the world systems it represents. In Genesis we read of the first woman, the first bride and how she was a helpmeet to Adam, in Revelation we see the bride of Christ, the New Testament Church and how she will share in eternal glory with Christ. In Genesis we had the first Adam where God began His redemptive work which is now completed in the Last Adam, in the Jesus of Revelation. This book is about how Jesus makes all things new, its about him, it reveals him as Lord of Lords! We see him not as God in the flesh but as God victorious. It is about how he will be crowned with glory, and appear in majesty as the Lion of the tribe of Judah with sovereign power to whom every knee shall bow and every tongue confess, so can you see why this is the last message to all the churches to encourage them? Their king is coming and he will make things right, this is the last message he has left to all the church!

Now as we study this book, I will try my best to show you who is speaking, what is happening, and where we are seeing events happen, for the scenes contained within this book shift from earth to heaven and back again quite frequently, so it can be easy to get confused, and that's the last thing I want to do. So as we begin, let me give you a very simple break down of this book, an outline per se. In ch1 we have the things thou hast seen, the vision given to John. In ch2-3 we have the things that are, the spiritual conditions of the church throughout the church age, from the beginning of the church to the rapture. And then in ch4-22 we have the things that shall be hereafter, the things that will transpire after the church is called home. So with that let's go ahead and jump in.

V1 *The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John:*

Like I have previously stated this is the message of the revelation, of the unveiling, of Jesus Christ, whom God the Father gave to him in order for Christ to give to his angel, a specific messenger who is sent to Christ's servant, the Apostle John, who gives this message to the churches, who are then commanded to give it to the world, *Re 22:16 I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches...* Jesus gave this message to show the servants of Christ, his followers, his believers, of what must shortly come to pass. Now as soon as I say that, 2000 years and counting does not seem that short, yet remember time is nothing to God, 1000 years is as a day, He is always in the present, He has no past or future, His simply is, He is the I AM THAT I AM. When Jesus states in *Re 1:8 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.* he does not alter that fact, for he voluntarily stepped into time in order to relate to man, he was a baby, he became flesh, he is the crucified Christ, and he will return, first to call home his bride, the church, during the rapture, and secondly at the end of time he will return to the earth as Lord and King. His first return has always been imminent since the promise was given, meaning his return for his bride could happen at any time, nothing is hindering nor need take place for his return to occur.

Mr 13:32 But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. 33 Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.

Mt 24:42 Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

Mt 25:13 Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

Ro 13:11 And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.

Jas 5:8 Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

And it is this Jesus and his soon return that John the Apostle bore record of.

V2 *Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.*

Remember it was John who wrote the Gospel of John and the epistles of I, II, and III John, where he wrote of Jesus as the Word, who bore record of the word of God... **John 1:1-14.**

Job 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 The same was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men. 5 And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. 6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. 8 He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. 9 That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. 11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not. 12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: 13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. 14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

John bares the record, gives us the report of the Word of God, of the testimony of Jesus Christ and wrote down all he saw that he was allowed to write. *1Jo 1:1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; 2 (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) 3 That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. 4 And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.* And what happens when we read what he wrote?

V3 *Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.*

This book begins with the possibility of a blessing and ends with a possibility of a curse... *22:18 For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: 19 And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.* But notice what John says here, he says not only must one read and hear, he must also keep those things which are written

therein. This blessing is repeated in *Re 22:7 Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.* The word “keep” means to hold fast to, to guard over, to watch over, meaning if the reader and hearer keeps the truth of this Revelation in their heart, they truly will have the blessing of hope, the assurance of victory and glory and escape judgment, wrath and the tribulation. Jesus says in *Lu 11:28 But he said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.* So we are to read this, hear this, keep this within our hearts of the future coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, for this is the word of God about THE Word of God who is Christ.

But notice John uses the word “prophecy” here in v3. And this truly is a book of prophecy. In fact of the 404 verses in this book, 256 of them (63%) deal in prophecy, of things to come. And notice how these prophecies are given to us in the use of signs and symbols, which is exactly how the angel that the Lord sent presented it to John. *...and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John:* That word “signified” means to show by a sign, so as we look at the book of Revelation we must understand the Lord makes great use of symbolism in order to speak to all the saints down thru history and not just to those at the time of the writing or those at the end of time, in order to make it applicable to all Christians of all times. Sometimes these symbols are explained, other times they are references to the Old Testament, and sometimes we just don’t know or fully understand their meaning. But symbolism is used as it can (usually) convey more information than just a single word or two.

For example: I can say “Her dress was as the color of the rainbow”, and you automatically think off all the colors that the rainbow consists of (red, orange, yellow, green blue, violet) instead of me having to describe her dress by reciting each color individually. Her dress is not really a rainbow, but it is similar to one, so by using the descriptive symbolic word “rainbow” one gets a picture of her dress. So John has recorded what he has seen in his vision, what he has been given in symbolism, and part of our task is to determine what those symbols mean or represent.

V4 *John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne;*

Beginning in v4, the Apostle John gives his greetings to the churches to which he is writing as well as describing the vision he had on the isle of Patmos. John first identifies himself as the human author of this book and who he is writing to, the seven churches in Asia, but as these churches correspond to the invisible church, the universal body of believers throughout the entire church age, (and we’ll look at that later) this is then written to all believers of all times during the age of the church. And much like the Apostle Paul, John begins with the greetings of grace and peace, of which both can be seen throughout this book: God’s grace upon those believers who are spared the great tribulation and have peace and assurance that they do not have to face such tragedy, to even those believers who go thru such a time for they are saved after the rapture, and then to God’s ultimate grace of victory and glory where believers will find true peace for all eternity.

This grace and peace that John greets the church with is from three distinct personalities, **first** it is from him which is, and which was and which is to come, and this is referring to God the Father. The Father is eternal, he always was, always is, and always will be in the future to come. He is I AM THAT I AM. And the reason I say this refers to the Father, is because we see the **next** person this message is from is God the Holy Spirit, which v4 describes as *the seven Spirits* (notice the capitalization there) *which are before his throne.* Now these are not seven different spirits but instead this describes only the one Spirit, the Holy Spirit, as the number seven here refers to the completeness and perfection of the Holy Spirit as well as the diversity of His activities, which we see referenced in *Isa 11:2 And the spirit of*

the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD. This description of the Holy Spirit is also used in the following verses...

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

Re 4:5 *And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.*

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

And here he is mentioned as being before the throne because it is he who carries out God's purposes, the purposes of the Father who is on the throne of heaven. And then in v5 we see the **third** person this message is from...

V5 *And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,*

So this grace and peace is from the Trinity, the Godhead, notice the three "froms" in v5-6, from God the Father, from God the Holy Spirit and from God the Son, Jesus Christ, of whom John gives three descriptive terms of here. First he calls Jesus the faithful witness, for Jesus came to this earth to be a faithful witness, or what we might call a prophet, which is one of the offices of Christ, who not only foretold of things to come, but forth told the word of God, as he declared the nature of sin, the need of righteousness, the nearness of judgment, and the news of salvation to a wickedly sinful world, he came to call sinners to repentance, to seek and to save, he came and faithfully fulfilled his duty as a witness to a lost and dying world. Second, John describes Jesus as the first begotten of the dead. In the book of Colossians we find a similar title, speaking of Jesus, Col 1:18 reads... *And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.* This does not refer to Jesus being the first one raised from the dead, or the first in some chronological order, but it refers to him being the greatest of authority and power of those raised. He is the preeminent one of those raised, the highest ranking, the first order, the most important, for it is thru His resurrection and life (in which he never died a second time like all the others) that we as His followers may be resurrected and have new life, eternal life, as well. Then thirdly, John calls him the prince of the kings of the earth. He is the highest of the kings, a prince of princes, a king of all kings, Jesus is the ruler of all rulers and thus the ruler of all the earth. *Ps 89:27 Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth. Re 19:16 And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.* In these titles we see three offices of Christ presented to us, prophet, priest and king, all of which are shown to us in the book of Revelation.

In the second part of v5 and into v6, John gives praise unto the Lord Jesus for what he has done for us.

V5-6 *5 And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, 6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

First Jesus loved us, loved us enough to come to this earth and suffer humiliation and shame for our sins, loved us enough to bear our pain and agony, loved us enough to die upon the cross of Calvary, loved us enough to shed his own blood for us. Blood that if we believe upon him washes us clean from our sin, because that blood was shed for us, for the punishment of our sin, it was the sacrifice that satisfied God's holy demands for our sin. He washed us from our sins in his own blood. *1Jo 1:7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*

But not only has he loved us and washed us clean, Jesus, by our faith in him, has also made us believers kings and priests, and we will see that truly fulfilled when we see him and become like him. For Jesus is a priest-king after the order of Melchisedec as seen in Hebrews ch7. We are kings who will reign with him, *Eph 2:6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:* We will judge others and even angels. As priests we currently serve him as such, for we believe in the priesthood of every believer, we can go to God at any time, and we are called to be a royal priesthood. *1Pe 2:9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:* We have been given the majesty of a king and the ministry of a priest thru faith in Christ. We have power with men and power with God. And for all this, all of what Jesus has done for us, we give praise unto Jesus Christ, John says unto him that done all this for us *to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

Previously we discussed that Jesus is going to return as promised. V1 said this MUST *shortly come to pass* and v3 said *for the time is at hand*. We also saw that one of the main thoughts of Revelation was “Behold I come quickly”. In fact, 1 out of 20 verses in the New Testament refer to Jesus’ second coming, which we now see referenced in V7.

V7 *Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.*

This depicts Jesus’ return to the earth, not his return in the air during the rapture as seen in I Thessalonians 4, where he comes as a thief, unseen and unexpected. Here he comes with clouds, which signify the glory and presence of the Lord, and here every eye shall see him, Jews and Gentiles alike, the entire world, and in this coming, the world will wail, will cry out, for he comes to judge sin and make war against unrighteousness. He does not come as a servant, or a lamb, but as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, as King, as Judge, as Victor. *Re 19:11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.*

Da 7:13 I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. 14 And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

Mt 24:30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Mt 26:64 Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

Ac 1:9 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. 10 And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; 11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

Notice how John ends v7. *Even so, Amen.* Even though the world will wail and be judged, even though there will be death and destruction, even though many will perish, and hell will be engorged with lost souls, even so, come Lord Jesus for there will also be justice and victory, sin will be no more and Satan will finally be defeated. John begins this letter much like he finishes it, *Re 22:20 He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.*

V8 *I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.*

Here we see John quote the words of the victorious Jesus, the very words of the Son of God. Jesus says I am Alpha and Omega, the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, this would be like us

saying A to Z, the beginning of the alphabet to the end. This symbolizes Christ's eternalness. The title Almighty denotes his ability to do anything and is used multiple times in Revelation (1:8, 4:8, 11:17, 15:3, 16:7, 16:14, 19:6, 19:15, 21:22). This shows his absolute omnipotence and universal rulership, he is in ultimate control. This verse also shows Jesus' claim of equality with the Father, that the trinity is truly 3 persons in 1, for as we saw in v4 God the Father was described as him which is, and which was and which is to come, and here we have Jesus' own claim to be the beginning and the end, which also is and was and is to come. He says the same thing in v11 and v17. John has mentioned the titles of Jesus, has given praise to Jesus, has spoken of the promise of Jesus to return, and now he reveals the power of Jesus to do all that has been described thus far, for Jesus is the eternal God, he is the third person of the trinity, he is the Almighty and has the power and authority to do what is described in this book of his revelation.

V9 *I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

Here the Apostle John breaks his thought process and introduces himself to the churches to whom he is writing, although they probably knew who he was or had at least heard of him as the last surviving apostle. Notice John doesn't use his title or position of authority here, he simply says I am your brother, a fellow believer, as well as a companion in tribulation, and he is not referring to the great tribulation here, but to their present time of sufferings. Remember the church was suffering great persecution during this time, what with Nero, Domitian, and all other such ungodly rulers that were very antagonistic to Christians. Jesus even said in *John 16:33 ...In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.* So John joined his brothers and sisters in sharing that persecution. But John also suggests there is more than the sufferings this world has to offer here, for not only is he a companion in tribulation but he says he is also a companion in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, he is a companion of the one who has overcome the world. John is a fellow sufferer, a brother in Christ, a member of the heavenly family, a citizen of the heavenly kingdom, and he shares with other believers not only tribulation, but patience and endurance, the holding fast in the waiting upon Jesus' return. He shares in their hope and the promise of which he now has more detailed information to add.

John says he is on the isle of Patmos, exiled from society due to the word of God that he preached and taught and the testimony he had of Jesus Christ as his Savior and Lord. Even the apostles were not immune to the suffering this world has to offer believers, Jesus wasn't immune to it either, as He suffered upon the cross, and thus too must his followers suffer in their walk thru their life on this earth. The Apostle Paul states in *Acts 14:22 ...that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. 2Ti 3:12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.* Now granted, many of us have not suffered anything close to what these Christians faced, but we all, at times, do suffer persecution, it may be mild but that does not make it any easier.

V10 *I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,*

John now gives more description of what transpired when he received his vision. He was on the isle of Patmos and it is the Lord's Day (Sunday). John was probably having his normal worship service on a Sunday and it must have been good for he said "I was in the Spirit". He is filled here with the Holy Spirit, possessed by the Spirit. The Lord shows up in his worship. And from behind him John hears a loud trumpeting voice, a voice of command and authority, a voice of majesty and power, a voice of a friend. And this voice says...

V11 *Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.*

This voice uses the very title John had quoted earlier, identifying himself as Alpha and Omega. This voice commands John to write what he sees in his vision and send it unto the seven churches, which John does in v4. This voice will give each of the seven churches specific instructions as we see in ch2 &3, but each church will also receive the complete message which is to all the churches, as this revelation is for all believers.

V12-13 *And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; 13 And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.*

So far we have seen the Apostle John give his opening greetings to the seven churches along with the blessings of grace and peace from the three persons of the Godhead, the Father, The Spirit and the Son, Jesus Christ, of whom John then gives a threefold description. He states that Jesus is the faithful witness, the first begotten of the dead and the prince of the kings of the earth. And then he follows that with a threefold description of what Christ has done for us believers, stating that Christ loved us, washed us in his own blood to cleanse us of sin, and has made us kings and priests by our faith in him. What an unveiling/revealing already of the Lord Jesus, of how great and marvelous he is, of who he is and how much he has done. And this is why we are to look for his return, for John clearly points out that Jesus will come again, the same way he left us, in the clouds and what a day that will be!

And now John begins telling us of his vision, the vision he received while in exile on the isle of Patmos, and we see that on the Lord's Day he was in the Spirit, Spirit filled, and from out of no where John hears a great loud trumpeting voice in v10, and it is very likely that John has not heard this voice for quite some time, since Christ had ascended into heaven, which would have been around 60 years ago, so how amazing it must have been to not only hear the familiar voice of Jesus but to turn around and see him again. For that is who John sees when he turns around, but John does not see Jesus as he once knew him, he turns and sees one like the Son of Man walking amongst seven golden candlesticks. He sees Christ in his glorified form, this view of Jesus was totally different from what John had known. Jesus was no longer the servant made a little lower than the angels, he was not meek and lowly in the flesh, for John sees Jesus as the risen, glorified, exalted, preeminent Son of God who possesses all power and authority over all things. He sees Jesus as the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, the priest king who has the right, the rank and the rule to judge all men. This was not the person whose breast that John had so casually rested his head upon, this was the unveiled, the revealed, Son of God.

Starting in v12 John describes what he saw, but he does so using symbolism, as it would be nigh impossible to aptly describe the Lord with so few mere words. And we do realize John is using symbolism due to his use of the candlesticks and seven stars, as they represent something else, so we must assume that what John describes about Jesus is symbolic as well. As John turns around in his vision and recognizes who is speaking to him, he sees one who is like the Son of man; it is the Lord Jesus, walking in the midst of seven golden candlesticks. Now if God didn't tell us what these candlesticks represent we all might still be guessing as to their meaning, but God in his infinite wisdom helps us out here, for in v20 God reveals to us what the meaning is behind these candlesticks, He interprets this vision for us. He states in the last phrase of v20 *...the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.* The candlesticks are representative of the seven churches of Asia that John was commanded to write to in v11.

What we see here is that Jesus is intimately involved with these churches, he is not a bystander or an onlooker but he is ever-present with these churches, which is how Jesus later states that he knows their works when he address the churches individually, he knows them for he is walking with them, he is in their midst, in their worship, in the believers' lives. And in this intimate relationship with Jesus these candlesticks, these seven churches, are to bear God's light to this world, the light of the gospel. *Mt 5:14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. 15 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. 16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.* But just like a candlestick, the church is not and can not be the source of such light. Because typically the candlesticks used in John's time were filled with oil, much like an oil lamp, and the oil burned and gave off light, and oil in the Bible is a type of the Holy Spirit. So a church (candlestick) filled with the Holy Spirit (oil) was to burn bright and be a light to the world, and the only way they could do that if Jesus was in their midst, if Jesus was their focus, their Master, their Lord, for He is the Light they are to shine.

In these verses John sees one like unto the Son of God, the word "like" shows us this is not an exact description, but symbolic. What John describes is Jesus in his exalted form of Judge of all the earth, for he is coming back, he is going to return, and he is going to judge the church and the world. And first off we see Christ in his royal judicial robes, *clothed with a garment down to the foot.* This garment reaches down to Jesus' feet yet did not cover those feet, this was a robe like that of a king or priest, and thus depicts Jesus' dignity and judicial authority and position of our high priest.

And around his chest he wore a golden girdle or belt, *and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.* Such a belt was worn by kings, priests and even judges during the time of this writing, and Jesus is all three, this symbolism would be easily understood by those in the churches this letter was to be sent to. The gold of the belt represents Christ's deity and divine righteousness as well as his authority as king for he is richly dressed. But the position of the girdle is quite telling, for a girdle about the "paps" or the chest is not very useful for a girdle was typically worn around the loins, the waist of a person while they labored, but when that labor was finished, to relax after a hard days work, one would loosen the girdle, pull it up and let it rest around one's chest, thus the special picture we are given here of the Lord Jesus echoes his words spoken on the cross, for his work, his labor, his position of servant on behalf of the redemption of mankind, is finished.

V14 *His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire;*

This depicts Jesus' eternity, of him being the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the End, the Ancient of Days as described in *Da 7:9 I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire.10 A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.11 I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame. 12 As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time.13 I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.* The whiteness of his hair also depicts Jesus' purity, holiness and his all knowing wisdom.

Next we see *his eyes were as a flame of fire.* This represents Jesus' omniscience and His divine wrath upon sin. He sees all and knows all which allows him to judge righteously and truthfully. His eyes burn with holy anger, divine retribution upon sin and they search out and see all sin, nothing hides from God's all seeing eyes as he sits in judgment.

Heb 4:13 Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

Ps 33:13 The LORD looketh from heaven; he beboldeth all the sons of men. 14 From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth.

Job 34:21 For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings.

V15 *And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.*

Here Jesus' feet appear extremely hot, glowing with heat, like white hot or molten brass, and this also gives us the picture of judgment, as brass is symbolic of judgment in the Bible, such as the brazen altar in the temple where the substitutionary offering was judged in place of the offerer, or the brazen serpent that was lifted up in the wilderness which was a type of the cross where God's judgment of sin fell upon Christ. His feet also signify victory over his enemies, for the Lord will crush the head of the serpent as spoken of in *Ge 3:15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.* The heel was bruised at the cross and the devil will be ultimately defeated at Jesus' return and judgment. *Ps 8:6 Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet.*

...his voice as the sound of many waters. Here again, as in v10, Christ speaks with a loud voice. One that has power and authority and which can not be spoken over for it drowns out all other voices, voices that would make excuses or pleas or somehow try to escape judgment. Think of trying to argue with Niagara Falls, could you speak over or try to bargain with such power? I don't think so, and no one will be able to do so with Jesus, he will judge rightfully and true, he will not be swayed as the time for forgiveness and pardon is passed, and what he speaks in judgment will be it, he will say either welcome home my child or depart from me I never knew you.

V16 *And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.*

Just like the candlesticks in v12-13, God gives us the meaning of what these stars are that Jesus holds. In v20 we are given the interpretation of this vision, *Re 1:20 The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.* Jesus says these stars are angels of the seven churches, but we know from further study he does not mean angelic beings watching over the churches. For the Greek meaning of this word "angel" is messenger or sent one, and is translated into the King James English as both angel and messenger in the New Testament. And we further see that these messengers, these sent ones, are pastors, they are the pastors of the seven churches of Asia. For in ch2:1 we see John commanded to write to the angel of the church of Ephesus, *Re 2:1 Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;* So if this is a spiritual being why would John write to it, how would he deliver his letter to it? And how was an angel supposed to respond to the command to repent? So we see that these angels, these stars, are symbolic of the pastors who are in Jesus' hands, Jesus upholds them, watches over them, protects them, keeps them close as they are his messengers who are leading his people, giving his word to those in need. He holds them in his hands not because they are better or more privileged, but to keep them close to him, under his direction and will, close to his light. How close we see the Lord Jesus is to his church and his people, walking in their midst, holding them in his hand, how dear we are to him and how much more dear should he be to us.

...out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: When Jesus speaks He speaks the words of God for He is God. His thundering, trumpeting voice of many waters is full of power and authority, holiness and justice. Eph 6:17 describes the word of God as the sword of the Spirit. We read in *Heb 4:12 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the*

joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Later on in Revelation Jesus says Re 2:16 Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. And later the battle of Armageddon is ended when Jesus comes and slays the enemy with his words Re 19:21 And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth... His words are divinely powerful.

...his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. Countenance refers to Jesus' face or appearance. He is intensely bright, white hair, shimmering gold, his eyes are flaming, his feet are glowing white hot brass, and his whole face shines as the sun, both terrible and beautiful at once. This vision probably reminded John of the transfiguration of Christ Mt 17:2 And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. Here we see that Christ's glory can not be contained! His face shines forth his glory! And I believe it was this brightness that blinded Paul on the road to Damascus where he met Jesus, Ac 9:3 And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: for Paul says in his recollection of those events in Ac 26:13 At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. The sheer power and holiness that radiates from Christ is unimaginable. Remember when Moses went up on Mt Sinai to speak with God and he came down with a glow all his on? And we also see in the book of Revelation that the glory of Christ will light the new city of Jerusalem that comes down from heaven, and that glory is so bright there is no need of the sun or moon... Re 21:23 And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. You just can't be around Jesus and be close to Jesus without radiating Jesus. For he is like the sun, his ministers are like the stars and the church is like lamps or candles, and all are light to a very dark and dreary and sin filled world.

This whole view of Jesus in a glorified state, in this powerful form of judicial majesty strikes John almost dead, he is awed, shocked, frightened, for what does he do in v17?

V17 *And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:*

John falls at the master's feet, the feet of God, the feet of judgment, he bows and cowers, he is terrified at such a vision of the powerful Christ, is there any wonder every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Christ is Lord and King when he is revealed to all in all his glory? Is it any wonder he has the preeminence? It makes me wonder what we each will do when we do meet our Savior face to face, when we are in the presence of our glorious Lord and Savior. One of my favorite songs (written by Mercy Me) states...

I can only imagine,
What it will be like,
When I walk, By your side
I can only imagine, What my eyes will see,
When your face, Is before me,
I can only imagine
Surrounded by Your glory,
what will my heart feel?
will I dance for you Jesus or in awe of you be still
Will I stand in your presence
or to my knees will I fall
Will I sing hallelujah, will I be able to speak at all
I can only imagine

But what does Jesus do in response to John's fear? He lays his right hand upon John and says *Fear not*. Jesus touches him and speaks to give John assurance, strength, courage. Oh what a touch

from Jesus can do! And then as has been stated multiple times already in this chapter, Jesus says I am the first and the last, the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the everlasting self-existing one.

V18 *I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.*

Jesus states it is *he that liveth*, that lived forever in eternity past, yet took a mortal form to come to this earth to be an example and a sacrifice and who died upon the cross for mankind. And yet behold, he is alive now, alive and well forevermore, he is resurrected and will live into eternity future never to taste death again, for he is the one that now has power over death and hell. “Take heart from this John” Jesus seems to say, “I created you, I loved you, I died for you and now I live so you may live as well. Fear not, for I have the keys, the power, the dominion, over death and hell. I have control of all things. You have faith in me, fear not for death will have no sting, the grave will have no victory, and hell will not burn one hair of your head. Fear not for I am God, fear not, for I am the judge who will judge righteously. Fear not, your sins are paid for. Fear not eternity is yours, Fear not for I am with you. Fear not for I am your Lord, your Savior and your Friend.” How much must have passed thru John’s mind at such words from the Son of God.

V19 *Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;*

And once John’s fear fades, Jesus gives him his command, his direction for this book, and this verse is basically God giving us his outline for the book of Revelation as explained in the introduction of this chapter.

V20 *The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.*

See explanation of v16 for details of this verse.

Chapter 2

SERMON - YOUR FIRST LOVE

To start with let me ask you a question, how many of you love Jesus? Raise both of your hands if you love him. Stand up if you love him. Can you say I love Jesus? Wow, look at that, all of you love Jesus, that's awesome and I want you to keep this in mind as we get into the message, so while you are standing, if you have your Bibles, turn with me to two places... turn to **John 13 and Revelation 2**

Now before I read anything we must understand that in chapters 2 & 3 of the book of Revelation, which were penned down by the Apostle John, we are shown the various states of 7 different churches and we also find the Lord Jesus' warnings, instructions, and commendations to each of them about their Christian conduct and spiritual standing. And what we should take note of is what the Lord says is not only applicable to the Christian's of those seven churches, but his words are for all believers, for all churches, His words are for us. We can apply what the Lord Jesus says to these churches to our own church. If he commends one of those churches we should take note of it and help the same thrive in our own church. If Jesus warns or rebukes a church we should see that no such thing appear in our church. As we want to have a church that is pleasing to God. We want to be exactly the kind of church God wants us to be. So as we look closely at just one of these seven churches that Jesus addresses, the church of Ephesus, I want you to examine yourselves and your church to see what you might have in common with this church, to see what the Lord Jesus might commend you for as a church and as an individual, as well as what He might rebuke you or your church for. **Revelation 2:1-5**

V1 Here we see the Lord Jesus speaking to the church of Ephesus, as he is the one who gives the Apostle John the command to write this letter, it is Jesus who holds the seven stars in his hand, and it is Jesus who walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. Now the candlesticks spoken of here are symbolic of those seven churches of Asia we find in ch2&3 (specifically the churches of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea). The seven stars in v1 refer symbolically to the pastors of those seven churches, the very pastors that Jesus has called and watches over as they proclaim the message of his gospel. We understand this symbolism based on Jesus' explanation back in **ch1:20** where Jesus explains these terms... *The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.* The word angel as it is used here in v1 is simply another word for messenger, and that's what these pastors were to do, deliver the message of God to His people.

What this means is that these stars, these pastors, these angels, are messengers or sent ones, not angelic beings, that's not what John is referring to here, for how would you write a letter to an angel, how is an angel to repent as commanded in these verses? So as ch2 begins the first letter is to one of these seven stars, one of these pastors, one of these angels, that John is instructed to write to, *Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write.* So what we see here in v1 is Jesus telling the Apostle John to specifically address this letter to the pastor of the church of Ephesus so that he may then deliver Jesus' message to the entire congregation in Ephesus.

So we see in v1 that Jesus upholds the pastors of these churches, they are in his hands, he walks in the midst of these churches, he is amongst them, his presence is with them. The point being that Jesus is not just a spectator but that he is intimately involved with each of these churches and their

leaders, he is alive and present with these believers (just as he is with us), and here in v1 we see that Jesus is specifically involved with the church of Ephesus, and he is so involved with this church, look at what he says to them in **v2-3**.

Jesus says he knows the Ephesians' works, he knows all about this church, he is familiar with their walk and their worship, all their praise, all their prayers, all their deeds, he is in the midst of all they do and say and think, for he is God and thus knows all things. And with such divine knowledge, the wonderful thing we see here is that the Lord Jesus commends or praises these believers for their good works, their labors, their patience (their endurance in the faith), he speaks well of how they abhor evil and how they discipline themselves with sound doctrine instead of being led astray by religious lies and false prophets and teachers. The Lord Jesus commends the Ephesians for bearing, enduring and suffering thru persecution brought on by their relationship with him, for these believers have suffered greatly for their faith, yet they still served Christ without fainting, without giving up, without quitting, despite the persecution brought on by their faith. Ephesus was a wonderful church in all these facets. They were serving and sacrificing, they were remaining steadfast and separated from the world, they stood where many others would have fallen. They were going and doing and laboring and evangelizing. They were extremely busy in the Lord's work. The Ephesian believers were doing everything a church is supposed to do in their service for the Lord, and the Lord Jesus compliments them for it as he is in their midst, he knows all about them, and so for the most part the Lord is pleased with this church of Ephesus.

But the Lord Jesus has one critique, one rebuke for this congregation, and it was critical to what the church at Ephesus was doing. Jesus says in **v4**, *Nevertheless* {despite all these wonderful works I just commended you for} *I have somewhat against thee* {I have one point of contention with you, why? What is the problem he has?}, *because thou hast left thy first love*. Despite all this church was doing, despite all their services and gatherings and meetings, despite their good works and programs, despite their preaching and singing and community outreach, despite their survival and endurance of persecution, despite their appearance of seeming to be a good Christian church to anyone on the outside looking in, what with their hustling and bustling and seeming to be a thriving church, despite all that, there was a problem on the inside of the church that Jesus clearly saw and points out. For the church at Ephesus was serving without the right motive, without the right purpose, as I believe they had fallen into indifference and into routine, they had become careless in their service to the Lord. For they done all of what they were doing without the right attitude, they served for the sake of serving, for the sake of keeping up appearances, they served the Lord without love. For they had left their first love.

Notice here that God had not changed, He was the same as He had always been, He still loved them all, He still loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son for, and God was still willing to be with this church and bless them and strengthen them, but the heart of the problem of the Ephesian church, as Jesus points out, was a problem of their heart. These believers had focused more on the doing than on the why or the who they were doing it for. They had become one big social gathering, some sort of community organization instead of a spirit-filled, on fire for God, congregation. They were not serving Jesus out of love, they were serving him out of routine and habit, they were going thru the motions, there was no zeal or excitement or enthusiasm, no joy, no movement within their worship which had become stale and stagnant all because there was no love. The Ephesian church looked like a loving church yet there was no true fellowship among the members, they came and they went without thinking about the concerns or burdens of their brothers and sisters in Christ, they had no expression of a holy relationship among themselves even as they claimed to be members of the heavenly family, and I would assume there was even bitterness and backbiting between the members within the Ephesian church, there were hard feelings, anger, dislike and disputes, and most likely even

hatred among the members, there were all kinds of emotions and feelings, except love, love was the one thing that was absent, yet it was the very thing that was needed. Everything looked good on the outside yet on the inside it was different matter. On the outside this church appeared to be spiritually healthy, but inside something was wrong, something was rotten, something was making this church sick, like a cancerous tumor, and the Lord Jesus clearly points out the problem, the church of Ephesus had “left”, which means to omit, to forsake, to lay aside, their first love, they no longer had a heart for God, and without a heart for God they had lost their heart for their fellow man and more importantly for the lost.

Now lets step back from this a moment, before the Apostle John penned down this letter to the church of Ephesus in the book of Revelation, the Apostle Paul had also written a letter to the Ephesians in which he makes mention of the love of the Ephesian church, of what their love used to be and the love that Paul was trying instruct them to grow even more in. What we understand from Paul’s letter is that the Ephesian church was once a church that majored in their first love, they thrived in their first love, their love for God and others, and we see this evidenced in such verses as Eph 1:15 where the Apostle Paul writes to the church of Ephesus... *Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints,* 16 *Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;*

Eph 3:17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 *May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; 19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.*

Eph 4:1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, 2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing {putting up with, enduring, suffering} one another in love; 3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Eph 5:2 And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us,...

The Apostle Paul had even told the Ephesian husbands to love their wives even as Christ loved the church. The Ephesians were commended for their love and instructed how to grow even more in Christian, Christ-like, love, and at first they exemplified the love of Christ, they did grow, were wonderful examples of that love, but it appears that over time they had drifted away from Paul’s instruction and the love they once had. They done what Paul had warned Timothy about when Timothy was pastoring the church in Ephesus, as Paul wrote to Timothy in *1Ti 1:5 Now the end of the commandment is charity {love} out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned:6 From which some having swerved have turned aside.* Ephesus as a whole had swerved, had turned aside from that commandment of love. They had left their first love. Ephesus was now only partially doing what the Apostle Paul had commended the church at Thessalonica for, as he wrote in *1Th 1:2 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; 3 Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ,...* The Thessalonians had labored with love but even with such love, Paul encouraged the Thessalonians to continue to grow in love *1Th 3:12 And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you.* And then in *1Th 4:9 But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.10 And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more;*

The Ephesian believers were a lot like the Thessalonian believers, they had increased in works, they were a busy church, but the difference was they labored without the love those works truly needed, they lost their focus all because they had left their first love. The church at Ephesus was once a church rooted and grounded in love, that was set up on the foundation of love, it was a church which had love for God **AND love for one another, and is that not what Jesus had commanded his followers to do in order to prove their love for him?** To keep his commandments if they loved him, to

show their love of him by following his instructions, and what was that instruction? What was his commandment? How are believers to prove their love to Jesus? By loving one another.

Joh 13:34. Jesus says... *A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. 35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*

Jesus establishes this idea of proving one's love for him by keeping his commandments in such verses as...

Joh 14:15 *If ye love me, keep my commandments.*

Joh 14:21 *He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me:...*

Joh 14:23 *Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words:...24 He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings*

Joh 15:9 *As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. 10 If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; ...* Jesus clearly states, multiple times, if one truly loves him, and if one wants to show that love, express that love, prove that love, one will do so by keeping Christ's commandment, by being obedient to him, and what is his commandment we are to keep and obey?

Jesus gives us that answer once more in **Joh 15:11** *These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. 12 This is my commandment {if you love me keep my commandment}, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. 13 Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. 14 Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you {lay down your life for me your friend by putting me first, others second and yourself last}.... v17 **These things I command you, that ye love one another.***

When Jesus was questioned about the one greatest commandment of the Mosaic Law, he said in **Matt 22:37**... **Thou shalt love** the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. 38 *This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself* 40 *On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.*

But not only did Jesus say love your neighbor, he even said to love your enemy, which definitely shows a Christ-like love to this world and demonstrates one's love for God. **Mt 5:43** *Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. 44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;*

Lu 6:35 *But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.*

So we clearly see that Jesus has given the commandment to love, to love God, and to show that love for Him by loving others as God loves them, as we are to be an example of God to others. We know God loves us for He has proven that by giving us His only begotten Son, and we love God for what He done for us, and in order to demonstrate our love to Him, we are clearly instructed to love one another, to love our fellow man, saved and unsaved unlike, and treat them accordingly based on that love.

Yet it was this love, the demonstration and proving of such love, that the church at Ephesus had left and drifted away from, they had stopped loving God or they had at least stopped trying to prove and demonstrate their love to Him, and thus they stopped loving one another and consequently had not kept God's commandment; maybe not intentionally, maybe not on purpose, maybe this had just gradually happened, but it had happened and Jesus noticed it and He is now warning them here in Revelation to remember that first love, to repent of such sin, and then make amends for it, by repeating their first works of love, to once more demonstrate their love, less they force Christ to come and remove this church altogether **Rev 2:5** *Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.* The Ephesians had gotten so wrapped up in their doings, so distracted with all they had going on, so used to the routine and habit, they became numb, they became what some might call "gospel hardened" - that they forgot who and why they were serving in the first place, they had abandoned

proving their love for Jesus, and thus failed in fulfilling Christ's commandment to love one another, they had stopped showing Christian love to the brethren, their own church, and to the lost, and now only pretended to do so.

And the thing is, believers are warned against such fake/pretend/hypocritical love, where we appear to love others, act like we love them, even say we love them, but in reality we don't really care, *Ro 12:9 Let love be without dissimulation {without pretense, hypocrisy, unfeigned}. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. 10 Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;*

1Pe 1:22 Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently {intensely, sincerely}:

Now not only had the Apostle John heard Jesus speak this commandment to love one another in person, John had also recorded it in his rendition of the gospel, and then in Revelation ch2 he was told to reference that commandment in the letter to the Ephesians, and this commandment must have had a great affect upon John for he even repeated this instruction in the other letters he wrote to believers. Remember the Apostle John was not only the human author of the gospel of John, and Revelation but he also wrote I, II, and III John. So let's turn to **I John** to see what John writes about this commandment to love one another...

I John 2:3-8a; John here in v7-8 says he isn't writing about a new commandment, as the idea of love and loving God and loving one another is an old commandment, a commandment given in the Old Testament... *De 6:5 And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.*

De 10:12 And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, {also 30:6}

Le 19:18 Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD.

That's the Old Testament command to love, and if a believer loves God, respects God, walks in a way that is pleasing to God, then that individual will treat their fellow man with respect and love. Think of the 10 commandments. If one has no other god before them, neither makes nor bows down to an idol god, nor takes the Lord's name in vain, and one tries to honor God with their life, then what comes from obeying those commandments is a demonstration of their love of God towards their fellow man, because if one does what the first portion of the 10 commandments say, one is not going to kill or steal or commit adultery against others because they love God. Thus loving God, obeying Him, will lead one to loving others or at least treating others decently. And this is exactly what the Apostle Paul states in *Ro 13:8 One no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. 9 For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended {summed up} in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 10 Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.*

Ga 5:13 For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. 14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 15 But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another....

And what we see is that by loving God and loving one another you could fulfill the entire Law, as you must love God in order to truly love others, and you can't demonstrate your love of God without loving others. So if one can love like this there will be no need for all the other laws, because you don't harm or wrong those you love, at least intentionally.

But the problem is man can not love like God commands, we can't love Him nor can we love others like He asks us to, the Law proves that to us, as the Law points to mankind's sin, to our failures, for none can fulfill the Law perfectly, because we do kill, we do steal, we are sinful and desperately wicked, we disobey and fall short, we fail, because of our fleshly nature we leave our love of God and

begin to love ourselves and this world which causes us to lose our love for others and commit sin against them.

And that is the problem. We know what we should do but don't do it, we know what we should be, but we aren't. We know what God's commandment is but can not fulfill it. What we need is God's love implanted in us, we need an example of His love to follow, and both of those needs are accomplished/fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ, for it is Christ who truly fulfills the Law, Jesus said in *Mt 5:17* *Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. As Jesus, in his love for God the Father, demonstrated that love, proved that loved, by loving others...by loving us.* Christ loved us so much that he gave his life for us, he bore our iniquities upon the cross, he gave us the supreme example of what it means to love God, of what true love for others is, he showed us exactly what it meant to keep his commandment to love one another. For Jesus loved us enough to put us before himself, to put obedience to God before himself, even when that obedience meant his very own death.

And now, by placing our faith in Christ, in submitting to him, the Lord transforms us and helps us grow in that same kind of love for others so that we may be truly Christ-like. Jesus is the one that makes it possible that we can love like he loves, we do that by letting him who now dwells within us to love thru us. Jesus speaking to the Father says in *Job 17:26* *And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: **that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.*** Jesus, and a relationship with him, having him within us, is the new portion of the old commandment of loving God that John was talking about. It is the other half of what man needed in addition to the Old Testament commandment in order to truly love one another and fulfill God's commandment to love, the new portion is having Christ in us and letting him love others thru us, as that is the only way that allows us to love one another as God has instructed. We can't love others like God, but God can love others thru us. If you are saved you have the capacity to love others like Christ does, for Christ dwells within you. You can love your brother and sister in Christ, you can love your neighbor, you can even love your enemy, because Christ loves all of them.

I John 3:11, 14-18, {the Ephesians had gotten the deed part down but not the truth, for they served without love, they served out of duty and responsibility but not true love for others or love of Christ, they had left their first love, they were going thru the motions and had lost the heart for God}

I John 3:22-23;

I John 4:7-8, 11-12; 20-21; 5:1-3

II John 5-6

III John 5-6

What we see here is the Apostle John, the beloved Apostle, the one whom Jesus loved, the one who had rested his head upon the bosom of the Lord and heard the heartbeat of God, had been greatly influenced by the Lord's words about love for God and loving one another. John took Jesus' commandment very seriously, and now here in the book of Revelation, in ch2, he writes to the church of Ephesus concerning them walking away from that commandment to love, Ephesus had left their first love, stopped proving their love of God, and so they were not loving one another as they should; how could they if they were not trying to demonstrate their love of Christ to him, if they were not loving Jesus based on all he had done for them, how could they love others who fell far short of what Christ had done? How can anyone truly love another if they leave their first love? So Jesus warns this church to go back, to stir the embers of that fire, to rekindle their love for the Lord and serve him with love so they could then show that same love to one another.

Now at the beginning of the message all of you raised your hands and stood up and proclaimed your love for Jesus, but my question is do you really love him, because the real question is do you demonstrate that love for the Lord by keeping his commandment to love one another? Not in word, but in deed and truth. If Jesus sent our church a letter like he did Ephesus, would he commend us or chastise us, would he have a point of contention with us? My fear is that we as a church may have slipped into the same state as the Ephesians, where we look like a church, act like a church, but we don't love like a church. Sure we say we love the Lord, we can raise our hands, voice the words and proclaim our love for Christ, and sure we say we love the lost, we pray for them and support missionaries who go out to sinners around the world to proclaim to them the gospel hoping that souls will be saved, but do we love one another here, our brothers and sisters in Christ here in this congregation, if so how do we really treat one another, how do we show it? Do we really express the love of Christ, the example he has given us, to one another? Do we demonstrate to Jesus how much we love him by loving those we gather with every Sunday morning as he loves them? When you leave here do you feel like you have been loved or do you feel any different at all? If you can't say I feel loved when you leave here, then maybe you should look at your own love first and ask yourself a couple of questions: **1.** Did you deserve to be loved by others today? **2.** Did you love others here like Jesus loves them and you? Did you do unto others as you would have them do unto you (ref. Mat 7:12)? You know true love involves us focusing on God and others instead of focusing on ourselves, we should focus on being a blessing to others, set self aside, get rid of our pride, die to self, and love our brother and sister in Christ just as Christ loves us all.

Look, I know you are a good church, like the church of Ephesus you serve faithfully, you labor and work and endure, you sing and pray and worship, but what I want to know is have you left your first love? I ask you today to examine yourself in this in order to warn you, to open your eyes. For do we not see in Scripture, time and time again, of those who left their first love, who walked away from God and His will, and tragedy struck? Did not Adam and Eve lose their first love when they gave ear to the serpent in the garden and ate of the forbidden fruit and caused sin to enter into the world? When they lost their focus on God, mankind fell. When Moses lost his first love he disobeyed God and lost out on entering the Promised Land. When Jonah lost his first love he ran from God and was swallowed by a whale which he described as being in the very belly of hell. When Israel lost their first love and committed idolatry, they were overthrown and taken into captivity. That is why Jesus warns the church at Ephesus here in Revelation, to turn back to him, to confess, to repent, and to do the first works, to rekindle their love for him, lest he come and chasten them, punish them, lest he come and remove the candlestick, remove the church out of that place, and close its doors forever.

Now unfortunately from what we know of history this church didn't listen, they may have for a short time, but today there is not even a city of Ephesus, much less a church of Ephesus, they left their first love so Jesus removed the church and their unloving influence, their unloving example. But that's what I want you to avoid, by not losing your first love in the first place, but if you have, you need to rekindle it, *This is my commandment (says Jesus), That ye love one another, as I have loved you.*

(Additional Notes)

Let me close by showing you how important love for others is. The word **charity** in the Bible typically means love, and look at what Paul writes to the church of Corinth about love in... *1Co 13:1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not **charity**, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. 2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not **charity**, I am nothing. 3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not **charity**, it profiteth me nothing. 4 **Charity** suffereth long, and is kind; **charity** envieth not; **charity** vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, 5*

*Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; 6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; 7 Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. 8 **Charity** never faileth:...13 And now abideth faith, hope, **charity**, these three; but the greatest of these is **charity**.*

So my two questions to each of you, first have you left your first love, and second, are you loving one another as you should? Is everything ok between you and your Brothers and Sisters in Christ? If not maybe you need to do something about it.

Additional Verses

Ga 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love,...

1Th 5:15 See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.

1Pe 3:8 Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, ...

1Pe 4:8 And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.

Col 3:12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. 14 And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. Love is what unites/bonds one to another.

Pr 8:17 I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me.

Mt 5:43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. 44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

Lk 6:35 But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.

Chapter 3

REVELATION - CHAPTER 2 - THE SEVEN CHURCHES

In chapter 1 we have the Apostle John exiled to the Isle of Patmos and on the Lord's Day he hears a voice and sees a vision of the risen glorified Christ who commands him to, as verse 1:19 states... *Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter*; and John being the faithful follower, writes what he sees and experiences, and to begin with, the vision he saw involves the Lord Jesus in the midst of seven golden candlesticks, holding seven stars, dressed in his judicial priest-king attire. Remember this is the revelation of, the unveiling of, the Lord Jesus Christ, everything in this book revolves around Jesus and his interaction with mankind.

But the nice thing about what John sees in the vision is that the Lord actually explains the meaning of it, telling John the seven golden candlesticks represent the seven churches of Asia he is writing to, and the seven stars held in Jesus' hand are the angels or the pastors of those seven churches. And beginning in ch2 the Lord Jesus begins addressing each of those seven churches. Now what Jesus says is directed to a specific church each time, but it can be applied to all churches of all times, so we need to keep that in mind; and here in the first few verses of ch2 we see Jesus commands John to write first to the angel, the pastor, of the church of Ephesus.

EPHESUS V1-2

Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; 2 I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

Since Jesus has such an intimate relationship with all the seven churches, specifically with Ephesus mentioned here, he has a very intimate knowledge of all they do, for He says in v2 *I know...* Jesus here knows the works of the believers of the church, the good works one's faith should lead them to doing; Jesus also knows of the labor they engage in, and their patience, their endurance in the faith, he knows about their devoted service. Jesus also praises them for not bearing, for not putting up with, those that are evil who say they are apostles like the twelve, for the Ephesian believers try those that come teaching and preaching, they put them to the test, seeing if what they say aligns with God's Word. The Ephesians do what the Apostle Paul commended the good Bereans for doing in *Ac 17:11* *These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.* The Ephesians compared what these new preachers were saying with the Scriptures and the teachings of Jesus and the other true apostles, and when they saw falseness and lies, when they saw corruption, they proclaimed them as liars. The Ephesians were grounded in sound doctrine and kept their congregation true to the Word of Christ by closely scrutinizing visiting ministers, just as we should.

V3 *And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.*

Jesus continues commending the church. The Ephesian church had carried on despite persecution, trials and troubles. You think established churches have a hard time today just keeping their heads above water, think about the early church, with rulers such as Nero and Domitian that hated Christians, and what with the Roman authorities and the Jews causing the early church constant

problems, especially when the church really wasn't quite established with designated places to meet and gather with true freedom and liberty to worship. This was a time when people were still imprisoned and possibly even put to death for their faith, yet the Ephesian church endured, they endured not by any strength or will of their own, they endured, they persevered, they did not faint or give up for the name sake of the Lord Jesus Christ, *for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted*. This church had kept going and made it so far because of their relationship with the Lord Jesus, because they at first truly loved him. But as we see in v4, the Ephesian church had drifted from that love.

V4 *Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.*

The Ephesian church was a wonderful church, that served and worked and stood for what was right, but Jesus points out one critical flaw, they had left their first love. They had forsaken their love of God, serving out of pride and routine, habit, tradition, just doing what was expected of them, but love did not enter the equation. Even though they had been instructed in love, were rooted and grounded in love, taught to grow in love, they found it far too easy to walk away from what was truly important, for as the Apostle Paul points out in I Corinthians 13, without love, we are nothing. Without God's love we are hopelessly lost with no way of repentance, but it was God's love that sent to us His Son to redeem us of our sin. And without love for God we are still stuck in our sin, for we don't put our faith and trust in some one we don't love. And then without love for others we can not truly love God for He has commanded us to prove our love of Him by loving others. And here the Ephesians had left, forsaken, omitted one of the most important tenets of their faith, their love of God and their fellow man, so Jesus calls them on it, but he gives them a chance to make amends, because this critique comes with a warning.

V5 *Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.*

Jesus gives them an option here. They can either do three things or he will do one. Jesus tells the Ephesus church to **remember**, to **repent**, and to **repeat** or else he will **remove** them. Jesus says to remember where they are fallen from, remember where they left God, remember the love you once had for God and for others, remember what it meant to love God, what it meant to please Him, to obey Him. Recall the love you were instructed in and once rooted in. Remember the love you have fallen from and forsaken, and then repent. Confess your sin before God of losing that love, of forsaking God. Repent of your lapse of love. Repent of the poor example of Christ-like love you have set before others. Repent, turn from such a tragic omission and seek forgiveness. And then repeat, do the first works again, the works that you once done because of that love you had for God. The works you done in serving God with a fervent heart, and the works of love you did for your fellow man because you truly cared, not because it was expected of you. Remember, repent and repeat the first works of love or else, says the Lord. Or Else. Its your choice and you need to make it quickly says Jesus. If you do not do this, if you don't make things right, Jesus says I will come unto you quickly and will remove thy candlestick, I will remove the church of Ephesus. This is not a threat from the Lord, it is a simple fact. For I think he would rather have no example than a bad example. Why do you think we are instructed over and over about our conduct?

But unfortunately from what we know of history, the Ephesian church didn't listen, they may have for a short time, but in 252 AD the Goths destroyed the city, so today there is not even a city of Ephesus, much less a church of Ephesus, they left their first love so Jesus removed the church and their unloving influence and example. And now there is no light, no Christian church, in the vicinity,

that area is now overrun by the Islamic religion. And that's what I am trying to warn you about. We either love God and others, or there is no point in us being here, we either obey God or else. For if we don't serve God in the right fashion, with the right motive and attitude, He doesn't want our service, for it causes more harm than good. Obedience is better than sacrifice. And truth be told I would hate to be the reason, because of my poor example, that my church's doors closed. Remember, repent, repeat or else he will remove. But after this one warning and rebuke, Jesus commends the church once more.

V6 *But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.*

Another good thing about the church of Ephesus was they hated the same thing God hated. Here they hated the deeds of the Nicolaitanes. Now we do not know much about the Nicolaitanes, they are only mentioned here and in v15 where the church of Pergamos had embraced the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes for which Jesus rebukes them, for the church overtime had went from hating the deeds of the Nicolaitanes to practicing their corrupt doctrines, keep in mind the seven churches also give us a picture of the church as a whole down thru history all the way up to the rapture, they are representative of the entire church age. And since we know God hates both the Nicolaitanes deeds and their doctrine we can at least assume they taught false doctrine and corrupted a believer's service to the Lord.

Now if we look at the origin of the word "Nicolaitane" to get a sense of who they might have been, we see that it is made up of two Greek words, one word means to "to have the upper hand, to dominate, to conquer" and the second word means "the people or laity". And when you put these together to make the word Nicolaitane we see that it means "conquerors of the people, rulers or dominators of the people" this being in a religious sense, so what most assume this refers to is that the Nicolaitanes taught or believed in a priestly caste system or a form of religious hierarchy, where you have some priests or bishops or whatever ruling over other people within the church. There would be some in the church claiming a superior position over others. We see such contamination of beliefs in Episcopal type churches and it is most easily recognized in the Catholic Church system where there is a defined hierarchy of positions over others, the Pope, the bishops, the priests and so forth, which has no scriptural support.

We actually see the Apostle John addressing such a situation in *III John... 9 I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. 10 Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church. 11 Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.* Diotrephes apparently thought he ran the church as he loved to have the preeminence, the most important standing and highest authority, but who is to truly have the preeminence in the church? We know that answer from Colossians, it's Christ. *Col 1:18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.* So John says I'll remember Diotrephes and deal with him if I get to come and visit. I'll help set him straight, and John did have the authority to do so as an apostle, the apostles did have positions of authority in the church, but we all know the apostles and their authority over believers are no more, for their time has passed.

So who has authority over believers now? Christ. And who are the priests in the church? Every believer, as we believe in the priesthood of every believer, we can each go to God on our own behalf because Christ is our mediator, we don't have to go to anyone else, any specific person to talk with God, because we have the Lord Jesus as our advocate. *1Ti 2:5 For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;* We no longer have the office of priest for we are all priests in that sense. And that's another reason I try to teach that the congregation has the power in the church, not the pastor

or the other leaders. Yes, I as a preacher and pastor have a specific calling and you have asked me to lead you, to study and pray, to preach the word, but as far as power/authority, I have no more than any of you except for what you give me. Sure what I say might have more influence but that's only because of the example I am to set and the characteristics I am to exhibit. The deacons are the same way, they are to be spiritual oriented men who help the pastor and the church, who serve out of love, and guess what, servants don't have power, but due to the deacon's spiritual characteristics and example, they should be able to make recommendations to the church to help guide them in accordance to God's will, but neither the pastor or deacons have the authority to make the rest of the congregation do what they want.

But thinking one person is to have some sort of spiritual authority over another is easily something God would hate, for that tries to shove God aside and rob Him of His place of authority. Satan and his minions have always wanted to take God's place. So let me give you a warning, no matter where you go to church, when someone steps in and starts trying to dominate the church you should be very wary of them. You know I hear some preachers say I tell my church to do this or I don't let such and such go on, and I think to myself, where do they get the standing to do this? Maybe I'm confused on this, and if I am, please show me scripturally what kind of authority I have as a pastor. But as far as hating the deeds of the Nicolaitanes this is also why we believe in the independence of the local church, where we don't follow the edicts of some association or convention, where some other organization has authority over the local church. So the Lord Jesus commends the Ephesus church for abhorring evil, false teaching and false doctrine, and for hating the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, the belittling of some believers while revering or esteeming others. Again they were an upstanding church, they just needed to remember their first love.

V7 *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.*

Notice what Jesus says here, that whoever has an ear let him listen to my words, that whatever individual will listen they need to listen now, and what Jesus says is not just to the individuals of the church of Ephesus but unto all the individuals of all the churches, plural. *Re 2:7 He* (singular) *that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches* (plural); Jesus' warning is not just for Ephesus, its for all churches, all believers. So we should pay attention to what he commends the church for as well as noting what he rebukes it for, and make amends where they are needed.

The last part of v7 is very important to those individual believers that will listen to him. *To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.* "Him that overcometh" refers to believers, for only believers have the victory, victory in Jesus, for they are overcomers thru Jesus.

1Jo 4:4 Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

1Jo 5:4 For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. 5 Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

Ro 8:37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

And it is only saved believers that get to partake of the Tree of Life in heaven, that are granted eternal, everlasting life. This is the same kind of tree as mentioned in the book of Genesis and in *Re 22:2 In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*

Re 22:14 Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

Jesus' reference here to the tree of life points to the future glorification of the believer and their abiding in the New Heaven and the New Earth, dwelling in the new city of Jerusalem when God

makes all thing new, in a new resurrected body which they will receive that will never die but live forever, *Job 11:26 And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?*

See Jesus still loves those at Ephesus, he commends them and encourages them, in love he rebukes them and gives them a second chance, in love he gives them a warning of what will happen and urges them to change course, if not as a church, at least as individuals, and in love offers them eternal life with him and all he asks is for love in return.

SMYRNA:

We now turn our attention to the church of Smyrna, a city located about 40 miles north of Ephesus, where there was a strong Jewish presence. This church was most likely planted by the Apostle Paul on his third missionary journey. And word Smyrna means “myrrh” or “bitter”. Now myrrh is a very fragrant spice and had many valuable uses. It was used in perfume, in making holy anointing oil, and in burials. It was also one of the three precious gifts given to Jesus at his miraculous birth, and was symbolic of his coming crucifixion, burial and supernatural resurrection. The reason for this symbolism is that myrrh must be crushed in order for it to emit its fragrance. And from the crushing experience Jesus went thru in his death and burial we see that a sweet aroma of the grace of God arose and engulfed mankind at Christ’s resurrection. For here Myrrh is a picture of sweetness after a bitter experience. And the church of Smyrna is much like its namesake. For even though we saw that the Ephesus church had experienced persecution, their experiences were nothing compared to the crushing that the church of Smyrna went thru and the church-age it represents, as Smyrna typifies a period of time of the church under fire, of when the church was literally crushed under Roman authority, under tyrannical Caesars and rulers, yet the church, despite its bitter suffering continued on and spread the sweet fragrance of the gospel across the land. The suffering of the church of Smyrna pictures a time of great martyrdom, and that’s probably why Jesus begins his message to them the way he does.

V8 *And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;*

Jesus commands the Apostle John to write to the pastor of the church of Smyrna, in order for this specific message to be read before the whole congregation. And here Jesus introduces himself differently than he did to the church of Ephesus. Instead of focusing on the intimate relationship Christ has with his church, where he held the pastors in his hands and was in the midst of the golden candlesticks, Jesus focuses on the fact that he is in ultimate control of all things, because he is God, and he is the eternal one, the first and the last, the beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega, all titles we saw the Lord Jesus identify himself as an equal with God back in [ch1 \(1:4, 8, 11, 17\)](#). Jesus also pinpoints the fact of what he done for mankind, for as God he died for mankind’s sin as the ultimate sacrifice, but death nor the grave could defeat him for he rose again, thus his description of himself “*which was dead, and is alive*”. What Jesus is doing here is reminding the believers of Smyrna and those in the coming years that he too suffered greatly, he experienced persecution, he felt the scourge and the hate, he felt the humility and shame, he felt the pain and torture and tasted death, he was as the myrrh and was crushed for mankind. Yet even death had no power over him, the grave could not hold him, he conquered both and now lives and is alive forevermore, he has ascended to the right hand of the Father where he now intercedes for those who love him. The Lord Jesus reminds his followers of this, of his great suffering for them, as he would not ask them to do anything he was not willing to do. But before we get into all that lets look at v9.

V9 *I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.*

Once more, just like with the Ephesian church, Jesus states he knows Smyrna's works. He knows what they have done or have been unable to do. He knows all about them, for he has just an intimate relationship with them as he does all the other churches and individuals. Jesus also says he knows their tribulation, the great pressures they are under. He knows exactly what these believers are going thru during a time of terrible persecution and tragedy. He knows their pain and anguish, Jesus easily identifies with them. For the church of Smyrna, as well as the church age it represents, was a hated church. Christianity was basically outlawed by the government, believers were severely persecuted; they were condemned as enemies of the state for not acknowledging the Caesar as God, they were stripped of possessions and land, they suffered imprisonment and horrible torturous deaths. So during this time believers gathered not in nice buildings with stained glass windows and pews, but they gathered in caves and catacombs and secret hidden places to worship. Much like some Christians do today in China and the Middle East and parts of Africa.

The reason I say that is because Jesus also says he knows their poverty, he identifies with that as well. When Jesus came to this earth he had nothing, he was not rich, he even stated when he began his ministry he had no place to even lay his head. He fully trusted in the Father to supply all his need. And Smyrna knew something of poverty. That word poverty does not just mean poor, its means severely, hopelessly, miserably poor, they had absolutely nothing, they were destitute. What with having their possessions, wealth, land, homes and such stripped from them, but also by identifying themselves as Christians this prevented them from taking part in the Roman guilds which kept them from being lawfully employed, they had no right to work and if and when they worked on their own, others boycotted their businesses. These Christians had nothing and could really work for nothing. Yet God helped them, they strived, they kept their faith and trusted God and he came thru time and time again.

This makes me think of those believers in the last days that will refuse the mark of the beast and can not buy or trade for food or daily needs, they will be in great poverty as well. Here we see that Smyrna is a deep contrast with the church of Laodicea, who was rich, increased with goods and had need of nothing, nothing except God. Here the church of Smyrna is impoverished, but the Lord has no rebuke for them, nothing to correct them in, he has only encouragement and assurance. Smyrna had little wealth but great faith. Laodicea had great wealth but little faith. And that's why Laodicea was rebuked by the Lord, and the one main difference in these two churches lay in the church's wealth. This should get our attention as believers who find ourselves in the Laodicean church age. As it was never God's plan for a church to have a massive amount in a bank account. Sure a church needs some money for basic operating costs and support of the ministry, but thousands and thousands of dollars just sitting there, doing nothing in the Lord's work is a reproach upon the blessings of God. The church isn't supposed to hoard money, it is to share it, do good works, support missions. God must truly be sick with all of us and be ready to spew us out of His mouth with how we sit in such grand buildings and homes and fine clothes while His work goes on undone and incomplete.

Now there is nothing wrong with having anything nice, that's not what I'm saying, but God blesses us for a reason, to whom much is given much will be required. When people have so much that they begin to think they do not need God, or they have so much and are trying to get more and thus they leave God out of their lives having no need of Him or no time for Him, something is wrong with such believers. They have lost their focus, their first love, and have forgotten how much they truly depend on God to get thru each day. Yet here in Smyrna they had great need for God, they utterly depended on God for mere survival, and I think their faith was exponentially greater than most

of ours because all they had was faith to keep them going and to fall back on. So a question I could ask all of us is what has our faith really cost us?

But even in their poverty the Lord Jesus calls the believers of Smyrna rich. I know thy poverty but thou art rich. They are rich, wealthy beyond imagination, for they have partaken of the most precious gift ever given, the blood of Jesus Christ, they have accepted and received the Son of God as their personal Savior. They have benefitted greatly from the exceeding riches of the love, mercy and grace of God. Because of their faith in Christ they have been given eternal life, they have what no amount of money can buy, priceless salvation and all the benefits that come with it, they have a mansion awaiting them in heaven, they will get to eat at the heavenly king's table, they have a robe and a crown awaiting them, they are part of God's family, adopted chosen children, they are ambassadors, rulers and reigners in Christ. *Jas 2:5 Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?* The Smyrna believers have far more than the mere trinkets and moments of pleasure this world has to offer. These people have Christ and that far outweighs the treasures as well as the sufferings this world offers to those that follow Christ. Paul writes to the Corinthians to encourage them in their walk in *2Co 6:4 But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, 5 In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings; 6 By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, 7 By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, 8 By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; 9 As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; 10 As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing: **as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.***

2Co 8:9 For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

Jesus says in *Mt 6:19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: 20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: 21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

Then as we continue in v9 Jesus says he knows of the blasphemy the church is facing, *and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.* Here, God's chosen people, the Jews in Smyrna, were most definitely not acting like they even knew God or worshipped Him (they were not loving their neighbor that's for sure), sure they may have been Jewish by heritage and birth, but not because of their faith/religion, they were not godly Jews, for the Jewish community in Smyrna persecuted the Christians greatly. They denied the church just as they denied Christ. Some tried to encroach on the Christian's doctrine with the same old formula of legalism and being under the Law and tradition, while others treated the followers of Christ just like they did Christ himself. They slandered the Christians, had them imprisoned, and made life extremely difficult and unpleasant for believers. And this was right along side what Rome and other persecutors were doing to the church. But we see the one who was really behind such horrible treatment, Satan himself, for these were not God's people but Satan's pawns in his battle against the Almighty. They were not of the synagogue of Jehovah, they were of the synagogue of Satan and acted as his wicked agents in their treatment of the Smyrna church. Jesus says I know what you are facing from these Jews and other men, I understand exactly what it is like, for he too was persecuted by the Jews (as well as the gentiles). Again Jesus wants his followers to know he understands, he identifies with them, he has felt exactly what they are feeling, be it humility, pain, extreme pressures to alter their ways, or even death itself, but Jesus doesn't want them to focus on the pain or the problems, he wants them to focus on Him.

V10 *Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*

Despite their tribulations, poverty and adversaries, despite everything this church was facing, it was still attempting to do the Lord's work, and Jesus says not to fear, do not be afraid of what you are having to face or will face. Don't let the persecution stop you, don't let Satan scare you, for just as when John turned around in his vision and saw the glorified resurrected Christ who said unto him "Fear not", "fear not John for you believe and I, God the Son, am with you", so too is Jesus with the believers in Smyrna. He is far greater than anything man or Satan can do to them, for he is eternal, he was dead and is alive, he defeated death and the grave and crushed the head of the serpent on the cross and arose from the tomb. Jesus here gives confidence to these believers, as they are on the winning side, so they are not to fear any of the things they would suffer and face. And please notice, Jesus doesn't stop their suffering, he doesn't end it, but he promises to be with them thru the suffering, thru the test and trials, thru the pain and torment, thru the valley of shadow of death, and he says fear not, fear no evil, do not fear Satan or his agents, do not fear the Jews or the Romans, for they can not win, they can not tear apart what we have together. *Ro 8:35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?*

2Ti 3:12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

Jesus then warns Smyrna that some of them would be imprisoned by Satan himself, and then tried, tempted, tested; they would suffer greatly at Lucifer's hands. But this would put their faith to the extreme test, was it real or not? The wheat would be separated from the chaff, the gold from the dross. And Jesus gives a time period of ten days for this tribulation, this imprisonment by Satan where they would be in his hands. Now, to be honest I am not sure what the ten days reference here, but I'll give you two options, it could just be a saying that the time would be brief; their suffering would be short, and most likely granted a quick death. The reason for this is as we all know, life is but a vapor compared to eternity, a blip on the time scale, so Jesus could be encouraging his followers to persevere for that short while, to remain faithful unto death. Don't give in, don't give up, your life, your pain, your persecution is nothing compared to what awaits you in eternity.

The other option is that some believe these ten days refer to the ten great persecutions under ten Roman emperors. Beginning at the time of Nero in 54 AD and running to Diocletian in 284 AD, the latter having the fiercest persecution of Christians this world has seen, as there were approximately 5 million Christians killed during this time period. If this is what the ten days reference, we again see Jesus speaking to the church to be faithful unto death, to be willing to die a martyr's death, of which he would give sufficient grace in the time of need to face such, and that even in death one could glorify Christ. History actually records time after time, person after person, when condemned to die for Christ, Christ was always there with them to see them thru, he gave them the grace not to be afraid, not to be ashamed, but to uplift him above all others. Such a demonstration of faith caused many others to actually convert to Christianity.

Jesus tells them to remain faithful unto death, as he will see them on the other side and will give them a crown of life, also known as the martyr's crown, because they were willing to give their life for the Lord. Concerning this willingness to die for what and who you believe in, let me paraphrase John Phillips "*Ease and prosperity are never promised to the Christian as a reward for their faith. On the contrary, we are told to expect persecution in this hostile world. Most of us have wondered if faced with such a torturous death for our faith, would we have the strength to endure to the end. We turn the pages of history and read of terrible things that have been done to the saints, and we wonder if we could face such horror and hold out. The only way we can possibly be prepared for such a fate is to live for Christ today so we will be able to die for Christ tomorrow.*" The thing we believers should note is that Satan offers a moment of torment, while Christ offers us an eternity of reward, Satan offers pain, Christ offers peace, Satan offers terror, Christ offers joy, Satan offers death, Christ offers everlasting life and victory to the overcomer, the one who has overcome

due to faith in Christ, and the Lord Jesus even offers a promise to one of such faith to not even be touched by the second death, the penalty of the sin of unbelief, the lake of fire.

V11 *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.*

Jesus speaks to all those that may suffer for his name sake, *Mt 10:22 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. Mt 24:9 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.* He has warned us, we know what we should expect, persecution should come as no surprise. But Jesus wishes to encourage those he loves, his friends, his bride, God's children, that no matter what this world, what other men, what Satan himself, throws at you, it is a mere nothing compared to what you have in Jesus. Keep standing, stay strong, do not fear, I am with you is the meaning behind His message to the church of Smyrna.

And to close this study on Smyrna I wanted to tell you about a certain man that lived during the time of the Smyrna church and who died under the rule of the great persecutor Marcus Aurelius in 168 AD. His name is Polycarp, and by the time of his death he had been a Christian for approximately 86 years. He was most likely converted under the Apostle John's ministry and knew John well. Polycarp actually served as pastor of the Smyrna church. Jews and other pagans conspired against Polycarp, trying to convict him of treason so he would be thrown to the lions; when that failed they sought to have him burned at the stake. After his arrest, while waiting for his likely conviction, he asked for an hour to pray, and so fervent was his prayer that his guards were converted. When brought before the council of his trial, he was asked to recant of his faith, to deny Christ and he would be freed, and I want you to listen to his reply "Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He never once wronged me; how then shall I blaspheme my King, Who hath saved me?" And with that he went to the stake to be burned alive, and when the flames would not touch him, he was then pierced with a spear, much like the body of Jesus, and his body thrown on the fire. But I am sure while he faced his accusers and stared death in the face, this letter from John, his friend, his brother in the faith, echoed in his mind, as this aged pastor gladly gave his life for his Lord, counting it for nothing compared to uplifting the Lord Jesus Christ.

And the question I want ask you is not what would you do in such a situation, but are you prepared to face such a situation?

PERGAMOS

We now move on to look at the letter to the church of Pergamos, a city that lies north of the city of Smyrna and was built upon a one-thousand foot high hill. It was considered in its time to be the greatest city in Asia-Minor for all its many wondrous buildings, temples and structures to the Roman and other pagan gods. Its altar to the god Zeus was one of the ancient wonders of the world. Pergamos also became the first city of Asia to have a temple for the worship of Augustus Caesar, the Roman Emperor, built in 29 AD and at the time of this writing of the book of Revelation, Pergamos had become the center of Roman emperor worship, they worshipped their Caesar, and this is something we need to keep in mind as we study this section on Pergamos.

Also its believed that the Apostle Paul may have planted the church of Pergamos during his travels. The word Pergamos means "married to, wedded to, or elevated". And that meaning carries with it the symbolism of the church age that Pergamos represents. This has to do with the fact that Satan had not destroyed the church with his 10 intense Roman persecutions which we mentioned in our study of Smyrna, so Satan now changes his tactics. If he can not destroy the church from the

outside thru persecution, he was now going to attack the church from the inside. For we see that Pergamos typifies the age of the church from 312 AD to 606 AD when the church was “elevated” to a place of power, and “married” itself to the world and to the state government, the church became a power with political influence and authority, and just so you will know where I’m going with this, the Catholic church has its origin in 325 AD, at the very beginning of this church age, when the “First Great Council of the Church” in Nicea was held. And I believe that’s why the Lord Jesus reprimands the church of Pergamos here in these verses, the church allied with the Roman government, elevated its position and authority, not only of itself but also of its clergy and leaders, and became something God never intended the church to be. And that’s why the Lord Jesus begins his address the way he does.

V12 *And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;*

Notice Jesus keeps using descriptions that go back to the imagery that John saw in his vision in ch1. *Re 1:16 And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. And what is this sharp sword with two edges? Well what comes out of a person’s mouth? More specifically what comes out of God’s mouth? The words or THE Word of God.*

*Eph 6:17 And take the helmet of salvation, **and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:***

Heb 4:12 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

*Re 19:11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. 12 His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. 13 And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. 14 And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. 15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. 16 And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. 17 And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; 18 That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. 19 And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. 20 And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. **21 And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth:** and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.*

Now what is the purpose of Jesus mentioning that he is the one with the sharp two-edged sword, the Word of God? I believe it is because it is the Word of God that all men will be judged by. It is belief or unbelief in the Word, God’s Word and the Word that is Jesus Christ, that will divide men asunder, a sword with two edges cuts both ways so it will separate the sheep from the goats, the wheat from the tares, the righteous from the unrighteous, the just from the unjust, the saved from the unsaved. Christ judges, as the great judge, everything and all men by the Word of God. So I believe this is a warning to the church of Pergamos, and those that follow the teachings that originated during the Pergamos church age. For Christ says in *Re 2:16 Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.* Christ will come and deal with the beliefs originated in the Pergamos church, beliefs that we will look at in a moment, but beliefs that Jesus says to repent of lest they want to fight against, struggle against, strive against God Himself. And in all honesty that’s what we see with the Catholic Church and other denominations or religions that lift themselves or their leaders above their intended positions, that in their sin they try to unseat Christ from his rightful place as the head, the great high priest of the church, and put someone else in his rightful place. We are not to do that, we are to be humble and meek not lording authority over the world or each other, for its

Christ who has the preeminence as the head of the church, not any man. But before I get carried away with that, we do see that the Lord Jesus has some commendations for the believers in Pergamos, despite all the problems that are beginning to arise within it. There are still some there that are true believers, true followers of Christ, that have not strayed, for there is always a remnant.

V13 *I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.*

Jesus says I know your deeds, your works, I know all about your devoted service to me. He also says he knows where they dwell, he knows where these believers are, the city they are in, and the false teachings, influences and arising powers they are facing, both within and outside the church, and Jesus also knows that their abode is where Satan's seat is. Pergamos was at this time where the throne of Satan's power was, where his corruptive presence was, where Lucifer was beginning a great work to try to destroy the church from the inside out, to cause rifts, and chaos and death, all done in the name of Jesus. For remember this is the city where worship of the Roman emperor was centered. And I believe that Satan's plan and what Jesus warns the church about here unfolded with the Roman Emperor Constantine.

To quote H. A. Ironside's commentary on the book of Revelation... *"Those of you that are familiar with Roman history and church tradition will recall that after the death of Diocletian and Glarius, Constantine and Maxentius contended for the throne. Constantine is said to have seen a vision of a cross of fire and to have heard a voice saying, "In this sign, conquer." He wondered what the vision could mean. He was told that the cross was the sign of the Christian religion, and that it must mean that the God of the Christians was calling him to be the champion of the Christian religion, that if he obeyed the voice, he would be victor over the hosts of Maxentius and become emperor of the world. He called for Christian bishops and asked them to explain their religion to him. He accepted the new doctrine and declared himself to be its God-appointed patron and protector. Some writers make a great deal of this so-called conversion of Constantine, but it is questionable if he ever became a child of God by faith in Christ Jesus. He won a great victory over his opponent and thus became emperor of the world, and one of his first acts was to liberate the Christians and to stop all persecution. He bestowed unwonted honors on the bishops; they sat upon thrones with the nobles of the empire."*

One can see how Satan is working here, the worst persecutions of the church ended instantly, Christianity went from the weakest to the strongest religion with a single command, the leaders were basically bribed by Constantine, wealth and power became their idol, instead of being the pure spotless bride of Christ, a large part of Christendom married itself to the world, to power, to the state, and along this line it thrived and then reached a point when the church and the state became the same entity, Rome became a church state and Constantine became not only the emperor of Rome but the head of the Roman church, taking a title from a Babylonian pagan religion, Pontifex Maximus, which is the same title the Roman Catholic Pope goes by today. So is it any wonder so much of Roman Catholic imagery mimics that of the great whore in Revelation 17, where the church was to be the bride of Christ? Those that followed the doctrines of Pergamos wedded themselves to the world and are thus called a harlot, the great whore, for they have betrayed God and committed spiritual adultery, just as the nation of Israel was described when they worshipped other gods other than the one true God. This perverted religion corrupted the purity of the true church and instead of giving all authority to the Lord, took it for themselves, and heaped wealth and power unto themselves, while taking advantage of the laity. None of which is presented as biblical in the Scriptures. But here was the beginnings of all this in Pergamos, a church the Apostle Paul had planted and preached to, which had done the exact opposite of what they had been instructed, how quickly we turn from the truth to having our ears tickled and our own lusts fulfilled. This should cause us to always examine ourselves, our beliefs and our church and make sure it aligns with and falls on the right side of God's word.

And in v13 Jesus points to those who have done exactly this, who have made sure what they believe is right and have remained true to Him, who have not been corrupted by Satan or this world,

and he commends them for it. He says despite all the peer pressure to change or alter your ways you remain faithful, despite the false doctrine you hold on to my faith, you have kept me in my proper place, as Lord and Savior, as head of the Church, and yourselves as the bride of Christ. You have remained true to me even in the past days of persecution, *even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.* We don't know who Antipas was, just that he died a martyr's death in Pergamos, and yet the believers still stood for Christ despite the threats they faced. Maybe Antipas stood up to those within the church that were siding with the emperor, or those who thought allying the church with the Roman government was a good idea, maybe some pressured the church to give in to outside influences, where some did, Antipas did not. Whatever the case Jesus commends the believers in Pergamos for their faith, their steadfastness and works in his name. But as we have already mentioned, there were others who were not as pure, working within the church and turning it into their and the world's view, corrupted by Satan's lies, and Jesus points out such corruption, he states he has a few things against them.

V14 *But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.*

The first thing that Jesus has against the church of Pergamos is there are some who are holding to the doctrine of Balaam. Now the story of Balaam is given in Numbers 22 thru 25. So let me summarize what happens so we understand what the Lord is referencing here.

When the children of Israel on their way to Canaan had reached the land of Moab, Balak, the king of Moab, sent for Balaam (a prophet) to come and curse Israel. When God prevented Balaam from cursing them by turning his curses into blessings, the prophet told King Balak to invite the Israelites to their pagan celebrations, which would anger the Lord and cause Him to punish Israel. King Balak did just this, and when the men of Israel intermixed with the Moabites they committed whoredom with the daughters of Moab. *Nu 25:1 And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab.2 And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods. 3 And Israel joined himself unto Baalpeor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel.* This idolatry and fornication, this spiritual harlotry, caused God to punish Israel with a plague that killed 24,000 of them, and Moses ordered that all those who committed such sin be put to death. So by intermixing with the world Israel brought about its own downfall and punishment, it fell from within. Balaam was hired to curse Israel, but when that failed he caused Israel to sin by their own choice by preying upon their own lusts, he caused an unholy union between Israel and those that God had forbidden to be formed, they were unequally yoked, they disobeyed God, committed spiritual adultery, committed great sin and paid the price. This was the doctrine of Balaam.

And it was this same doctrine of Balaam, the same actions, that Satan, using Constantine as his pawn, used to try to destroy the church from within. When Constantine came to power he ended persecution of the church, he gave grand buildings to the bishops, and gave them great amounts of money to turn those buildings into churches. He also supplied them with expensive clothes and gave them positions of power and authority. And then he set himself up as the head of Rome and the head of the church. But not only did he corrupt the leaders, he corrupted the laity as well, adopting pagan festivals as holidays, heathen priests were made into Christian priests, pagan temples were turned into churches, and many false doctrines and practices were introduced, all to appease those he conquered in the name of Christ, all the while Christ was being left out and forgotten, except only in name. The church had now been wedded with the state, with political power, with the world, and thus the church was corrupted from within, elevated to a position it was never meant to be in. This then explains why

Pergamos was the place of Satan's seat, for here Satan had dethroned God in this so called holy church, and in Christ's place as head of the church, sat a mere sinful man.

But not only was the doctrine, the teachings, of corruption that Balaam practiced in effect here, Christ says there is another false doctrine at work as well.

V15 *So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.*

Not only did the Pergamos church have those that held to the doctrine of Balaam, intermixing with Rome, with power, and with the world, they too had those that held to the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes. Now we looked at the teachings of the Nicolaitanes back in our study of the letter to Ephesus, where in ch2:6 Jesus said he hated the deeds of the Nicolaitanes. And now those deeds, those actions that the church had once hated, were now being held up as doctrine, as biblical teaching within the church. What God hated was now being presented as something God loved. If you recall the Nicolaitane's teachings were that of a hierarchy of power within the church, where there was rulers, bishops, archbishops, cardinals, a pope, and at the bottom of the ladder were just the people. But we know Jesus is the head of the church, not any man, no priest or preacher or deacon has authority over anyone else in the church, we are all brothers and sisters in Christ, we believe in the priesthood of every believer who have different callings and gifts to be united in one body, and we can each go to God on our own, to approach the throne of heaven boldly, due to our advocate and mediator who sits at the right hand of the Father and who serves as our heavenly high priest, we have no need of another to do this for us, for we have Christ. It is this one spiritual body that we are united in, specifically on the local church level, that is to determine the will of God for that specific body of believers, not a select few religious men who place themselves above others.

But here we see belief in a priestly caste system; the Pergamos church had adopted the teachings of the Nicolaitanes in addition to the church becoming a political state power. This makes sense as these two things go together. For if you think of a nation, it has a king or ruler, and he has his nobles, his commanders and at the bottom are the peasants, the people. The same thing can be seen in the military, you have the general, then all those of lower rank all the way down to the private. The one in charge determines what everyone else is to do, and this works in those areas, but it doesn't work that way in the church. For Christ, not man, is to be in charge of the church, he is the head, he is the King, he is the Captain of the host, no man can take his place. Yet that is exactly what Constantine done, seeking his own power, he abused the church, bribed the leaders, and did not condemn the sin of the people, instead he embraced that sin, overlooked it, even advocated that sin and the sinners by baptizing nonbelievers into the church. And so the church of Christ was turned into the church of Satan, of man, of the world, all by corrupting the church from the inside with appealing doctrine and playing on mankind's weakness to power and wealth. Is it any wonder the Lord Jesus says he hates this, for it breeds world wide confusion, hypocrisy and causes others to blaspheme the name of God? Here are evil men doing evil things in the name of Jesus.

And for this, as we've already read, Jesus says to repent unless they want a fight. And the true church has fought against this false church for centuries now. That's why we should pay close attention to what Jesus says there in v16.

V16 *Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.*

Jesus says I will come to **thee**, to the church, to the true believers, to those that continue to hold fast his name and has not denied his faith despite the persecution they may face or be facing from those who are proponents of these new corrupt doctrines, he will come to thee and he will fight

against **them**, Christ will fight against those of the doctrine of Balaam and the Nicolaitanes, and the great whore will be defeated in the end. Jesus will protect his own.

V17 *He that bath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.*

Again Jesus addresses all the churches of all times, all individuals who will listen to him; to him that overcometh, to him that believes in the Lord Jesus, to him will Christ give three things. 1) hidden manna – spiritual nourishment, spiritual health instead of corruption 2) a white stone – in this time period a white stone was put into an urn or similar vessel by a judge (and remember Christ is the supreme judge of all men and judges them by God's Word), that judge would then use this vessel with both white and black stones in it to determine a person's guilt on many accusations. If a black stone was pulled out they were guilty, if a white stone was pulled out, they were acquitted, declared innocent, just as a believer in Jesus is declared innocent because of the blood of Christ that washes away all sin, and this is why Christ gives the overcomer the white stone. 3) a new name – a secret name between the believer and Christ, he makes you a new creature, gives you a new body, a new destination, new outlook, new purpose, new heart, new nature, he is the one that makes all things new, so why not a new name to go with the new you that has overcome?

THYATIRA

So far in our study of the seven churches we have seen that Ephesus had left their first love, Smyrna was severely persecuted and in deep poverty and Pergamos had those within its ranks that held to the doctrines of Balaam and the Nicolaitanes, a portion of the church had been corrupted and had united with the state, in essence wedded the state, thus elevating the church to a position of power. This was when the rudiments of the Catholic Church were formed under the rule of Constantine by him uniting the church and state. Along with this was an acceptance of a priestly order of authority within the church, instead of everyone being equal there was a hierarchy of power within the church. And now as we come to the study of Thyatira we see the ramifications of the false doctrines that were accepted in the age of Pergamos; we see the results of the union of church and state, as in the Roman Catholic Church's ascension to power and introduction of blasphemy after blasphemy into its teachings thus further corrupting the church. Please note that there is still a faithful remnant of believers, but here with Thyatira we are dealing specifically with a long reaching corruption within the Christian faith, the state-church, which even though it is not the only one, is typified by the Roman Catholic faith. The time period represented by Thyatira covers a large portion of history, and in fact carries on into the end times, but this church typically symbolizes the time period from 606 AD to 1500 AD, a time known as the Middle Ages and includes the dire times known as the Dark Ages, where the Catholic Church had an iron grip over the masses, for it ruled its own empire. It was in the 7th century the Bishop of Rome was first recognized as the visible head of the church, thus beginning the papacy, as the pope was now acknowledged as the head of all Christendom. Do not let anyone tell you the Catholic Church has its roots all the way back to the Apostle Peter, that is a blasphemous lie, for Christ says he would build the church upon the rock, speaking of himself, not the pebble that was Peter. The Catholic Church as we know today did not begin until the 7th century, all that happens before then is just evidence of the church becoming more and more corrupt, drifting further and further away God and His Word. But how odd it is to have the little church in Thyatira typify this time period, for Thyatira was one of the smallest cities to be addressed by the Lord Jesus, but we can see its

corruption is very far reaching, even tainting our faith today. I guess this goes right along with what the Apostle Paul said that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. The lies and false doctrine that started in this little church has contaminated the whole world and all of Christendom.

Now Thyatira is located some 40 miles north of Pergamos, it was a military town and a commercial center with many guilds, one thing it was famous for was its many dyes and it is thought that possibly Paul's first convert in Europe played a role in planting this church. Remember Lydia, *Acts 16:14 And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. 15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.* It was possible that this woman Lydia helped plant this little church, but as we look at the message from the Lord here in Revelation to Thyatira, it is now most definitely a woman who is blamed for the blasphemy within the church, a woman who has set herself up as a spokesperson for God and now spouts all sorts of erroneous doctrine. And we'll look at what she typifies on a grander scale in a moment. But since she is causing so much damage, is it any wonder that the tiniest city gets the longest message to all the churches from the Lord, both a message of commendation, for there was good being done here, but primarily a message of rebuke and dire warning for the corruption it was allowing to spread. For in this church we now see what was once the corrupted minority has now become the corrupted majority who are leading the church further from God instead of closer to Him. Instead of avoiding evil and the world, the church was now married to it, involved in it, accepting of it and was even originating some of its own.

For we see in the meaning of the name Thyatira one of the blasphemous doctrines that would be propagated by the Catholic Church, visible proof that the corrupt members within the church had drifted away from God. Thyatira means "continual sacrifice", and we see in the practice of the Catholic Sacrifice of Mass a great doctrinal error. For in the Mass, we see the priests declare they are offering a continual sacrifice for the sins of the living and the dead. Every time a priest stands at the altar to offer the sacrifice of Mass he denies the finished work of Christ on the cross, for in order to offer a continual sacrifice, that sacrifice must be killed every time it is offered, thus the priests in their error must kill Christ anew every time they offer Mass, Christ must die anew. If I understand this correctly, concerning the bread and the cup of communion of Mass, Catholic doctrine states that these materials become the actual body and actual blood of Christ. It is not symbolic, it literally becomes, thru their ceremony, Jesus' flesh and blood, this is called transubstantiation (where I come from its called cannibalism and an abomination). But again the worst thing about this blasphemous error is that it denies the finished work of Christ at Calvary, who was the once and only once, all sufficient sacrifice, which Paul plainly lays out in... *Heb 9:25 Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; 26 For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. 27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: 28 So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.*

Heb 10:10 By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. 11 And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: 12 But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;...Heb 10:14 For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified....Heb 10:18 Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.

Any other sacrifice that denies the one time offering of Christ is an abomination, it is direct unfaith, unbelief, and in rebellion to God. And yet that is exactly what we have rooted in Thyatira which symbolizes the Roman Catholic Church, a continual sacrifice, a repeated slaying of Christ Jesus. And from this one error comes forth many other doctrinal errors, for when you take the headship of Christ out, reduce him to an insufficient sacrifice for sin, and put man in charge, what do you expect

but error, lies, deceit and corruption all in pursuit of more power and wealth. We see such errors as the Pope as the vicar (agent or representative) of Christ, the veneration of Mary, worship of images and relics, invention of holy water, canonization of the saints, celibacy of priests, prayer beads, selling of indulgences, confessionals, removal of the communion cup from the laity, doctrine of Purgatory, tradition put on equal standing as the Bible, acceptance of the Apocryphal books as canon, the immaculate conception of Mary, the infallibility of the Pope, and many, many more. So is it any wonder Christ Jesus addresses his message the way he does to the church of Thyatira?

V18 *And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass;*

Here Jesus identifies himself as the Son of God, he lays claim to his divinity. This is the only time he is called such in the book of Revelation; Christ makes it very clear here he is not the son of Mary, nor is he a continual sacrifice for his blood as the blood of God is sufficient to cover all sin. And then we see once more that he uses a similar description as to what John saw in his vision of the resurrected glorified Christ in *Re 1:14 His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; 15 And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.* His eyes are all seeing with holy indignation, his feet are as burning brass, signifying judgment, for Christ is the mighty judge of all men, and he will judge the blasphemies that are coming from this church. But notice in v19, the Lord Jesus has something to commend the church for, despite its corruption and blasphemous teachings.

V19 *I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.*

Again as the one who walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, the Lord Jesus knows all about the works the church of Thyatira is involved in. This church is most definitely an active church. The Lord commends them for their love towards others (charity), their service, their good works and outreach in the name of Christ; he praises them for their faith, they do yet look to Him as their Savior and as God, despite their incorrect doctrine. He also knows their patience, their endurance, for even here they had suffered thru persecution, and that may be why they ally with the state, to protect themselves. And then oddly enough Jesus mentions their works a second time, stating that the last or latest works were more than the first, the beginning works. This church had grown, and in its growth it grew in the works of the Lord and they are praised for it. Just as we can not deny that the Catholic Church has done some good. Their stand against abortion and being pro-life has been a boon in our fight against such evil. They have stood for religious rights and religious freedom here in the States, and hands down they have been one of the frontrunners in their outreach and aid to the poor, Mother Teresa, a catholic nun, was famous for such. And in the early years their monasteries served as the only hospitals that were available for the sick. So even with a faith that walked away from truth, that became corrupted, they did get some things right as far as works are concerned. And compared to the previous three churches, Thyatira actually gets more praise than all of them, but then it also gets more rebuke than the other three as well.

But before I move on I want to make this comparison, if we compare Thyatira to the church at Ephesus we see these two churches are almost exact opposites. Ephesus had lost its first love, its outward showing of love for God and for others but countered this with a strong stand against doctrinal error, while on the other hand Thyatira was severely weak in doctrine but strong in works and expressions of love. But the thing to note is that BOTH are reprimanded for their errors, for a true church of Christ is to be both strong in doctrine and strong in love and works, as Eph 4:15 points out... *But speaking the truth in love...* the reason being because God hates unloving doctrine and loving

compromise. Yet compromise is exactly what Thyatira represents, all because of the influence of a Jezebel.

V20 *Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.*

Jesus says despite all your good qualities, I have not one, but a few, things against you. The main problem was the church was suffering or permitting or tolerating that woman Jezebel (see where toleration can get you into trouble?). Apparently in the church of Thyatira was a woman, most likely not named Jezebel as that name is probably more symbolic of her actions and character than her true identity, but nevertheless she was encouraging doctrinal error with whatever standing, power and influence she had. What she was doing was assuming authority within the church which God did not give her, she was pretending to be an oracle of God, a prophetess or spokesperson or mouthpiece for God. Maybe that's why Paul instructs Timothy in *1Ti 2:12 But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.*¹³ *For Adam was first formed, then Eve.*¹⁴ *And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.* Here a woman was blatantly ignoring her place, and in her own deception she was the transgressor causing others to sin as well by following corrupted doctrine. And surprisingly the church allowed her to do this, allowed her to openly advocate apostasy within the church, by allowing her to teach and seduce the church with corruption and immorality, most likely tempting them with power and influence of their own and maybe even getting them to participate in the Nicolaitane's doctrine of church hierarchy and getting them to be friendly or more accepting of mixing the state and church together. Thru this influence she caused others to sin, to commit fornication, which within context is more likely spiritual idolatry/adultery rather than something sexual, but that's possible as well; either way it was immoral and unscriptural for the church was being contaminated, it was trading truth for falseness, doctrine for error. This woman was getting followers of Jesus to mingle with false teachings and was most likely incorporating other religions or religious practices into the church's practices; she was bringing in things that were specifically condemned by God to the detriment of the church. She was the one trying to pull the church away from biblical teaching.

And that's probably why she is referred to by the name Jezebel. For we see the woman of that name in the Old Testament trying to do the same thing to the Hebrew faith. If you remember in *1 Kings* the story of King Ahab and his wife, Queen Jezebel, we see that she was a nonbeliever and very opposed to Jehovah and his followers. Queen Jezebel was a prominent influential leader of Israel, who was not even a Jew, but was the daughter of a pagan king with pagan Babylonian beliefs. Ahab married her for diplomatic reasons and was then corrupted by her beliefs for Ahab done evil in the sight of the Lord and built an altar to Baal and worshipped that false god. Jezebel's corruption was very far reaching, she so despised the Jewish faith that she tried to do all she could within her power to destroy it, all by corrupting it, forcing it to compromise, as she tried to mix the religion of her heathen people, the worship of Baal, with Judaism, just like the Jezebel here in Revelation who was mixing the church and the state. Jezebel was very destructive for Judaism, remember she had all those true prophets killed, tried to kill Elijah, had all those other prophets of Baal under her control as well as King Ahab and so she led Israel down the wrong path into idolatry and practices connected with vile Babylonian religions. Jezebel was a very negative influential personality for the Jews.

Much like the negative influential personality we find in the Pope and the Catholic Church. For we see many similarities here between Jezebel and Catholicism. Like what Jezebel was trying to do in mixing the Jewish faith with paganism, Roman Catholicism is a mixture of religions too, it's a mix of Christianity, Judaism and paganism. In the 4th, 5th and 6th centuries the church, influenced by the doctrines of Balaam and the Nicolaitanes, accommodated and permitted paganism into its beliefs in

order to gain converts, it also participated in the subdual of the true servants of God thru extreme persecution, it was greatly contaminated with false beliefs, it united truth with error, it even began to think that the Catholic Church's teachings were superior to the Bible. And like I already stated, it robbed Christ of his preeminence in his finished work on the cross by their belief in Mass and the continual sacrifice. The Catholic Church, though Christian in name and in some works, was anything but a true Christian church. Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. The Roman church done the exact thing Jezebel is accused of here, exercising authority not given to her, causing others to commit spiritual fornication by forming a close friendship with the world and idolatry, introduction of the worship of images and other blasphemous practices. All this was allowed in the church because the faithful majority had become the faithful few pitted against the compromising corrupted majority.

But despite all this falseness, all this corruption, in Thyatira and in the Catholic Church, the Lord in his mercy gave them both opportunity to repent of such blasphemous sin, of their spiritual adultery and idolatry.

V21 *And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.*

This letter was a warning and provided a chance to repent for the woman and her followers in Thyatira, and over time the Catholic Church has been given the same chance to repent of its falseness. Think of all the reformers and protestants that God rose up from within the Catholic Church to confront its corruption, think of Wycliffe, Martin Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, all who pointed out the sins of the church but were ignored. Rome was given the chance to change her ways many times but did not. Instead the Catholic Church added to its list of sins and blasphemies and false doctrines over time. Jesus says I gave them the chance to repent, to turn from their sin but they refused. So judgment will come.

V22-23 *22 Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. 23 And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.*

The Lord says I will cast her, the Jezebel, the spiritual harlot, into a bed, not a bed of seduction or of spiritual adultery, but a bed of sickness. For she must lie in the bed she made, her lust for power will bring destruction and plague, just as a true harlot can die from the repercussions of her sins, so to would this spiritual harlot perish for her sin. She was going to suffer from the disease caused by her blasphemy. Here the Lord was going to make a public spectacle of her, for all to see in her destruction. The bed she once used to corrupt others was going to become her death bed as judgment poured out upon her as well as upon those that were corrupted with her, those that joined themselves to her, that committed spiritual adultery with her, they would be judged as well, the states that were wedded to the church and contaminated it with power. Jesus says if these do not repent of their deeds they will be cast into great tribulation. And in this great tribulation, Jezebel's children, the followers of such corrupted doctrines, will be put to death. And thus, all churches, all denominations will witness this destruction so that all will know who is the preeminent Christ, the one who holds the reins, who is in control, (not her, the church is not hers to control), and who knows all men's hearts, for He is the Son of God, the head of the church, a church that is to be separated, spotless and holy, not contaminated, corrupted and adulterous. Jesus follows this by saying he will judge each one according to their works. So we should all catch the warning here that the work we do should be in accordance to the will of God, under the command of Christ and the direction of the Holy Spirit, not some man or some stately power or some doctrine of some Jezebel.

It should be easy for us to see that this destruction, this great tribulation, that this Jezebel will suffer, symbolizes the destruction of the Catholic Church and the revived Roman Empire that has seduced many. Jezebel corrupted Israel with Babylonian false religion. The Catholic Church has corrupted Christianity with its own pagan and Babylonian beliefs and ceremonies, and thus it is synonymous with the Great Whore of Babylon, the church-state of the end times which we know during THE Great Tribulation will suffer its demise, reference Revelation 17:1-7; 18:1-10.

So far we have been looking at the letter the Lord Jesus sent to the church of Thyatira, the church that represents the rise of the state-church, where government and religion are wedded together, united, and thus the church becomes a church of compromise, a church of works with a weak doctrinal stand. We have also seen that Thyatira means “continual sacrifice” and we looked at the blasphemous teachings that were allowed within the church that had merged itself with the world, the false doctrines presented by the false prophetess Jezebel who was allowed to teach within the church. We compared those teachings to the teachings and spiritual corruption down thru the ages of the Roman Catholic Church and saw how Thyatira symbolized Roman Catholicism in how far both of their doctrines drifted from true Scriptural interpretation. The Jezebel in Thyatira had not only set herself up as a mouthpiece for God but the church actually allowed her to speak such blasphemy, the church of Thyatira allowed her to spread false doctrine and manipulate believers into following her ways instead of God’s Word, into allying with the state, into adopting a priestly hierarchy, into undermining and challenging true preachers and teachers of the gospel, in essence she caused many to commit spiritual adultery, just as we pointed out the Catholic Church has done. So the Lord Jesus rebukes them for this corruption, and even states he had given this Jezebel, and the followers of such false doctrine, the opportunity to repent of their wrong doing. The truth was presented to them to show them the error of their ways, to give them the chance to turn back to truth, yet the Lord Jesus says they repented not. So he pronounces judgment upon them, and we saw that in the end times the great state church, most likely the newly revived Roman Empire Catholic Church power, the one world religion, the one great spiritual adulterer, will be judged, and the great whore of Babylon would fall. All will be witness to this, as this Jezebel of a church would be made a public spectacle, so all would see it is Christ who is the head of the church, who is the bridegroom, who is the jealous God, who has the preeminence, not some man made, man controlled religion.

Now beginning with v24, we see that the Lord Jesus shifts his attention from addressing the whole church at Thyatira to speaking to the minority of true believers, the ever faithful few of Thyatira. He speaks to the remnant that still holds true to sound doctrine and the pure and simple gospel, with no additions or subtractions.

V24 *But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden.*

Jesus speaks to those who do not have, who have not accepted, the teachings of this Jezebel, of this spiritual adultery. He speaks to those who have refused the doctrines of Jezebel, of Balaam and of the Nicolaitanes; teachings he refers to as the depths of Satan. As Satan is the father of lies, he is the deceiver, the serpent, old slue-foot, and look at the discord and disorder he had sown thru lies within Christendom, the corruption he cultivated within the church, where at the beginning there was just a corrupt few but that few had slowly grew into the majority within the church, so many had been deluded by Satan’s seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. We read in 2Pe 2:1 *But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought*

them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. That's why doctrine is so important, so we do not deny the Lord, blaspheme or become a heretic and thus bring destruction upon ourselves.

And so since this faithful remnant has not been corrupted by Satan the Lord Jesus tries to encourage them. The Lord implies they have suffered greatly under this false doctrine, they were actually burdened by it. This falseness within the church weighed upon these believers, it concerned them, worried them, they were burdened for their deluded brethren, they wanted them to be right with God and His word and not to be compromised or to capitulate. They spiritually suffered in the burdensome concern for the brethren. So the Lord says I will not place any other burden upon you. You have enough to deal with. *1Co 10:13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. 2Pe 2:9 The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.*

The Lord doesn't place any more commandments upon these believers, they had their hands full in trying to face the world, the state, and the apostasy within their own church. Isn't it wonderful that the Lord did not tell them to try to change the church, to fight against impossible odds, but that He just tells them to basically stay clear of this cult, to be separate from them and hold fast to what they knew was true? He says stay faithful to him as he will deal with those that follow Jezebel.

V25 *But that which ye have already hold fast till I come.*

Hold fast. Stay with the true sound doctrine you have already been given. Stay with the uncorrupted Word of God. Keep the faith, keep your assurance of the salvation you have. Don't heed seducing spirits or false prophets, test them to know whether they speak the truth. Hang on, hold fast. Make a stand, do not compromise, do not give in, do not give up even in the face of this corruption.

Prov 4:13 Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life.

1Th 5:21 Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

2Th 2:15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.

2Ti 1:13 Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

Heb 4:14 Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.

Heb 10:23 Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)

The Lord Jesus ends v25 with one condition, they are to hold fast "til he comes". Here is the first mention in Revelation of Christ returning for his church. Hold fast til he comes, and we are all instructed to always be looking for his coming, to be ready, to be watching and waiting for his imminent return. And when Jesus returns for his church in the rapture, they will no longer have to worry about holding on, for they will go from holding on to being a full overcomer, a victor in the Lord Jesus all because they have placed all their trust and faith in him as their Savior. *1Jo 5:4 For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. 5 Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?*

V26 *And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:*

Jesus asks this remnant to just hold fast and to just keep serving him til the end, to keepeth his works, to be the overcomer. For not only are believers to be watching and waiting, we are to be working while we do so. We prove our love of God and our faith in Him to the world by serving God, doing good works while we await His imminent return. And the Lord Jesus shows us that it is worth the wait, for those who hold fast, who overcome will be greatly rewarded for their devotion and dedication, for he says at the end of v26 *...to him will I give power over the nations.* The Lord Jesus will give to believers the power that the sate-church never truly had yet it constantly pursued, power over the nations, rule, authority over others. Jesus references Psalms ch2 here which looks to the day of the

Lord's return to the earth where his foes are conquered and his earthly kingdom set up, which his saints will play an essential part in. *Ps 2:7 I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. 8 Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. 9 Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. And then we read such selections as...*

Lu 22:29 And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; 30 That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

1Co 6:2 Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? 3 Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?

The overcomer will be permitted to be a co-ruler of the nations during the millennial reign.

Re 3:21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

2Ti 2:11 It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: 12 If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us:

Re 20:1 And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. 2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, 3 And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season. 4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

Where the world belittles the believer, casts them aside and crushes them underfoot, where the believer can just hold fast, the Lord Jesus empowers the believer, lifts them up, allows them to overcome thru faith in Him, and he then exalts them. *Lu 14:11 For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.*

1Pe 5:6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

Jas 4:10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

We will be allowed to rule and reign with Christ as an overcomer.

V27. *And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.*

This rule will be with a rod of iron, of rightness, a rule that is not easily bent or made crooked, as well as a severe rule, a rule of sternness, of holiness and justice. Just as Jesus will rule with a rod of iron so to will the overcomers he promotes to positions of rulership.

Speaking of Jesus' rule we read in *Re 12:5 And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne. And in Re 19:15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.* Again the words by the psalmist of *Psalms ch2:9 Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel* are applied to Christ, and to the church, who will rule the nations with Christ as their Chieftain, with the word of God powerfully convincing the world of sin and righteousness. The Lord Jesus says the overcomer will rule with absolute power, with authority as He himself received from the Father, *And he shall rule them with a rod of iron;...even as I received of my Father.* In his reward to the overcomer Jesus gives to them the same authoritative rule he has, and so rebellious men, those that spurn the Lord Jesus during the millennial reign will be dealt with severely, justly, rightly and righteously, they that do evil will be like clay pots which are easily broken under a rod of iron. Sin will be quickly dealt with. And so the humble will truly be exalted because they did not try to exalt themselves in their own doctrines or made up religion, they allow the Lord to show them more of his wonderful grace instead of trying to satisfy their own greed. And so with such a lifting up, with such exaltation by the Lord, we see in v28...

V28 *And I will give him the morning star.*

The overcomer here is given the morning star. And as we read in Revelation 22:16 we see that Jesus is that star... *I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.* Here we see that the overcomer is so rewarded for their holding fast to their faith, and keeping away from all sinful corruption, that they in the millennial kingdom will be so identified with Christ that it will seem almost as if He, Christ, belongs to them. They will be given the morning star, they will be given Christ, they will be so near and so affiliated with Christ it will seem like they possess Christ as one would possess a most precious treasure. And if one possesses Christ they possess all. We will be a follower of Christ, a ruler with Christ, a possessor of Christ, I think this means we will be as close to God as we can possibly get.

And truly as a believer we already have Christ living within us, we are in him and he is in us, but when we rule and reign with him, when we overcome all and are with him, it will be so much more glorious as we will truly know him intimately in spirit and in truth, we will no longer be looking thru a glass darkly but all things will be made known, our relationship with Christ, the head of the church, the preeminent Christ will be ours to possess and we will be completely his. He in us and we in him, a perfect union where we truly abide in Christ and he in us.

V29 *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*

And once again the Lord Jesus closes this letter the same way, urging all who will hear his words to listen and respond.

Chapter 4

REVELATION - CHAPTER 3 – THE SEVEN CHURCHES CONTINUED

SARDIS

We now begin looking at the church of Sardis, the city of the same name being located some 30 miles south of Thyatira and about 50 miles east of Ephesus. This is the only place in the Bible Sardis is mentioned. It was the capital city of the region known as Lydia and was once a very prosperous and wealthy city, a center for trade and a military hub, a place of luxury. The worship of the city focused mainly around the pagan goddess Cybele, known as the mother of gods whose worship included speaking in tongues, a ritual carried over into the true church, and Artemis, a nature god whose cult's beliefs revolved around death and rebirth, which may be why the Lord Jesus focuses on life and death in his address to the church here as one of the main problems with Sardis is that it had a history of tragedies and was now known as the city of death for it had suffered two devastating invasions and a disastrous earthquake which had decimated its once grand splendor. These people knew how precious life was and how tragic death can be. At the time of the writing of the book of Revelation, Sardis had dwindled in power and influence due to its disastrous history, it was a shadow of what it once used to be, yet the city was trying to live on its past glory, power and influence. Like the city, the church of Sardis followed suit, for it too was struggling to survive, it had once been a wonderful influential church grounded in the truth, but now it was depending on its once great prosperity to remain an influence within the region, the church was trying to survive on its past greatness. Sardis (the city and the church) was trying to live in the past but unfortunately they were dying in the present.

No where in this address does the Lord commend this church, but neither does he reprimand them for incorrect doctrine or problems that needed to be dealt with, along with this was the fact that the church was not suffering any opposition or persecution. What we see here is the church had grown comfortable and complacent, they had no opposition for they were not taking a stand, they had no encouragement in their work for they were not working, instead they were daydreaming of days of yore, of what they used to be, and ignored what they were now, a dying church. They had become content in their worship, living on fond memories of what they used to be, what used to happen, of past glory – the good ole days, they were living in the past while the present slipped away. Nothing was happening here, as the church really wasn't doing anything. And if there is no growth, no repair, no reproduction, no power within a church or for that matter any kind of living organism, means that church or living organism is dying or it is already dead. So we see that the church of Sardis was a dying church, a church that had fallen asleep on the job, just as the sentries of that city had fallen asleep on guard duty when both of its tragic invasions occurred. The church of Sardis was once a grand and lively church, but it grew comfortable, complacent, and now the enemy had slipped in and was wreaking havoc. And so the church here stands at a critical point of decision, it either wakes up and succeeds in its task of serving the Lord or it totally drifts away, fades out of existence, and dies a slow death.

And that shows us the symbolism of the historic time period Sardis represents of the church age. Sardis actually represents the time of the Reformation period, from AD 1500-1750. Now why

would we call this a dying, sleeping church when we compare it to the Reformation age, when great men of God protested against the Catholic church of that time and came out from under its rule? Men like Martin Luthor, Calvin, Wycliffe, and John Knox who took a stand against Catholic rule; when even the word Sardis carries the meaning “the escaping ones” or “those who come out or escape”. Why would we say this is a dying church when it looks like the Reformation period was a time believers were waking up? Well, the problem arises is that the church during this time in history had fallen asleep, it was in most terms a dead church, driven to despair by uniting with the state, grown drunk with its own power and wealth. Where worship had grown formalistic and ritualistic, where the church had a form of godliness, a name of godliness but the power of the Spirit was woefully absent. The church in all its added traditions, corrupted doctrines, separation of clergy and laity, had grown cold and lifeless, and the church had forgotten its true calling. The church had grown strong in worldly influence and power, but spiritually it had grown weak and feeble. Outwardly the church had the appearance of life, but inside it was virtually dead. It was going thru the motions, conducting its rituals and ceremonies, people came and went with no change in their lives toward sin or God, truly the church had become an empty shell. It had the name of Christian but no Christianity was in it. And then the Reformation happened, believers protested against the Catholic rule, thus they became known as Protestants, and from the reformation was formed many denominations, protestant churches, even other state churches. But the thing is these state churches and other denominations of the reformation period may have escaped or came out of Catholicism, but they came with their own creeds and their own histories, they had their own costly churches and colleges, their boards and agencies, and all kinds of groups and activities, their own beliefs, ideas and doctrines, but nothing about them closely resembled what the early church looked like when it began.

The problem here was the churches of the reformation that protested against Catholicism did not protest enough, for they did not fully separate themselves from catholic teaching and doctrines, they did not fully come out, did not completely escape from catholic doctrine and influence, in fact they brought a lot of those false beliefs and practices, doctrines and traditions, rituals and ideas with them. The work of the reformation was incomplete, they did not completely break off from the state church for we see such teachings as infant baptism, baptismal regeneration, sprinkling, salvation by works, a church hierarchy (doctrine of Nicolaitanes), and even the uniting of the state & church (Jezebel and Balaam) carried into the churches of the reformation. And thus these churches had within themselves the seeds of their own death. They brought with them the very things that were killing the church in the first place: ritualism, traditionalism, false doctrines and lies. So even though the reformation was great in one aspect, in another all it did was make things worse, for the church now stood at a point where it could go either way, it could turn back to Christ and live which would have been great but we don't see this happen, or they could continue on in their downward spiral and die, and many chose to just prolong their religion's death. For even today we see some of these protestant churches wanting to reunite with the Catholic Church or join the big ecumenical movement where they say all faiths are the same so we can all worship together as long as we leave our doctrines at home. Thus we see the roots of the worldwide state-church being formed preparing for the time when the antichrist and false prophet come on the scene. But something I want you to remember is that the Baptists were never a part of this, Baptists are not protestants, Baptists did not come out of the Catholic Church for they did not come out of the reformation, they were always separate from the church-state, in fact they were the ones the church-state persecuted when it was in power, and were in fact persecuted by many protestants, including followers of Martin Luther and Zwingli. So knowing all this is there any wonder the Lord Jesus addresses this letter the way he does?

V1 *And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that bath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.*

Christ reminds this church that it is he who has true power, the power of the Holy Spirit, signified by the phrase “*he that bath the seven Spirits of God*”, thus referring to the completeness and perfection of the Holy Spirit as discussed in *Re 1:4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne*; Christ is the one who has spiritual power, who sends the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, something the Sardis church was lacking. Jesus also reminds them it is he who holds the seven stars, the pastors in his hands. He is the one in control. Not the state, not the church, not some hierarchy. He controls the Spirit and his called servants. The church has no authority over the preacher just as the preacher has no special authority over the church, it is Christ who is the head, the rest of us are all part of and are an essential part of the body.

Jesus then says he knows their works, and look at what he says about those works, even though this church looked like and appeared like a church on the outside Jesus says “*thou hast a name that thou livest?*”, you have a name, a title, that you are alive, that you are Christian, that you are aligned with me, but then what does the Lord say? “*thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.*” The Lord Jesus says you are dead, there is nothing about you that is showing signs of life. No Spirit, no power, no outreach, no true worship, no praise, nothing, zero, nada. Yes this church may have some works but those works are pointless if not empowered by the Holy Spirit, which is absent here at Sardis. Only the church of Laodicea is of a lower spiritual state than this church. For a church that grieves the Spirit, quenches the Spirit, that does not have nor welcome the Spirit, loses its spiritual power, and a body without a Spirit is dead. Sardis was a dry, cold, unmoved, dying church.

And in all honesty, I wonder if many churches in today’s time are not close to that state. Many look like a church, have service like a church, have members like a church, they fellowship, give money to missionaries, they tithe well, but where is the spiritual power, where is the life, where is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit? Is He so grieved that He has abandoned such churches? Have they grown so complacent that God has left them for dead? God help us! God forbid that we are a dead or a dying church, but the signs are there for all to see, many have a name that they are alive but are they? But the good news is, whether they are dying or not, the Lord Jesus gives a dead church like Sardis a second chance. For he sends this letter to them by the hand of John to shake them awake, to stir up what life they may still have, and our churches of today can be revived as well with the Spirit and with life if we heed Jesus’ warning. For when a church will begin to confess its sin, and its members begin to get right with God and with each other, the Spirit can be free to move and a reviving, a revival, can occur. But it has to start within each of the members’ hearts. And that’s what will have to happen if such churches want things to turn around, they must humble themselves before God, turn back to Him, confess their sins of complacency and comfort, confess their falling asleep, of trying to live in the past on meetings and services they once had, reveling in the good ole days, believing the best times are already past instead of in the future, they must repent and truly begin worshipping and praising the Lord Jesus, uplifting the name of Jesus, to brag on Jesus, for when the name of Jesus is uplifted the church can truly worship and the Spirit will be in the midst of such worship. Such churches should begin to strengthen what they have in the Lord and begin to try to grow in worship instead of further dying in their worship. But to reach this point it will have to start with a repentant heart. And is that not what the Lord now says to Sardis?

V2-3 *2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.*

Be watchful, be vigilant, strengthen the things that remain, begin to once more grow in the truth that you have, even with the reformation churches, they did have some truth to grow in, for the most part they believed in salvation by grace thru faith in Jesus, that Jesus was deity, that the gospel was the word of God. Jesus says to grow once more on the foundations of your faith, strengthening, holding on to what you have left because otherwise Jesus says you are ready to die. You are ready to fade out, ready to disappear as a church, as an influence, you can not depend on what you once were, for every day is a new battle, a new chance to grow or diminish. So strengthen yourselves “*for I have not found thy works perfect before God.*” Jesus is not specific here, probably because the problems are too many, so Jesus refers them back to the ground floor of the church, himself and his gospel. He says in v3 to remember...

V3 3 Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

If you are going to live in the past at least remember what it was you heard when you were a Spirit filled, Spirit empowered, church. Remember the truth, the word, the gospel you received, the hearing of the word that granted you salvation; remember and hold fast to the core truths and not all this ritual and tradition and added doctrines of “the church”. Repent of you complacency, your sleepiness, your deadness, and live once more. Jesus is basically saying to this church to turn back to Him, to turn from deadness to life, for Jesus said “I am the life”. He offers this church a chance so they may survive and continue on. But if they refuse, if they continue on their death march, he gives them a warning of coming judgment. *If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.* When the Bible speaks of the coming rapture where the true church is caught up and taken away, leaving the rest of the world to face judgment and wrath we see many times that it describes such an event as a thief coming. And so true believers are commanded to watch and wait and be ready and prepared for such an event, we are to love his appearing so as not to be caught off guard, we read such passages as...

Mt 24:42 Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. 43 But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.

Mt 25:13 Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

Lk 12:39 And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. 40 Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.

1Th 5:2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. 3 For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. 1Th 5:4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. 5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. 6 Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. 7 For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. 8 But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. 9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,

2Pe 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

Re 16:15 Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.

What Jesus is doing is warning the Sardis church if they continue on their path to death, to being a dead church, they will be left for judgment, for even though they may have a name of life, have a profession of faith, claim to be saved, does not mean that they are, for they are not watching for him, they are not waiting and ready for him, for their names are not written in the book of life, they are in essence blotted out for their names were never in the book to begin with. And so if the Lord came at this very moment they would be left for judgment and wrath because many of them had not truly repented. Jesus warned Ephesus he would remove their lampstand if they did not repent, he warned Pergamos he would come and fight against them with the sword of his mouth if they did not repent,

and now he threatens judgment upon this dying church of Sardis if they do not repent. Don't fool yourselves, don't deceive yourselves, don't rely upon doctrines of men and traditions or rituals to keep you from judgment, only rely upon me, Jesus Christ, for I am the way, the truth and the life and no man cometh unto the Father but by me. Be ready, be saved, remember the truth that was once given to you.

V4 *Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.*

Here Jesus does give some good news, that even in this dead church there is still a remnant of spiritually alive faithful believers, the righteous few, who have not death to look forward to, but true life in Christ Jesus. There are a few here who have not been corrupted, who have not been defiled by false doctrine or teaching, who have not been contaminated by the state church and its power and influence. They have true faith, they have the Spirit, they have Christ, and they are counted worthy to one day walk with the Lord in white robes of righteousness, for they are true believers, believers who are only worthy because they have accepted the one who is worthy of all glory and praise and honor. They have Christ first in their lives, they have truly escaped from the arms of a worldly church and have devoted themselves to the true word of God. These believers may have not done great works to be commended but they are still faithful, they may not have been what they should have been, but they were holding fast to what they had, so Jesus tries to encourage them, even in their weak and feeble state for they still had hope, they just needed to keep keeping on.

V5-6 *He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. 6 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*

Here Jesus turns his attention once more to all others, telling them that they can be like this faithful few who will get to walk in white robes with him, if they too place their faith in Christ and become an overcomer. Those who will place their faith in Christ Jesus will be rewarded with white robes, with a name written in the book of life, will receive heaven and eternal life, and Jesus himself will claim them as his own as he intercedes on their behalf.

Mt 10:32 Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.33 But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.

Lu 12:8 Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God:9 But he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God.

He will reward the overcomer with supreme victory for they are saved by the blood the Lamb that taketh away the sins of the world, but its those who are not saved, who have been deceived by false church doctrine into thinking they are saved, that think they are okay, who believe they have their name written in the book of life, who think they have life who are in trouble, for they have a name that is alive and art dead, these are the ones who need to give an ear and heed the words of the Lord to repent.

PHILADELPHIA

The church of Philadelphia, and the city of the same name, are located about 28 miles southeast of the city of Sardis, on one of the main trade routes to Rome, which allowed the city of Philadelphia to be the most prosperous of any of the seven cities we have studied, leading it to be known as the "Gateway to the East". It was also known as "Little Athens" because of the many

temples and other fabulous architecture that were located there. Philadelphia was thus a wealthy, commercial driven, religiously diverse, cultured and highly populated city, which means there were a lot of people there who needed the Lord.

The word Philadelphia, as many of you know, means “brotherly love” or “love for the brethren”. In fact the Greek word “*philadelphia*” is translated in the New Testament as “brotherly love” several times as we see in the following verses, this should give us an idea of the attitude this church had towards its fellow man...

*Ro 12:10 Be kindly affectioned one to another with **brotherly love**; in honour preferring one another;*

*1Th 4:9 But as touching **brotherly love** ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.*

*Heb 13:1 Let **brotherly love** continue.*

*1Pe 1:22 Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned **love of the brethren**, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:*

*2Pe 1:7 And to godliness **brotherly kindness**; and to **brotherly kindness** charity. {charity meaning love}*

So we see brotherly love was a defining characteristic of this church. And we truly see the meaning of brotherly love come into play during the church age that Philadelphia represents. As this church symbolizes the church age from 1750-1900 AD, that age ending a little over 100 years ago, coming just after the age of Sardis, which was a time of cold, lifeless church services and worship. Where there was a contentment and complacency within the church, that had a name that was alive but was in fact dead. But then in the 18th and 19th centuries God began to stir his people. Awakenings began to occur all over Northern Europe and Britain which then spread to America. Churches and believers were once more spirit-filled and spirit empowered, they got on fire for God. The church that was so sound asleep that it seemed like it was dead was now stirred awake. During this time period the great missionary movement was birthed, revivals spread across the land like wild fire, believers began to truly show God’s love to a lost and dying world. Men of God like George Whitefield, John Wesley, Charles Finney, D.L. Moody and Jonathon Edwards preached to thousands and carried the gospel everywhere they went to receptive hearts. This was the time of the Great Awakenings that gripped churches, believers and unbelievers alike, and many, many lost souls were saved. The church was revived, they now had a world vision for the lost, they had been awakened spiritually, and they now began to really focus on the second coming of the Lord. What a time to be alive and be involved with the Lord’s work to see Him bless so, especially when the church had been so cold and indifferent for so long. So is it any reason that the Lord Jesus has no rebuke for the church of Philadelphia?

In fact he was very pleased with this church, as this church was almost the exact opposite of Sardis, which was corrupted and cold, while Philadelphia was pure and on fire, which makes what the Lord says about Laodicea so sad, for it was neither hot nor cold, just luke warm, and the Lord preferred it to be one or the other and not be in the state it was in. But what a church Philadelphia was, and we even have remnants of this church with us today, the same spirit, the same attitude, just as we have the remnants of the church of Sardis and Thyatira with us as well, the dead or dying church and the state-church filled with corrupted doctrines. I am sure I could guess what kind of church we would all want to be like, so as we look at the church of Philadelphia lets keep in the back of our mind how our church compares with it in attitude and spirit, and if need be, make adjustments, not only in our church and worship, but in ourselves as well.

V7 *And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;*

Jesus instructs John to write to the pastor of the church of Philadelphia in order for him to read the letter before the congregation, and as in all the other letters to the seven churches of Asia, Jesus gives a special description of himself. Here he says he is holy. Holiness is utter separation from

evil and uncleanness. Jesus is truly the Holy One of Israel, for he is holy, spotless and without blemish, pure in character, in words, in actions and in purpose; and in calling us to be holy he asks us to be separated from evil by being separated unto him, drawing near to Christ as we draw away from worldliness.

But not only is he holy, he is true. Jesus said he was the way, the truth and the life, for there is no error in him. He is genuine, he is the only true God, the only true Savior, the only true King. We read in *1Jo 5:20* *And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know **him that is true**, and we are in him that is **true**, even in his Son Jesus Christ. **This is the true God**, and eternal life.*

Re 6:10 *And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, **holy and true**, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?*

Re 19:11 *And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and **True**, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.*

Jesus here declares once more his deity and power that only the true and holy God would have, and then he says he has the key of David. Possession of this key shows us he is in total control of all things, for he opens what he will and shuts what he will. Back in 1:18 we also see he has the keys of death and hell. Jesus is defined as the life and here he also has the keys (control) over death, so all power rests in his hands, he has total authority.

Jesus' phrasing here in v7 of the key of David is a reference to Isaiah 22 were God removes a wicked man from a position of power in Jerusalem and places a faithful man, named Eliakim, into that place of authority and unto him is given the keys of authority. *Isa 22:20* *And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiab: 21 And I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand: and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah. 22 And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open. 23 And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place; and he shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house. 24 And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house, the offspring and the issue, all vessels of small quantity, from the vessels of cups, even to all the vessels of flagons. 25 In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, shall the nail that is fastened in the sure place be removed, and be cut down, and fall; and the burden that was upon it shall be cut off: for the LORD hath spoken it.* Eliakim here is a picture of Christ, as he is a trusted administrator of the affairs of God's people (ref. Warren Wiersbe). This key Eliakim holds is a key to the treasury of David's household, a key to the greatest riches of the king, it gives him total control over the treasures of the kingdom, which is what Christ has over the treasury of God's kingdom, treasures which he gives to us who believe upon his name, for those treasures include the riches of God's grace, the blessings and supply of daily needs, entrance and citizenship in the kingdom, the right to sit at the Father's table, he grants salvation, justification, redemption and all that entails, he gives eternal life and eternal reward, and he even offers these treasures of heaven in answer to prayer, all we must do is come before Him as his faithful servant and ask of him our needs, and with such prayer that is sincere and in the will of God, the Lord can open the windows or the doors of heaven and pour out some of those heavenly riches *Lu 11:9* *And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. 10 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.* The key of David that the Lord Jesus holds opens many, many doors... *he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;*

So if Christ is the only one who can open and shut those doors does that not demonstrate his power and control over all things? Especially those who have given themselves to him as living sacrifices by accepting him as Lord and Savior? Meaning he has control over us. That is probably why an open door means an opportunity for ministry. For Jesus gave us all a mission, the Great Commission, to go and teach all nations, to evangelize the world, so it is Christ who opens and closes those doors of opportunity to get the gospel out, to deliver a message of the riches of God's mercy

and grace found in the Lord Jesus, and it falls to us to be obedient in taking advantage of those opportunities to go and spread that good news, to take advantage of every open door presented to us.

V8 *I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.*

I believe it's that open door of evangelizing that the Lord speaks of here. No where does Jesus comment on the works of Philadelphia, just that he knows those works, and seems to be pleased with them for again there is no rebuke. Jesus is probably so pleased with their work he continues to open doors for them to spread the gospel, and no one else can shut those doors. We see the same opportunities given to those in the time period of the Philadelphian church age, where all those revivals and great mission works began, where men gave up all things, even their entire lives, risking all, leaving all, to go to dark countries to carry the light of Jesus. These men were truly burdened for the lost, had a true understanding of heaven and hell, they took advantage of the opportunities, the open doors, presented to them.

We also see God opening and shutting doors for Paul's ministry... *Ac 16:6 Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, 7 After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not. 8 And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas. 9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. 10 And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.*

Additionally we see in Scripture opened doors for getting the gospel out.

Ac 14:27 And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.

1Co 16:9 For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.

2Co 2:12 Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord,

Col 4:3 Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds:

So with the church of Philadelphia we see many opportunities were given to them to tell others about Jesus, remember they were on a main trade route to Rome, many visitors came thru this city, there were numerous pagan religions with worshippers in the city that needed converting, not to mention all those involved in trade and commerce that lived or travelled there.

But notice what Jesus says in the second portion of v8 *for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.* He not only knows their works, that they are faithful in their work in taking advantage of opened doors, but he points out that they have little strength. Now how can such a faithful productive energetic church be so weak? Well, it wasn't weak in faith, it was weak in ability. For remember the church has just awakened from near death, from the dying church of Sardis we now have a church that is returning to life, reviving, yet it has not gained it's full strength back. This little strength was like the church being groggy after its nap, or that it had been deathly ill and was just now recovering, still weak but growing stronger everyday. This may have to do with their influence among the lost, what with tainted thoughts and ideas about what the church was after many had had bad experiences with the corrupted doctrines and lifeless services of old. But even in its weakness, this church was still faithful, was spiritually strong for they had kept God's word, they trusted him, was obedient to him and they had not denied his name, they were devoted and not ashamed of the Lord Jesus, they proclaimed him as King, as Lord, as Savior, they glorified him and praised him, they uplifted the name that is above every name and stayed true to his doctrine and commandments, they loved God and one another, which even Ephesus had had a problem with!

V9 *Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.*

To further encourage this church, Christ says he will protect them in their weakness. Remember it was Smyrna, the persecuted church, that faced the synagogue of Satan during all their trials, *Re 2:9 I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.* But instead of having to face great persecution, Jesus says I will make these false teachers, these blasphemers, these religious enemies who oppose the gospel and the church, to come and bow before you, and they will know they were wrong and you were right, for you loved me and accepted my love for you. For did we not see with the church of Thyatira that Christ would give the overcomer, the believer, power over all the nations, where the believer would rule and reign with Christ, *Re 2:26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: 27 And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.* So here is another promise of that, Satan's minions would be humiliated before the true King and His followers, they would see who had true strength, true power, true control, true love, and they will be forced to bow and to confess the name that is above every name. Where they had spurned the love of God and are punished for it, believers in Christ accepted that love and are rewarded for their faith.

V10 *Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.*

The true church is promised deliverance, because of their faithfulness the Lord promises to keep them from the hour of worldly temptation or trial. Notice he says “keep them from”, not “keep them thru” for I believe this is another reference to the rapture and the Great Tribulation. For just as with Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, and now with Philadelphia and later with Laodicea, we see there are remnants of each of these churches represented in the end times. Jesus told Pergamos that he would come quickly and fight against them with the sword of his mouth lest they repent, he told Thyatira that those who allied with Jezebel would be cast into great tribulation, he told Sardis to repent or he would come upon them as thief at an unknown time finding them unprepared, and here he tells Philadelphia that he will keep them from the hour of temptation, the hour of trial and judgment upon those that dwell upon the earth, once again stating the imminency of his return in v11 with the phrase *Behold I come quickly*. Since this church was faithful, obedient and most importantly was composed of believers, they are not going to have face the judgment and wrath the Lord Jesus describes to John in the remaining chapters of the book of Revelation, for they will be caught up, raptured, rescued from God's wrath that is poured out upon the synagogue of Satan, upon unbelievers, upon the wicked and evil that dwell upon the earth.

1Th 5:9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,

1Th 1:10 And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

V11 *Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.*

So, due to this promised deliverance and his imminent return, Jesus tells the Philadelphian believers to hold fast, to keep the faith, even with their little strength they were to hold on to him, lest some man come and take their crown, lest some man steal their reward, not their salvation or eternal security, but their reward in heaven. For it is in heaven we are to lay up our treasures, as that is where the heavenly treasurer is isn't he?, so that is where your heart needs to be, so do not get unfocused or led astray by one of these satanic minions, do not let them hinder or side track your service to the Lord, to come to a point where a believer loses their heavenly reward.

V12-13 *12 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name. 13 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*

Again Christ once more closes by addressing the overcomer, the one who has believed upon him, and says that he will make them a pillar, an emblem of strength; they were little in strength but now they will be made mighty. They will be honored for their faith. They will be so honored that the Lord Jesus will write upon them the name of his God and the name of New Jerusalem, the new city, which we will look at in Rev. ch21 & 22, and then he will also write upon the overcomer his new name. Now we saw in our study of Pergamos that Christ would give the overcomer a white stone with a new name written in it, and here he says he will write his new name upon us. So apparently we get a new name, we have a new life, we live in New Jerusalem, and we have written upon us the new name of Jesus. For was he not called Jehovah in the Old Testament, Jesus in the New? And now a new name he will have in eternity *Re 19:12 His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and **he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.** and that name will be written upon us, *Re 22:4 And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.* This name written upon us shows we forever belong to him, it identifies us with our Savior, with his name on us it shows we are citizens of his kingdom, children of his Father, and we are granted rights in heaven. We will bear his mark, just as during the tribulation the antichrist will have his followers marked with the mark of the beast, so too will Christ forever mark his followers.*

Now granted I do not fully know what all this means, as there is a lot of mystery in v12 as to what is alluded to, but whatever the Lord Jesus does will be alright with me, for he is holy and true and in total control and he has saved me and rescued me from God's wrath, both on earth and for all eternity. He is my Savior who has done it all for me yet it is I who gets a reward, how gracious our God is! And that's what all ears need to hear, they need to know of the love and grace of God, they need to know the Lord Jesus, and that's why we need to take advantage of those open doors as the opportunities arise.

LAODICEA

We now come to the last of the seven churches of Asia the Lord Jesus commanded John to write to, the church of Laodicea. The city of the same name was located some 40 miles southeast of Philadelphia and 40 miles east of Ephesus. It was located between the cities of Hierapolis, which was famous for its hot springs, and the city of Colossae, which was known for its pure cold water, while the city Laodicea was well known for its wealth due to it being a large banking center, trade and market area. Much wealth and goods traded hands here. Laodicea was also a center for lots of manufacturing, especially the fabrication of a very soft, fine black wool cloth; where white togas was more common among the Romans, those of Laodicea commonly wore the local black cloth. Also within this city was a large medical school which made many medicines, ointments and salves, this school was known primarily throughout the land for one particular eye-salve it produced. The city also had much in the way of entertainment, boasting two theatres and a stadium. This city and the church along with it, were very prosperous, very wealthy and very well to do.

Yet it is this church of Laodicea that Jesus proclaims as poor that represents the last of the church age, the age of indifference, the age of the apostate church, the materialistic church, the time that the Bible warns of there being a great falling away; Laodicea represents the time in history from 1900 AD to the present day until the time of the Rapture. For as we see here, there are no more

churches to study, and since each church is representative of a specific time in history, we should see time is about to run out. So on one hand what a time to be alive, a time where we that sit here may not have to taste death, but will be able to meet the Lord in the air when he returns for his church, but on the other hand how sad it is to see the church and the world in the shape they are in today, how dire our situation has become. For despite the prosperity of Laodicea it was known as the City of Compromise, and the church of that city followed suite, as well as the church of today that it represents, all have followed the path to compromise, complacency, and indifference.

But the thing is, at one point Laodicea was a spiritually strong and thriving church; in Paul's epistle to the Colossians we are introduced to a man named Epaphras who was from Colossae, who was one of Paul's acquaintances in the faith, and was a fellow prisoner with him in Rome. Epaphras pastored in Laodicea. *Col 4:12 Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. 3 For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them that are in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis.... 15 Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house.* Paul instructed that letter to the Colossians to be delivered to Laodicea as well, and that the letter which he wrote to Laodicea (which is now lost) to be read in Colossae *Col 4:16 And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.*

Laodicea had been instructed and grounded in truth, in sound doctrine, had been preached to by Epaphras the servant of Christ who labored fervently and zealously in his study to help these people, Laodicea had been personally written to by the Apostle Paul, had a full understanding of who the Lord Jesus is and how he should be in the preeminent place of every believers' heart and life. Yet from such a close standing with the Lord Jesus this church had drifted so far from the Lord that he was now outside the church knocking on the door trying to get in. For instead of walking in the midst of the seven golden candle sticks, instead of holding in his right hand the seven stars or pastors of those churches, instead of being welcome and in the midst of the church's worship and praise and service, Jesus had been locked outside, and instead of walking with them was knocking to be allowed admittance. Jesus was trying to get in to a place and a people that bore his name yet really didn't know him as they should, they instead treated him as a stranger.

Why is this? Its because the church compromised its stand, the people grew indifferent, worldliness was let into the church and into individual believer's lives and thus Christ was shoved aside and forgotten, the church pushed Jesus out and forgot to invite him back in and so they took control themselves and began to run the church the way they wanted to. And this we see from the meaning of the word "Laodicea", it translates as "the rights of the people" or "the people rule", in the church where Christ was to be the head and the church the body, the body had now walked off without its head, and thus the body began to falter and die, for we all know that a body without a head is dead. And that's what we see in the apostate church. People in charge of God's house, running it their way, doing what seems good in their own eyes, indifferent to Christ and the truth and to sin, having no need of God, his power or his input. Paul sums it up nicely in *2Ti 4:3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; 4 And they shall turn away their ears from the truth...* So is there any surprise that the Lord Jesus has absolutely no commendation for this church, only rebuke, only warning, a last and final warning, and to put the exclamation point on this warning Christ introduces himself in some very powerful words.

V14 *And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;*

Here Jesus refers to himself as the *Amen* which is the Hebrew word for confirmation and trustworthiness, it means "so be it". Amen is also a title used of God in *Isaiah 65:16* where the Hebrew

word “amen” is translated as the word “truth” *That he who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of truth {amen}; and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of truth {amen}; because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hid from mine eyes.* Jesus here in v14 proclaims that he as God is ultimately trustworthy and what he says is absolutely true, he is the confirmer of God’s truth, he amens the Amen. For he also calls himself *the faithful and true witness*, not only here but in ch1:5. Jesus also referred to himself as holy and true to the church of Philadelphia, so what he is about to say to the church of Laodicea about their spiritual condition is the absolute truth whether they recognize it or not. Note that what Jesus says is not diluted, not sugar coated, he does not soften or distort or pull his punches in delivering the truth of the church’s state as their condition is far too serious not to be direct. He gives them the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth for they need the help of God. And you know sometimes I may be a little too blunt, a little too direct, I may really step on some toes, maybe say some things that infuriate some people but its not because I’m trying to hurt, I’m trying to help, just like Jesus is doing here, out of love for the church he is trying to help them by giving them the truth.

Jesus then gives a third description of himself, he says he is *the beginning of the creation of God*. Again this places Jesus in the place of deity, within the trinity of the triune God, and it is thru this position that Jesus created all of creation, he is the origin, the beginning of all within the universe. *John 1:3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.* I believe this is also a reminder to the Laodicean’s of the letter they received from Paul *Col 1:16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him.* Jesus began it all, he is the Creator, all things were created by him, for him and by him all things consist, he is the one that gave life to mankind and that gave his life for mankind, and the church here needs to remember that, without him, without Christ, they are nothing, without him there is no future, without him they are without everything, yet he is the very one they have locked outside their church doors.

And I believe it is because of that fact that the Lord says to John to write to *the church of the Laodiceans*. The key word being **the** there. Jesus makes this subtle addition as if it were no longer his church but theirs, **the** Laodiceans. He does not say the church of Laodicea but *the church of the Laodiceans*, as he is on the outside of the church, and it is now ruled by the people on the inside, it is empowered by the people, it is being destroyed by the people and their wants, their desires, their pettiness, their feelings. Church became about them and them being served, it was to run how they thought, it was not about them serving or worshipping the Lord, it was about them being served, they came for a blessing, not to be one. And so Jesus as the faithful and true witness who sees and knows all things and calls them like he sees them says to the church of Laodicea...

V15 *I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.*

Jesus knows this church’s works, what they do in his name, and he is not pleased. For we see they are not hot, neither are they cold, they are a sickening lukewarm, tepid temperature; they are stale, halfhearted, apathetic, unenthusiastic, indifferent. Thru biblical study you can find there are three types of spiritual heat in one’s spiritual heart, first there is a burning heart as seen with the disciples on the way to Emmaus when unbeknownst to them they spoke to the resurrected Jesus: *Lu 24:32 And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?* Second there is the cold heart *Mt 24:12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.* And then thirdly there is the lukewarm heart as seen in the church of Laodicea. The temperature of this church would be as that of water pumped from the hot springs of Hierapolis or the cold pure water of Colossae, no matter the location that water was pumped from the water would arrive at a lukewarm temperature at Laodicea. This church showed no enthusiasm about the Lord whatsoever, they were indifferent to doctrine, to

devotion, to zeal. Laodicea may have appeared like any other church on the outside, but it was just going thru the motions on the inside. It had lost its power and was clueless to this fact. The Lord Jesus said this sickened him so much that he would prefer they were either hot or cold, instead of this blah kind of temperature. He would prefer they were a cold dead church like Sardis who were alive in name only or that they were on fire like the church of Philadelphia who truly had a heart for God and His service, Romans 12:11 describes such a heart *Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.* But Laodicea was neither, instead it was just there, somewhere in the middle, not quite dead but definitely not alive, it was just taking up space, just hanging on, doing what it had always done, or at least it thought was, but something was very different, something was lacking from what it used to be.

And that lack was that there was no spiritual fire, no spiritual heat to warm the hearts of the members any longer. They had drifted far from God, lost the Spirit, and locked Christ outside, and without a continual influx of such spiritual fervor, of spiritual fire, they grew cool until they hit their lukewarm indifference. *Just as the Second Law of thermodynamics tells us. This law states that a closed system, such as this church, with nothing coming in and nothing going out, eventually moderates {balances out} so that no more energy is being produced. Unless something is added from the outside, the system decays and dies. For example, without electricity the hot water in the hot water heater becomes cool, without electricity coming in, the refrigerant in the freezer becomes warm. And so the church cannot be a closed system, it will grow lukewarm and powerless if it is, for Jesus said "Without me ye can do nothing". The church needs the addition of the Lord and His Spirit. Yet the Laodicean church was independent, self-satisfied and secure in their own little world. They even said they had need of nothing, not realizing they truly needed God. So they were dying a slow death, they were spiritually powerless, with the Lord on the outside trying to get in {paraphrase of Warren Wiersbe}.* Laodicea had closed its doors to Christ and the dynamic energy he supplies and thus they began to moderate to a lukewarm temperature. From this we see Jesus either wants all your heart or all your hate but he does not want lukewarm love, it is revolting to him.

And do we not see evidence of this in our churches today? An indifference among professing believers? An indifference to worship, to praise, to preaching, to teaching, to faithfulness to the church, indifference to the Spirit, to the truth, to the gospel, to salvation, indifference to one another, even an indifference to the church itself, thinking one church is as good as another, when its not. Many think they can take or leave their church and it doesn't matter {sister churches, denominations, yet each church is its own unique body}. In our churches today we see evidence of no enthusiasm, no urgency, no compassion, yet these churches move and operate, even appear like any other church but the key difference is the Lord is not there or at least he is not participating in their worship. What a sad, sad fact. That in one of the most opportunistic times in history to get the gospel out and see the lost saved, the church has become indifferent to the lost's plight and the one that saved them from their own damnation. And it is this indifference that sickens God.

V16 *So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.*

This church which had once been a blessing to God and pleased him was now repulsive to God. He hates this condition of indifference in his children, it is like asking a child questions over and over and them simply replying I don't know or I don't care, it doesn't matter, or my wife's favorite response from our nephew "I guess". There is no enthusiasm or care in such an answer, yet this was how the church was responding to God and that's how many respond to Him today, with the answer I don't care or it doesn't matter, "do you want me to be involved in your worship?"... "I guess" is the answer they give to God; they are indifferent, which not only has to be sickening to God to the point he is ready to vomit this church out of his mouth, but it must be infuriating as well.

The saddest fact about the condition of the Laodicean church is they were totally unaware of their state. They had deceived themselves about their condition. Like many churches today believe

they have everything a church needs to be a church, they have a building, a preacher, assistant pastors, a few deacons, a choir, committee after committee, an assortment of programs including a missions program, Sunday School, a few special meetings a year, plenty of members, plenty of money in the bank and a big spending budget, they thought they had so much that they had need of nothing else, they didn't need anything added to their church, to their worship or to their service, yet they were utterly blind to the fact that they didn't have the most important factor, they were missing the Lord Jesus, they had left him outside in the cold, and then they probably wondered why their services were cold, uninspired, dead, and why their church was dying. And then Lord Jesus tells them why.

V16-17 *16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. 17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:*

This church was ignorant of their spiritual condition and needed to be told very bluntly that they needed the Lord back in their lives. This church was so indifferent to the missing Christ that they thought they were fine, that their spiritual condition was okay, they were satisfied, comfortable, no one rocked the boat and that was okay with them, but it disturbed them when someone tried to stir them up. One of the main reasons the church had slipped into to such a state was they were so increased with goods, they were so prosperous they didn't have to depend on or need God anymore. They were truly a rich church, wealthy, having plenty to fulfill their programs, yet they had no heart to use that money. They truly thought in the back of their minds "we are so well off we really don't need anything else, we have all our bases covered, we are financially secure, even our members are increased with goods, they don't struggle to make ends meet, they live good lives, live in nice houses, drive nice cars, have lots of land, have plenty of additional material goods", they thought because they had so much we must be doing something right for God to bless us so much. And it is that right there that has snared many a Christian, they mistake their prosperity for God's blessing, yet does not the Bible say that the followers of Christ would suffer, especially suffer persecution? Remember the church of Smyrna suffered great persecution and great poverty yet Jesus calls them rich, they were the only church not reprimanded by Christ, yet Laodicea is materially wealthy but they are spiritually destitute and receive no commendation only rebuke from the Lord. Laodicea had grown wealthy because they weren't growing anywhere else, no heart for the lost, fellow churches, missions, the hurt, the orphaned, the poor, the abused, the afflicted, they had no compassion for their fellow man, no outreach to show the love of Christ to others, so their money began to pile up. This church was not burdened for the things of God, they were burdened by their wealth. Clarence Larkin writes "*The trouble with the church today is that it thinks that nothing can be done without money, and that if we only had the money the world would be converted in this generation. The world is no to be converted with money, but by the spirit of God*". Laodicea and the churches it represents have no sense of need, they are self-sufficient, they got along just fine without God, they are independent of the Lord. They have a high opinion of themselves, they are focused on money and materialism and self instead of depending on and being focused on God. They measure their success by human standards instead of by God's, and God wants obedience, he wants relationship, he wants humbleness, he wants love. Yet Laodicea and these others have none of these and are ignorant of this fact.

So Jesus the faithful and true witness informs them of their miserable condition. You think you have it all and don't even realize, *that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*. This is a church God is ashamed of, sickened by, angered with and is very close to judging. Laodicea is symbolic of much of the church in the last days, yet it shouldn't and doesn't have to be. For we saw last time there will be remnants of the Philadelphia church in the last days, along with remnants of

Sardis and Thyatira. So we have a choice, we are going to be one of these churches and share characteristics with others, and I don't believe Thyatira or Pergamos, the state-churches, are an option for us, so we are either going to be a Philadelphian church, a church of brotherly love, a Smyrna church, poor and severely persecuted (not likely at the moment but the chances are ever increasing by the day), an Ephesus church that has left its first love, the Sardis church, a church that is alive but dead, or we are the church of Laodicea, a church of indifference that sickens God. Which one do you think your church is?, which one would you like your church to be like?, what are you going to do about it?

Their indifference to God caused the church of Laodicea to put Him aside while they took charge so they could rule, and thus their spiritual fervor cooled to a sickening lukewarm temperature, they were neither on fire for God or to the point they were fully cold and dead, they were just there, going thru the motions, they had no zeal for God yet they had not fully rejected Him either, the church had become all about the members and their wants and their issues, not God, not the lost, not spiritual service, instead of trusting God and growing their faith they done what they deemed right and best for themselves, and this sickened the Lord to the point he was about to spew them out of his mouth. Yet the very sad fact was, this church did not recognize their miserable spiritual condition, they had so much, so much material wealth, were so prosperous, they thought they didn't need anything added, they were so increased with goods they had need of nothing else, yet they were unaware they were missing the most critical factor, they were missing the Lord Jesus. He was not involved with their worship or their work because they were indifferent to Him and uninvolved with Him, and just to keep this in your minds, this church is representative of the state of the church in the last days, not all churches, but quite a large majority of them, but the good news is Jesus does give those who wish to escape such a miserable spiritual state a chance to do so.

This church thought they had everything, wealth, power, influence, all the church programs you could shake a stick at, numbers, all the niceties and comforts of life, yet Jesus says they were poor: absolutely destitute, wretched: meaning contemptible or afflicted, miserable: pitiable, blind and naked, shameful. They had the appearance of well to do, good moral people, having a form of godliness with deep religious insight, even biblical knowledge, robed in decency and honor, blessed and fine representatives of the church of Laodicea who enjoyed life, yet on the inside it was a totally different matter. For this is a church God is ashamed of, sickened by, angered with and is very close to judging and being finished with it. And that is why the Lord in his mercy offers this church, and the believers that made up that church, some wise counsel.

V18 *I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.*

The Lord says the Laodiceans had the wrong kind of gold, in all their wealth he still looked at them as poor, which is the opposite of what he said about Smyrna, who were utterly poor in a worldly sense but Jesus called them rich. The Laodiceans had worldly gold, not heavenly gold, so Christ advises them to buy of him gold tried in the fire. Jesus is asking them to examine and test their faith, will their faith really stand up to trial, to temptation, to persecution, if not they have fool's gold, they need to get the real stuff, strong faith, growing faith, not faith that is so weak it would allow them to leave Jesus outside. Jesus wants them to strengthen their faith, to have gold tried in the fire, and the best way to increase one's faith is thru adversity, thru testing, *1Pe 1:7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.* This church had so much going for it and had compromised so much it really didn't face any persecution or problems like the rich church of Smyrna did, so instead of having spiritual gold, strong

faith, this church was weak spiritually. But if they would let God back into their midst and partake of the riches of His grace, of His gold that has been tried, tried on the cross of Calvary, they can be partakers of the riches of Christ and they will find these riches more than sufficient to help build their own faith, they will be made spiritually wealthy for when they begin to do the Father's business they will face some trials to help strengthen their faith. God allows his churches to face adversity at times to help them grow in faith so they can be strong enough to face the purposes He has planned for them. So if a church will begin to serve God and increase in faith and most importantly let Jesus back into their midst they will have the one *In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge Col 2:3*. They will be truly wealthy.

Ro 11:33 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

Eph 3:16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;

Php 4:19 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

The second thing the Lord Jesus says to buy from him is white raiment. Remember Laodicea was famous for manufacturing clothing, specifically a fine black wool that many of the residents wore, but here Jesus advises them to buy white raiment to cloth their nakedness and change their state of wretchedness and misery to that of righteousness. He bids them to be clothed with the garments of salvation and righteousness. *Isa 61:10 I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.* Jesus advises them to put on the white raiment of the bride of Christ, the raiment of the saved, the faithful.

This is also the same or similar to the white raiment the Lord Jesus himself is clothed in,

Mt 17:2 And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.

Mt 28:3 His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow:

Mr 9:3 And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them.

Lk 9:29 And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering.

And it is also the same white raiment Jesus promises to those who overcome, *Re 3:5 He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.* This white raiment He offers is the covering of those who believe upon the Lord Jesus. He asks them to not be clothed and identified with the world, to be carnal believers, but to be identified with him, to wear the white robes of righteousness and not the black robes of worldliness, compromise and indifference.

And lastly the Lord Jesus says to the Laodiceans to buy of him eyesalve to anoint their eyes with in order to remove their spiritual blindness, so they can see what they have done, in how they have left the Lord on the outside and how they have corrupted their worship and faith with their own pride, selfishness and indifference; how they have taken the church and robbed it of its spirit and life. They needed to see themselves as God saw them, they needed to see their miserable state without Jesus in order for them to desire to remove their lukewarmness by inviting Jesus back in.

If you recall Laodicea was also well known for its medical school and production of medicines, specifically a very potent eyesalve. Jesus says the very best medicine you have can't help you but what I offer can cure and heal all things, including your blindness. For again this church had walked away from so much, and had become what Peter warns of in his letter... *2Pe 1:1 Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ: ... 4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. 5 And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; 6 And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; 7 And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. 8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 **But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.*** This church needed healing so they could see Jesus as their Lord and Savior once more, as the

head of the church, as the Son of God who gave all for them to be saved, they needed to see they needed to put Christ back in the preeminent place in their lives.

And everything that Jesus offers here will accomplish that, will help change the condition of this church. But one thing I find curious is that Jesus uses the term “buy” *I counsel thee to buy of me...* Is not grace and salvation freely given, can man earn or merit or buy salvation or God’s forgiveness? Then why use the term buy? I believe what Jesus is trying to get across, to remind the Laodiceans, is that all of these things he advises them to partake of (heavenly riches, righteousness, spiritual healing) have already been purchased, the price has already been paid by Christ’s very own blood. The riches of glory, the white raiment, spiritual sight, all are offered freely for Jesus bought them for us, he purchased all those things and more, he purchased salvation and all that entails for us on the old rugged cross. And all one must do is obtain these things from the Lord, that’s what the word “buy” their means, to obtain, they do not have to give something to get something in return, they do not have to buy them, but they only have to receive what is freely offered from the one who did buy such things, for he has already paid the price. Another thing to take notice of here is that Jesus does not force himself on these people or on anyone, he gives them the choice, grace or judgment, him or the world, him outside or inside, involvement or indifference.

V19 *As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.*

Here Jesus gives the reason of such strong rebuke to this church. It is because he loves them, “*As many as I love*”. All that Jesus done and does for mankind is because of his love. His love caused him to give it all on the cross, caused him to suffer torment, pain and death, to become sin for us and face God’s unmitigated wrath. It was that same love that caused him to arise from the dead and leave an empty tomb behind, to ascend into heaven where he now sits at the right hand of the Father showing us even more love as he intercedes for us and now awaits the appointed time to come and get the bride he so adores. And it is that same love that gives the Laodiceans a second chance, a chance to make things right, to amend their ways, to repent, seek forgiveness and become involved once more with the Lord by inviting him back into their midst; one truly can not say that God is not gracious or a God of second chances.

Yet as with all love, such as the love of a parent for a child, there is rebuke, correction, because of such love and care.

Heb 12:6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

Pr 3:11 My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction: 12 For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.

And so Jesus has been longsuffering with this church, loving, patient, compassionate, but his leniency for their sin is about to end and chastening is about to begin unless they change their ways, unless they repent, but not just repent, Jesus says there is something else they must do, they must be zealous. The Greek word for zealous here actually means “to have warmth of feeling for or against”. He is telling them their indifference has to change, they must turn from their lukewarmness and become fervently, zealously, spiritually hot. Speaking to believers Paul instructs them in Ro 12:11 to be *...fervent in spirit; serving the Lord*; and that’s what the Laodiceans need, to be fervent in spirit, their lukewarmness must be replaced by a roaring spiritual fire, by a hot burning heart for the Lord, they must be stirred up in spirit, they must be zealous, involved, invested, devoted, obedient. And the only way to do that is to let the Lord Jesus back in, and that is why he stands at the door and knocks.

V20 *Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.*

When Jesus came to this earth his nation rejected him, the world crucified him and now his church had excluded him, yet in his love he still calls to those who will hear. And now in v20 he cries not to the church, but he cries to individuals, appealing to individual souls who will be zealous, who will repent, who will let him in and be involved in an intimate relationship with him once more. Please note that this plea from Jesus is not to the sinner but to the believer, remember he is speaking to the church that had become lukewarm, that overtime had become indifferent, that had drifted away, become backslidden, had become uninvolved in relationship with him, and he now appeals to them to let him in once more. Again, notice that this is an individual's choice, as Jesus was earlier described as having the keys and what he opens no man can shut and what he shuts no man can open, but here Jesus does not force himself into relationship with his followers. Yes he wants relationship with them, desires it, for he loves them, but he allows the believer to decide whether to open the door or not, Jesus simply stands outside and knocks, speaking to them with his still small voice "Let me in, let me in and we can sit and sup together, we can dine together, we can have fellowship, friendship, communion, and worship, we can have a hot meal, not a cold or lukewarm meal, we can have warm friendship not a distant indifference, all you have to do is open the door". And look at what happens if one will heed this call, if they will open the door of their hearts and let Jesus in once more, the supper room, the room where they sit with Jesus becomes the throne room.

V21-22 *To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. 22 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*

Only thru a close relationship with Christ can one be an overcomer, for it's only by him one can overcome sin, the power of Satan, and the pull of this world and the flesh. And with such closeness, not only does the saved believer sit in fellowship with Christ, he sits and rules and reigns with Christ with him in his throne, not the throne of heaven, but the throne of David from which he will rule this world. And he does have the right and authority to rule, to judge, to reign, for he did overcome all, he was the firstfruits, he defeated sin and destroyed the works of the devil, he finished the work and purpose God the Father sent him to do. But even in such authority he still calls out in love to those who have drifted from him, he gives a second, possibly last chance to this church and its members that is so representative of the church today. Christ wants a close relationship with all of us, all we must do is respond, open our hearts and let him in. But the crux of the problem here is that Laodicea wasn't aware of their state until they received this letter from John, but if you see similarities in your own church, if you have recognized there are problems, what are you going to do about it?

Chapter 5

SERMON – INVOLVED OR INDIFFERENT WORSHIP

Isaiah 58:1-7

Isa 58:1 Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins. 2 Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God. 3 Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours. 4 Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high. 5 Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the LORD? 6 Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? 7 Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?

The Webster's 1828 Dictionary defines worship as "to adore, to pay divine honors to, to reverence with supreme respect and veneration, to honor with extravagant love and extreme submission; to perform acts of adoration or religious service" And that is what all believers are to do unto the Lord when they come to the House of God to worship Him, they are to adore Him, love Him, honor Him, reverence Him in sincerity and supreme respect, with a true, pure, clean and submissive heart, to obediently do and serve as His Spirit urges. In essence worship is not about those who give worship but to who they are giving it to. In true worship there is personal intimate involvement with the divine, true worship leads one closer to God, real worship changes the believer, it improves them and their relationship with the Lord, the worshipper becomes a better person for it.

Yet so many church goers today are becoming dissatisfied, discouraged or frustrated with their church and their worship, they come to church and leave with no change in their lives, not having become any better for it, feeling no relief, no assurance or even feeling closer to God. Some wonder why services can be so dry, so cold, so empty, so many think "why bother?". And many of you have told me you feel this way at times with our services here and wonder what the problem is, and I think the answer is because we haven't really worshipped. I have been truly bothered by this, but then this week I heard a really good message on these verses here in Isaiah 58 and it hit me that this is the Scripture we need, for it reveals the problem that prevents our worship but it also shows us how to solve our problem. What Isaiah has to say to the people of Israel is very applicable to believers today who have lost the meaning of true worship. For worship is not being counted present, it's not attendance, it's not studying or praying or singing in the choir, it's not being in the prayer room or coming on Wednesday nights, it's not dressing up in your Sunday best to come listen to the teaching and preaching of the Word, worship is none of those outward religious things as true worship begins in the heart, yet I believe that's what many have focused on and believe they have truly worshipped when they do such outward things, but unfortunately what they have done is focus on one phrase in that definition of worship, the last two words I read, and they forget all that is needed and required before that, let me read that definition again so you will get this... worship means "to adore, to pay divine honors to, to reverence with supreme respect and veneration, to honor with extravagant love and extreme submission; to perform acts of adoration or **religious service**" Religious service: an outward religious show, many believe that to look and appear as a good Christian church goer, to do the outward things that a good Christian is to do, that that is worship. I hate to tell you this but its not, real religion, real worship is an inward religion, an inward

relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. True worship is when the Lord is sincerely honored, adored and loved, where he is respected so much that whatever he asks of us we obediently and willingly do without delay. True worship takes place in the heart, but that heart must be clean and pure, its sins must be forgiven and washed away, true worship is when you come to church and you allow Jesus to change your heart service after service after service to be more like his heart, but the problem is many come and go with no change whatsoever.

Worship is not an outward ritual, it must start on the inside, but just like water in a tea kettle, when a soul is stirred up in worship, when their spiritual fires are ignited and their spiritual temperature rises, rising from a cold heart or even a lukewarm heart of indifference to a hot heart of spiritual fire, that spiritual heat that is kindled in a believer will be expressed on the outside, for a tea kettle when it heats to boiling what does it do? All that hot steam has to be let out and so the pot begins to whistle, it lets everybody know its got something hot on the inside and its telling everyone about it, you can tell there is something going on in that pot by whats happening on the outside of that pot, just as we believers who truly worship and allow the Lord to stir our hearts, to raise our spiritual temperature, we can not help but let others know the Lord is doing something in us, something has to be expressed on the outside, we show whats going on by our emotions, our actions, our words, even our good works, but when we quench the Spirit what do we do?, we try to cool that heat down real fast so we don't let any expression of our worship escape, all so people won't think we're crazy.

Hey we are called to be a peculiar people, **1Pe 2:9** *But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people: that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.* So when our spirit is stirred in true worship, that worship must come out and you know what we can do then?, we show forth our praise, we can cry, we can shout, we can raise our hands to the Lord, we can simply say Amen, we can even have a quiet moment with the Lord but even that quietness will be expressed on our outward appearance, we might even smile a little bit and have a better demeanor than we did, it doesn't matter how our worship comes out as long as it does come out and its in decency and in order and if its of the Spirit, that is how it will manifest, but what matters is that we show forth praises of Him, in our heart, in His house and in the world, for we have someone worthy of worship and praise!

Now as I say that we are to show forth our praise, you do realize it won't kill any of us to say Amen or praise God or anything like that don't you? Just in case lets make sure before we get into the text... (*Ex. Bro so and so can I get you to say Amen/praise God/thank you Jesus?*)... Look the sky didn't fall, lightning didn't strike, the world didn't come to an end and nobody's laughing at you. You know why? because we all desire to truly worship, we were created to do as much, but we have been so caught up with our outward religious service, our outward religious appearance and show that we have begun to think that is worship when its not, we have begun to work out our faith instead of letting our faith work out of us, and God is not pleased with this, He thinks this false worship is sickening and calls it sinful, just as he done to the Laodiceans for their worship was very much like this, yet many have worshipped like this for so long they have forgotten how to worship the Lord on the inside. So as we quickly go thru this chapter I want you to see Isaiah's message here to Israel, and I want us to look at our own hearts, our own worship, for this is something I had to do myself as I prepared for this message, I had to repent of a few things, seek God's forgiveness, so that I could truly worship and be able to preach this message in the right spirit, so as we go thru this my prayer and heart's desire is for all of us to closely inspect ourselves and see what is preventing us as individuals, what is preventing each of you that feel frustrated or discouraged from worshipping in the house of worship, for that is where the problem lies, in individual hearts and that is where the solution has to begin.

V1 *Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.*

Notice God's command here to Isaiah to cry aloud, to not sugar coat the message, but to proclaim the message as a trumpet, loud and clear. And what is the message Isaiah is to deliver? He is to tell the people of their transgressions and the nation of Israel about their sins. He was to deliver a very unpopular message, and telling the truth does not always make one popular because the truth hurts. This is just like the message the Lord Jesus gave to the church of Laodicea in Revelation ch3, where he is described as the faithful and true witness, and as that faithful and true witness Jesus told that church bluntly and directly about their miserable spiritual condition, he told them their worship, their indifference to him, sickened him. But neither Isaiah, Jesus or even myself do this to hurt, but to help. For if we didn't speak the truth it would be like a doctor who has found out you have a fatal disease, like cancer or ebola, but then he doesn't inform you of it and just keeps telling you everything will be alright, if a doctor done that he is failing in his duty, and I would fail in my duty as well if I don't give you the truth, the truth that there is a problem with our worship. For church I am very concerned about us and our state of worship, I think we are in for some dark days ahead, we are going to face some difficulties and struggles, and we'll probably grow smaller rather than larger, but we are either going to go one of two ways. We are either going to get right with God, get rid of our indifference, our could-care-less kind of worship or the Lord Jesus is going to spew us and our lukewarmness out of his mouth and judge this church as we wither away to nothing. We are either going to be a living church stirred up for God or we are going to be a dead church. That's the cold hard reality we are facing, its not pleasant but it's the truth, because our personal sins, personal unholiness, our indifferences, are wrecking our worship. And that's the same thing that was happening with Israel. See its not just in today's time that such indifference has happened, for here God tells Isaiah to speak to Israel about their sin in their worship. **V2-3.**

2 Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God. 3 Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours.

Isaiah here explains what the worshippers were doing, these worshippers appear to seek God daily, appear to want to know more about God, they done all that was required of them in their ritual and ceremonies, in their sacrifices and offerings, they didn't miss a beat, they showed up, sat down, and appeared to be good little Hebrews, and the fact is they enjoyed all this outward show, they felt like they accomplished something by going thru the motions of their religion. They thought that all they done in going to the temple, giving their offerings, doing all the outwards showings of their faith made God pleased with them, yet God was anything but pleased with this for He didn't notice nor care about all this outward show, this outward religion, for He looked upon the hearts of these worshippers, and their hearts were not sincere in their worship, they only followed a form of worship, and in all honesty they did not worship, not one single bit, week in, week out, they came and they went, and appeared to be the faithful followers they proclaimed to be, yet nothing changed, they were still cold, still unenthused, still indifferent to God. Their worship was that of indifference. And that mood set God's mood toward them, "If you are indifferent to Me, not caring whether I'm part of your worship or not then I will be indifferent to you and not be part of your worship" He seems to say.

And we looked at that word "indifferent" as we studied the church that is symbolic of the last days, we looked at the church of indifference, Laodicea, that was neither spiritually hot nor spiritually cold, just lukewarm with indifference, they had a take it or leave it kind of attitude towards God in their worship. The Lord Jesus said he was about to spew such a church out of his mouth because of

this indifference, and God here is telling Israel their indifference is hindering their worship and He considers it sinful. For what did He tell Isaiah to do? To tell the people their transgressions and their sins, tell them their indifference, their going thru the motions, their pretending to worship, sickens me. Their worship had become sinful for they tainted it with an impure heart, they had a form of godliness but were denying the power of the Spirit to move them, for their hearts were far from God.

Isa 29:13 Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:

Mt 15:8 This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. 9 But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

Indifferent worship is hypocritical, superficial, sinful, it doesn't cause any change, any growth, and does not bring forth repentance or a closer relationship with the Lord, in fact it drives Him further away. And wouldn't you be driven away by what we see in v3 where these worshippers begin to whine that they had fasted and had afflicted themselves with suffering and that God took no notice of them, that God didn't meet with them, that He didn't move in their midst, and I wonder why. Here they are whining to God that He took no notice of their fasting, fasting which God had only commanded them to do once a year but allowed them to do more often if they so desired in order to draw closer to Him, yet Israel had taken this intimate personal act and turned it into an outward show of religion; instead of doing it secretly they done it out in the open for attention. "Look at how I suffer for my God, look what I do for my faith, look at me" was the real motive behind their doings. It wasn't to worship God and show utter dependence upon Him or draw closer to Him, it was to get attention for themselves, to show others just how good and faithful and religious they were.

The fact is they were not to do this as an outward show, as worship is not an external ritual, it may result in some outward manifestation, but it does not begin there, worship begins in the heart of every individual, in the internal. Jesus speaking of fasting says *Mt 6:16 Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. 17 But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; 18 That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.* The Father knows the heart and the reasons for these worshipper's fasting, He knows if its sincere or if its pretense, and He knows your heart as well, whether you truly worship Him or if you are a hypocrite looking to have your own reward. For that's what was happening, these people would make great outward shows of fasting and suffering and others would say "look at him", and "how faithful he is, how close to God they are, what a holy life they must live, I should be more like them in my faith", and thus these worshippers would receive pleasure in the day of their fast, they got something out of it in a worldly sense, not in a spiritual sense. They went to the house of the Lord to gain for themselves, to have themselves served, pleased, lifted up instead of coming with humble hearts to uplift and glorify God, to build relationship with Him. And that my friends is not a heart of servant, a true servant comes to serve God, to bless God, to serve and help others, not to have themselves blessed or served. God is the one who deserves the attention, not those who gather to worship Him. We are sinners saved by grace, we are not good little Christians that deserve a pat on the back, it is the Lord who saved such a wretch as I that deserves the honor of my worship.

Isaiah continues his harsh message in v4. *Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high.*

God says "You fast and have a pious appearance but as soon as your fasting is done you go strive and argue and commit wickedness against your fellowman. You came to worship but leave unchanged and go back out in the world and sin all the more. Your heart is still corrupt, you have not drawn closer to Me. This shall not be, you can't do all this and then expect Me to hear your cries, your

prayers, for again your heart is far from Me”. And church members do the same thing, they come to church and look so nice and composed, they go thru an entire service, and then leave, and get in the car and WWII breaks out, screaming and yelling at the kids, the wife fussing at the husband, the husband snapping at the wife. Even extended families who attend the same church, who sit beside each other in the pews, can’t get along outside these walls, they fuss and fight and get to the point they can’t stand each other, and some leave, some quit, some move, one chastises the other about their conduct, telling them “that’s not very Christian of you” while saying “I’m trying to approach this in a Christian way”, when neither one of them are acting like Christians. They may appear all composed and holy in church, but outside it’s a free for all. And God says that shows Him they have not worshipped, in fact they are sinning all the more. They are lying to Him, to each other, and to themselves, and a lot of them are ignorant of this fact, they don’t realize what they are doing. Just like the Laodiceans thought they had everything they needed in their worship, they didn’t need a thing added, yet the most important factor, the Lord Jesus Christ, was outside the church knocking to be let in, and the Laodiceans didn’t even realize it. The Lord Jesus in His rebuke says to them *You say you have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: God doesn’t want appearance He wants substance, and He says as much in v5.*

Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the LORD?

God asks the question is this really what I asked for in your worship to me, a simple outward show, some sort of religious form? Jesus himself reprimanded the Pharisees for such, for they thought they were awesome followers of God yet they were the furthest thing from what God wanted, *Mt 23:27 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness. 28 Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.* They appeared as one thing but were very different on the inside. But in v6-7 God shows them what a changed heart, what true worship will do. **V6-7**

6 Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? 7 Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?

The fast that God wants from believers is a fast from sin, he wants us to stop sinning! Free yourself from wickedness, remove the burden, the oppression of sin, from your life, break the yoke of iniquity. God would prefer to see one clean on the inside rather than covered in sackcloth and ashes. He doesn’t want form, He wants substance. One can not come to church and be all pious and then leave and sin like the devil himself. This does not get one closer to God, it is not pleasing to God, it is abhorrent to God, God is not impressed with empty worship. That is why He is so absent from many worship services, as He rejects them because He has been rejected by the worshippers. They would rather have and hold on to that sin in their lives rather than get closer to God, ...well to be honest, most of them want both, but you can’t have both, one has to choose, God or sin, it’s as simple as that, yet many try to walk the fine line between the two. Let me make you aware of this, there is no line. It is God or it is sin. For God will not be involved with sin and sin can not be involved with God.

And if one would just choose God, look at what their worship produces, their faith produces an outward expression of worship which is the outpouring from a pure heart. In v7 we see the hungry are fed, the poor are aided, the homeless are given shelter, the naked clothed, and one’s faith is not hid from those in their own family, from their own flesh and blood; their faith, their worship, their closeness to God is easily seen and evidenced, its not all clammed up on the inside. God is basically saying if you would stop worrying about yourself being served and begin serving others, just as Jesus,

as the Master, served others with a servant's heart, you can have worship, you can have Spirit filled services, you can gather and I will not be on the outside knocking to get in but I will be in your midst, moving and touching hearts and lives. If you stop being selfish in your worship and start being selfless in worship you can draw closer to me. If you stop being indifferent in your worship I will be involved in your worship. And that's really what it comes down to, do we want indifferent worship or do we want involved worship, do we want God's indifference or do we want His involvement, well that depends on us, whether we are going to be indifferent or if we are going to be invested and involved in our worship?

For do we not want God to be involved with us, in our services, in our church, well then we need to stop being indifferent to our worship, indifferent to our sin, indifferent to each other, and indifferent to God. And the rest of this chapter deals with what God will do when we are involved in our worship.

Isa 58:8 Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall be thy rereward.

9 Then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity;

10 And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday:

11 And the LORD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.

12 And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in.

13 If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words:

14 Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

Chapter 6

REVELATION – SUMMARY OF CH1-3 & A SERMON ON THE SEVEN CHURCHES

Summary of Chapters 1-3

Before we move on to chapter 4 of Revelation I thought it might be a good idea to put a few of the pieces together that were given to us in Rev ch1-3. For over these past few chapters we have gotten quite a few descriptions of the Lord Jesus, as well as what awaits an overcomer, and we have also had the history of the church from its beginning to its last days on earth laid out before us, for again these seven churches are representative of the entire church age, starting from the apostolic age and going all the way down to the age of apostasy and the rapture.

So to really get in our minds on what we have looked at we must first go back to the key verse of the book of Revelation, *Re 1:19 Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter*; Now why is this the key verse? Because it gives us the breakdown, the God given outline of this book, as the Lord Jesus tells John to write down what he has seen, which John does in ch1, and to write down the things which are, John does that in chapters 2 & 3, covering the seven churches and their spiritual states, the Lord's commendations and rebukes, along with His encouragements, warnings, council and urgings to repent. And then lastly the Lord tells John to write down the things which will be hereafter, what will happen after the church age – for as we have seen, we are done with the churches, there is no other church age after Laodicea; so John is to now write what will happen in the end times, and that is what ch4 to the end of Revelation covers, we see this plainly stated to us in the first verse of ch 4... *Re 4:1 After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter*. So before we look at what is to come, lets make sure we have a good understanding of what John has seen and the state of things which are.

Firstly, I think one of the most important things John saw and describes to us, is not a thing at all, but a who, for he saw and gave us a very vivid description of the Lord Jesus, not only a visual description, but descriptions of the Lord in his divinity and godly character.

Re 1:5 And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth.

Re 1:8 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

Re 1:11 Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last:...

Rev 1:12-18

Re 2:1 Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;

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

Re 2:12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges; {the Word of God}

Re 2:18 And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass;

Re 3:1 And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars;

Re 3:7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;

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

What a powerful intimidating figure the Lord Jesus is, no wonder John fell to his down at the Lord's feet as if he was dead, almost cowering before the Lord in fear and terror at the sight of such holiness and raw power, but what a loving touch the Lord Jesus reaches out and assures and comforts John with. For sovereign authority and loving compassion are both seen here in our Lord, as he has the godly power and might to defeat sin and the devil, the divine holiness to be pure and righteous, and the love and care to do and give it all for mankind. What an awesome almighty gracious God we serve, so awesome in fact that He allows such wretched sinners as mankind is to, by faith in him, become an overcomer, who are now empowered by God to overcome sin, death, hell, the power and influence of the devil, and even overcome eternal judgment and divine wrath. But that's not all the overcomer receives, let's review what all awaits such a faithful believer...

Re 2:7 ... To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

Re 2:11 ... He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

Re 2:17 ... To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it. {spiritual health, innocence, new name}

Re 2:26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: 27 And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. 28 And I will give him the morning star. {full possession of Christ}

Re 3:5 He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

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

Re 3:21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

So here we have an idea of what awaits those that overcome, the mystery and wonders to expect, the rewards available to the believer. Again how gracious our God is for He is the one who gave it all, who paid the ultimate price, who gave His Son who then gave His life, yet it is by the simple act of believing in the Lord Jesus and being obedient and in close relationship to him that the overcomer gains the total reward.

And what is amazing is that all these overcomers are going to be made up from all kinds of believers from the entire church age, men and women, Jews and Gentiles, poor and rich, every creed color and culture, from the beginning of the church all the way to the time its called home. Every overcomer will come from one of the church ages represented by each of the seven churches, so to finish up this summary I just wanted to quickly review those churches ...

We begin with the church of **Ephesus**, a name meaning desirable, as this church age began with the apostles and their influence and it typifies a doctrinally pure church, something that God desires in His churches and was exemplified in Ephesus, yet this church even in doctrinal purity had lost its first love and was urged by the Lord Jesus to remember, repent and repeat their first works to regain that love they had lost. Ephesus represents the church age from AD 70-170.

Next was the church of **Smyrna**, the impoverished and severely persecuted church facing much tribulation yet the Lord Jesus calls them rich. As its spiritual condition was one of the strongest of all the seven churches. The word Smyrna means "myrrh" or "bitter" as this church emitted the sweet fragrance of the gospel under its intense crushing of persecution, suffering didn't kill it, suffering made it stronger. The time period this church represents is from AD170-315.

Third was the church of **Pergamos** which means "married to, wedded to, or elevated". In this age we see the formation and rise of the state-church, where the church is elevated in power by uniting with the powers of the world and state government, and with this came the elevation and separation of the priesthood from the laity, the development of religious hierarchy, what John calls the doctrines of Balaam and of the Nicolaitanes. In this time we saw the beginnings of the Catholic Church and its rise

to power as the Holy Roman Empire began to take shape. The dates for this time period go from AD 315-606.

Following this age was the age of the church of **Thyatira**, the church of the Dark Ages, the age of Roman corruption, a time when the Catholic Church was in power and thus corrupted the doctrinal purity of the church by allowing the doctrine of Jezebel to invade it, meaning they allowed false doctrine and false teachers to cause havoc in the church. Remember the meaning of Thyatira is “continual sacrifice” and that speaks of the heretical doctrine allowed by the Catholic Church in the corruption of the Lord’s Supper, where Christ was not offered only once and then allowed to sit down at the right hand of the Father, his work finished, but that he must be sacrificed over and over, continually being offered/sacrificed at each observance of Mass. This church represents the age AD606-1500.

Then there is the church of **Sardis**, the church of the Renaissance, the age of the Reformation. This was the church that had a name that they were alive, but were in fact spiritually dead what with all their traditions, rituals, and ceremonies. And in this deadness, this spiritual sleep, the church was now at a crossroads, to continue sinking deeper into that deadly sleep or to wake up and be stirred up. The good news is that a portion did wake up and escape the confines of the state-church. Thus Sardis carries the meaning “the escaping ones” or “those who come out or escape”. And due to this we have the age of the Reformation, where there were those that protested against the Catholic Church, hence they were called Protestants. But unfortunately we see many of the Protestant movement did not fully come out from the deadness of the state-church far enough, they did not protest enough, but instead hung on to many or even created their own religious rituals and ceremonies, many even resembling the Catholic Church without the power of the state or a pope, therefore the Lord did not find their works perfect before God (3:2) because they were still wrapped up in a lot of things God did not condone for His church. This church symbolizes the years AD 1500-1750.

Following this time of the church waking up from its slumber is the time of the **Philadelphian** church, the church of revival and missions, the church of brotherly love, an age of evangelistic fervor and missionary zeal, a time of the Great Awakenings where revivals and the gospel swept the lands. This was a time of spirit filled churches and spirit empowered believers. Where the good news of Jesus Christ was spread far and wide around the world, where many were stirred up and were fervently, zealously on fire for God and many, many people came to know the Lord. This was the time period from AD1750-1900.

And lastly we come to the age of **Laodicea**. The church of apostasy, the church of indifference, the church of the last age, for this church had left the Lord Jesus outside their worship and therefore do what they please and think is right. From once being on fire for God the church has now cooled to an uninterested, unconcerned lukewarmness. The church began to do what was right in their own eyes, to seek to please self and amass material wealth to the point they forgot their need of God. So they left him outside and ran the church how they saw fit. Thus the meaning of Laodicea is “the rights of the people” or “the people rule”. Instead of the Lord Jesus being the head of the church, men placed themselves in the role of rulership and headship, yet the Lord Jesus stands outside and knocks and pleads to those who will heed His call to repentance, for as we see, the church’s time is almost up as Laodicea is representative of the time from 1900-to the Rapture. There is no more church age after that, as the true church will be caught up to be with their Lord. And with that John concludes his portion of the things which are as the next step involves the church being called home, the rapture, thus beginning the things that will come hereafter, as we see in ch4.

But before we proceed I want to do one more study on the churches before we leave them. Because from my understanding these seven churches correlate with the parables Jesus taught in

Matthew ch13, so I want to take time and explore that and then we will be ready to move on. So what I want you to do is to read Matthew 13 and think about how each of the parables in that chapter relate to these churches and the historical time periods they represent before you proceed.

Seven Churches & Seven Parables

A Comparison of the Seven Parables of Matthew 13 and the Seven Churches of Asia in Revelation

We have just completed our study of the seven churches of Asia the Lord Jesus commanded the Apostle John to write to, and in that study we have seen how each of those churches and their status and characteristics represent a specific time of the church age, beginning with the time of the apostles and going all the way to the calling home of the church, the rapture. And if this is so, then what we have seen should correspond and compliment any other references to the church and its lifespan in the Bible, for God's Word does not contradict itself. And I believe that's what we see here in the seven parables given in Matthew ch13. For in this chapter the Lord Jesus teaches his disciples about the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. And what exactly is the kingdom of heaven? Well, by looking at the parables Jesus gives, and understanding their meaning, we can see that the kingdom of heaven is a picture of the age of the church and the time of the spreading of the gospel, a time where the church is in the world and can be and is influenced or corrupted or even infiltrated by the world; the kingdom of heaven does not point to the church specifically but the age the church is in, for the church is made up of saved by faith believers only, not sinners and false professors, of which all are mentioned in these parables. For as we shall see, each parable corresponds with one of the seven church ages, as each church age bears the characteristics Jesus teaches in each parable. And I think this will be more evident as we get into it, but again this is more of a study to wet your appetite, as we only have so much time, so hopefully it will encourage some of you to study this more in depth on your own. So with that lets look at the first parable Jesus presents...

The Sower: Mat 13:1-9. We see here a sower who goes forth and begins to sow seed and that seed falls in all kinds of places, that seed may fall by the wayside where the fowls come and devour it, it may fall in stony places and have shallow roots, it may fall among the thorns and be choked out, or it may fall onto good ground where it grows and brings forth much fruit. The good thing about this parable is if the reader does not understand what the Lord is speaking of here, He actually explains the meaning in **v18-23**. The Lord explains that the seed which the sower spreads is the gospel, the Word of God, and the different places the seed falls is the varying hearts of mankind, for some reject it sometimes due to demonic aid or influence, some superficially receive it and remain unchanged, some believe but they do so without true faith therefore they have no roots and when hardships come they give in, give up and quit, they are shallow and thus unregenerated, some make a profession of belief yet their worldliness and carnality betray such a profession, and then there are some that are true to their profession and it is evidenced in their fruit and the continued spreading of the seed.

But what we see here in the sower going forth and beginning to spread the seed, the gospel, we also see in the beginning of the church age, the time of the apostles and the birth of the church. We see here the time of the church of Ephesus, the apostolic church age, the age of the beginning of the church and the spreading of the gospel across the globe. Remember the church began in Jerusalem but was not obeying the command of the Great Commission, so God allowed Saul of Tarsus to wreak havoc of the church and so under such persecution believers scattered across the land, fleeing in fear and along with them went the gospel, *Ac 8:3 As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison. 4 Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word. And where they preached some believed it, some rejected it, some half heartedly received it, and so we already see*

the world beginning to contaminate the church with believers who profess but do not possess. Also during this time period, after Saul's conversion on the road to Damascus, we see the apostles going forth sowing the seeds of the gospel in far away lands and planting churches, facing satanic opposition at every turn, the devil tried to stop them any way he could, by stealing the seed, corrupting the seed, or corrupting the grounds it fell in. Again we see all the types of hearts and people described by the Lord in his parable of the sower that we see throughout the church age.

The Tares and the Wheat: v24-30. Here we begin to see the results of the various kinds of ground/hearts the seed fell upon, for those that were not truly converted as well as those who rejected the gospel out right are intermixed in the same field with the good seed, the field being the world. And so when the good seed sprouted and grew into fruitful wheat, right along with it came the tares, which were planted by the enemy. These tares hindered the wheat, caused problems for the wheat, even harmed the wheat, but nothing could be done about the tares lest the wheat be harmed even farther, so both the tares and the wheat are allowed to grow together until the harvest (judgment) (again this is why the term kingdom of heaven here depicts the time of the church not the church itself). And we understand this parable because the Lord Jesus explains it to his disciples in **v36-43**. In the age we see represented by the tares and the wheat we see satanic activity, we see confrontation, oppression, persecution, something the church was going to have to face in varying degrees for its lifetime here on earth. Here we see the church in direct conflict with evil. For we see evil seed sowed alongside good seed which resulted in struggle and disagreement and even violence, thus we have the age of the Smyrna church presented to us, an age of great persecution of the church, where the church was destitute, impoverished and in conflict with those of the synagogue of Satan (2:9). For we see the tares robbed precious space and nutrients from the wheat, they contested with the wheat for water and other resources, leaving the wheat in a poorer physical state. But because Smyrna knew the Redeemer it was proclaimed to be rich, it would not be touched by the second death (v11) unlike the tares who would burn in the lake of fire after judgment.

The Mustard Seed: v31-32. After the church age of Smyrna comes the church age of Pergamos, a time of confusion within the church as it began to give into the false teachings of the doctrines of the Nicolaitanes (hierarchy) and the doctrine of Balaam (the church uniting with the state power, elevating in influence and authority), it was also in Pergamos where the Lord said Satan's seat was (2:13). In this age we see an unnatural growth of the church, where it becomes something the Lord never intended His church to be, which is exactly what we see with the parable of the mustard seed. For this little seed, the least of all seeds grows into something it was not, just as what seemed like a small insignificant teaching in Pergamos blossomed into the what we call the Catholic Church and other faiths like it, both the church and the seed mutated.

For the mustard seed is an herb, it is to grow as an herb, it is not a tree. Now granted, the mustard seed can grow into a plant that is immense in size, some say it can grow some 12-20 feet tall and actually looks like a tree from a distance, but it is not a tree, it is a plant. It has no bark and nothing about it says that it is a tree, not even its cellular structure or the time it takes to grow, yet this herb the Lord says in v32 *becometh a tree*. This is representative of the abnormal and unnatural growth of the early church. Where the church married itself to the world and the state, where it adopted the ideas of a hierarchy of priests. And notice that this unnatural growth was so big and immense that birds, the fowls of the air (and who is the prince and power of the air) come and nest in its branches, symbolizing more false doctrines, false teachings and even demonic influence and evil spirits, they find refuge in such a distortion of the true church, evil flocks to a corrupted church. John Phillips writes of this abnormal growth presented in this parable...*If the Christian community had remained true to the principles of the Lord Jesus, it would have remained small, despised, and poor in the eyes of men. Instead the church became a tree. A tree has a massive trunk and great*

branches that keep subdividing into smaller and smaller branches until they dwindle into twigs. In other words, a tree is an impressive symbol of organization; it is an emblem of power that is derived from a central authority and through its various administrative arms reaches down to the lowly rank and file. . . . The mustard by aspiring to become a tree, denied the law of its being and sought to raise itself above the level of its kind and vie with the trees of the forest. Similarly the church has aspired to become a worldly, hierarchical system – a superpower established around a central authority that delegates its authority by organizational means. That was not what the Lord had in mind for His church. And thus we have the direct comparison of the Pergamos church and the mustard seed, both abnormal growths, both unnatural, both corrupted.

The Leaven: v33. Where the mustard seed shows us an error in the outward development of the church, the parable of the leaven shows us corruption in the inner development of the church. The parable of the Leaven correlates with the church of Thyatira. For Thyatira was corrupted from within by the false doctrinal teaching of the woman named Jezebel and became engulfed in the depths of Satan. A church ran by such a “woman” we saw was representative of the one-world church to come, the whore of Babylon. Her false doctrine and paganistic practices corrupted the church just as leaven corrupts meal, for in the Bible leaven is a type of evil and sin, and just a little leaven affects the whole lump. And we saw that the church of Thyatira began to build on what was begun in the age of Pergamos, and thus the Catholic Church came into power and ruled a large part of the known world, spreading its corruption and tainting the truth of the gospel with its evil practices. We see that Jezebel’s teachings affected the entire state-church. And here in the parable of the leaven we also see a woman who takes leaven and sneaks it in, hides it, in three measure of meal and thus all of the meal becomes corrupted. A little unholiness corrupts that which is holy, and that is what this woman and her leaven, her evil, did to the church. *It is interesting to note that the “leaven” or false doctrine of the church of Thyatira has contaminated three major branches of Christianity—the Roman or Western branch, the Orthodox or Eastern branch (which is essentially the Roman Catholic Church minus the papacy), and even the mainline denominations that resulted from the Reformation. All three streams feature a priesthood or high-order of clergy who dress in vestments to distinguish them from the “laity” on sight; all three practice infant baptism and claim it to be the door into the “kingdom.”*

The Hidden Treasure: v44. In this parable we see there is treasure hidden in the field, and as we’ve seen in the other parables a field is usually symbolic of the world. And so here we have the age after the time of the state church, after the age when the church united itself to the world and become worldly and corrupted, for we still see there is something worthy within that church. For the hidden treasure of this parable can be representative of the age of the Reformation, the age of the church of Sardis, when believers (who were spiritually alive) sought truth from the word of God and not from men and protested against the ruling Catholic Church (which had a name that it was alive but was in fact dead). So within the worthless field (the worldly church) there was something valuable hidden, under all the false doctrine and practices and corruption there was still something precious, and that was the truth of the gospel and faithful believers, for even within these corrupted churches there were true believers, something the Lord counts as very valuable. Yet these true believers are hard to see for they are hidden under all the Protestant religious doctrine and practices pulled from Catholicism, for remember many Christian religions did not fully come out of the all the erroneous teachings and non-biblical practices of the state-church during the Reformation, in fact many of those same teachings and practices still exist in those churches today. But true believers are there, even though they are hidden under lots of error, for anyone who places their faith in the Lord Jesus is saved, and thus the Lord Jesus and all of heaven rejoices at the fact, for Jesus gave His all to purchase their soul, He paid the penalty for all mankind to redeem those who would believe, just as the man here sold all he had to purchase the entire field (world) just to obtain that hidden treasure, the few who would truly believe.

The Pearl: v45-46. Now in the worldly church the treasure of true faith may be hid, but in the true church it can be found more easily as it is very public. For here in the parable of the pearl the man, the Lord, is seeking goodly pearls. And Jesus found such in the church of Philadelphia for they

kept his word and did not deny his name, the Lord Jesus loved and commended this church. For remember the age of the Philadelphian church was the time of the great awakenings, of worldwide evangelism and missionary work, where the gospel was preached with power and the Spirit was present in services and revivals and was very present in the lives of men. This church was on fire for God and the Lord valued it greatly. *The “brethren” of the Philadelphia period sought only one thing—the Lord Jesus Himself. They sought Him through the Word of God and through sincere spiritual fellowship with each other. They “sold” everything that did not, could not, bring them into a closer relationship with the Lord and a clearer understanding of the Word of God. They abandoned church buildings, altars, pulpits, clergymen, the liturgy, the church calendar, robes and vestments, infant baptism, and the accumulated theological wrestling and wrangling of more than a millennia. They found none of these things to be of the slightest value compared to the one goodly pearl they had found in the fellowship of the Lord and His Body.* So is there any wonder the church of this age was considered a pearl of great price whom the Lord Jesus gave His all to call His own?

The Drag-Net: v47-50. Here the net that gathers fish of every kind, the good and the bad, shows us the time of coming judgment, the end of the world, when the wicked will be separated from the saved, the unjust from the just, the wheat from the tares, where those who have not faith will be cast into the fire. And we know that in the age of the church of Laodicea, the last of the ages, that there are many who have not faith, for this is the age of the apostate church, where there is both good and evil within the church walls, where there are true and false believers, for this is the age of the indifferent church. Is it any wonder the Lord asks about His return in *Lu 18:8* ...*Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?* There will be many who in their indifference to God and the gospel will find themselves still upon earth after the rapture, many will still be standing in the church choir or sitting in the church pew, for they have believed with the mind but not with the heart, and so they will face the wrath to come, both here on earth and in eternity. That is why up to the very end of the age the Lord Jesus still knocks upon the hearts of man, calling to those who do not believe, who have fooled themselves in false belief, or to those who have strayed from their belief to just open the door of their hearts and let him in. The Lord is ever merciful in his out reach to mankind, for it is this loving Savior that gave himself for the church and wants it to be all it can be and what it was created for. For Christ ...*loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.* That is why He gives us warnings and counsel in the Seven Parables of Matthew 13 and in the Seven Churches of Asia in Revelation so that we may learn, be watchful and hold fast, so that we who have ears to hear, may hear what the Spirit saith to us.

Chapter 7

REVELATION –CHAPTER 4

We now begin the third portion of the book of Revelation as detailed by the Apostle John in *Re 1:19 Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter.* So far we have looked at what John has seen in his vision of the Lord Jesus in Rev ch1, and the things which are, which covers the entire church age represented by the seven churches of Asia that we looked at in Rev ch2 & 3, and now here in ch4 the church age comes to an end with the Rapture and we are shown the things which shall be hereafter, after the church has been removed from the earth, the future events to occur.

V1 *After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.*

Notice the phrase John uses here, “after this”, after the church ages, after the last age represented by the Laodicean church, after this time period has transpired, after this John now looks up and sees a door opened in heaven, and who is the one who has the keys and opens doors that no man can shut? The Lord Jesus. John also hears a voice like a trumpet which speaks to him, and he has heard this voice before, for we read in *Re 1:10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, 11 Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia;* Who is it that has such a voice? The Lord Jesus. And what does the Lord Jesus say? Come up hither, symbolic of the Rapture, which Webster's defines “*to transport with joy, act of seizing and carrying away, a carrying away to sublime happiness*.” and when John hears such a command, he is, as v2 points out, immediately in the spirit and in the throne room of heaven. In an instant, in a twinkling of an eye, immediately John is transported from where he was to the heavenly throne room, from earth to glory.

So here in just a few short words we see the rapture symbolized. For as we have already seen the church age is ended, and the exclamation point on that age is the rapture, the calling of the church home, when the Lord Jesus comes and calls his bride to the marriage and the marriage supper of the Lamb. Compare what we have just read in v1-2 to *1Th 4:16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*

1Co 15:52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. Another reason we believe this is symbolic of the rapture is as we continue our study in the book of Revelation the church is not mentioned again until we get to the final invitation in ch22:16, for the church is no longer on the earth, it is in heaven with other believers, it is removed from the judgment and wrath to come... *1Th 5:9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.* The church is going to be called home much like an ambassador is called home by his homeland before war is declared, and God is ready to declare war upon the earth. We see this removal from wrath evidenced to us in the life Enoch who walked with God and was not for God took him before the great flood of Noah's time came, we see it in the story of righteous Lot who was taken from Sodom and Gomorrah before destruction came, and we can see much more symbolism of the rapture throughout Scripture which speaks of how the church will be called home before God's judgment rains down. As everything else in this book that transpires on earth has to do with Israel and the nations, not the church, for the faithful remnant of the church has been taken away, all that

remains is the apostate church, the false church (not including the tribulation saints, those who are converted during the tribulation).

V2 *And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.*

Here as John is immediately transported to heaven he sees a throne, a symbol of authority and majesty, and one that sits upon that throne. Who is it? None other than God the Father, we know this for the Son approaches the throne in 5:6 and the Spirit is before the throne in 4:5. Now realize this is a vision and here we see the three personalities of God, who is not three separate beings, but three different personalities, which are pictured for us here as the triune God. John sees in his vision God the Father and can not and does not attempt to describe such an awe inspiring sight, for how could he describe God if he even tried? Mere words would not suffice, they would always be lacking and too small to try to describe such a big God. It would be like describing the Grand Canyon as a hole in the ground. So John doesn't even try to describe the appearance of God, he simply gives a symbolic description...

V3 *And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.*

John says to look upon God was like looking upon a jasper and sardine stone. Now the jasper stone is similar to what we call a diamond, for we see the jasper described in the appearance of the New Jerusalem in *Rev 21:11 Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal*; This stone is bright and light, depicting the glory of God, His brightness, much like the brightness of the countenance of Christ in His glorified state in ch1.

Ps 104:1 Bless the LORD, O my soul. O LORD my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty. 2 Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment.

I think what John focuses on here is the glory, the skekinah glory, the bright aura around God.

Now the sardine stone is very much like the ruby, red, red as blood, the blood that was sacrificed by the grace of God for the salvation of mankind, also red as a fire as God is a consuming fire (which also gives off light which we also see the Holy Spirit in v5 described as fire as well as Christ was back in ch1).

It was the jasper and sardine stones that were the first and last stones upon the breastplate of the high priest of Israel that were engraved with the name of the twelve tribes of Israel, thus, we see the people were ever upon the heart of the priest, the heart being the place for affection and love. So here in the description we have of God, we see that God who so loved the world that gave His only begotten Son forever has His people on His heart, and has now called them home to be His children.

And then, just like that, John jumps to other things he sees, for so majestic is God he can not dwell upon the sight of the Almighty upon His heavenly throne. So John's eyes begin to wander around the throne room and he sees in v3 a rainbow that encircles the throne, this is not just a half circle but a total circle with God and the throne at the center, for in heaven all things are complete, and its not just any kind of rainbow, it is like an emerald, a vibrant green rainbow. The way I imagine this is with different shades of green in place of the various colors of the rainbow we know. The rainbow is a token of God's covenant with man and creation, which typically is seen after a storm, but here the rainbow is seen before the storm, before judgment falls on those upon the earth and creation. And the green of the emerald speaks to us of the creation and God's covenant with it, for in the end of this chapter the elders and four beasts bow down and worship God because of the creation (v11).

So thus far, as John instantly arrives in heaven he describes to us what he begins to take in, first his eyes focus on the throne and the one upon that throne, then his sight drifts to that which is

immediately around the throne, the emerald rainbow, and now as his eyes move across the throne room he sees in v4...

V4 *And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.*

So not only is there the heavenly throne, but in the heavenly court there are arrayed 24 other seats, or thrones, and on them sit 24 elders clothed in white raiment and wearing golden crowns, victor crowns specifically according to the Greek word used here. So who are these elders? Well according to their raiment they are priests, they are clothed in white, as with the righteousness of the saints *Re 19:8 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.* These elders are also kings, crowned with gold. And aren't thrones and crowns promised to the saints? Christ told those that overcome he would give them a crown of life (2:10) and in *Re 3:21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.*

So what we see here are representatives of a **royal priesthood**. *1Pe 2:9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: 10 Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.*

*Re 1:4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; 5 And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, 6 **And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father;** to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

So I believe these 24 elders represent the redeemed saints in glory, and we know that by what they say in *Re 5:8 And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. 9 And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; 10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.*

These are the redeemed who have overcome in the conflict with Satan and the world because they wear the victor's crown and robes of righteousness, and they worship before the throne.

Now King David had something similar to these 24 elders in I Chronicles 24, where he appointed 24 elders to represent the entire Levitical priesthood of his day, he divided the priests of Israel into groups who were to serve for a two week period in the temple, serving in the House of God, the place that God dwelled. Now those priests were thousands strong so all of them could not all come together at one time to discuss matters, but each time the 24 elders that David appointed met the whole priestly house was represented. So it is possible these 24 elders around the throne in heaven represent the much larger heavenly priesthood.

So I submit to you a thought here, and only a thought, that each of us who are true believers, saved by faith, washed in the blood children of God, of the royal priesthood, may in fact one day get to set upon one of these thrones in our appointed time of service to the most high God, either that or an elect few who are honored with such a reward for faithful service to represent the saved, I don't know if can prove that but it's a thought, for if these elders are all true believers and they possibly rotate in service like the priests did of David's and Solomon's time, we **might** have the honor and privilege of sitting in the royal throne room of the Heavenly Father with the responsibility of representing the redeemed. We will possibly get to see the very sight John saw here for ourselves, we will get to see the throne, the One who sits upon the throne like a jasper and sardine, we will get to see the emerald rainbow, we will get to see and experience all that and much more! Glory what a day that will be!

V5 *And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.*

Now something draws John's attention back to the throne. Just like the rainbow is depicting a coming storm, so to do these lightnings and thunderings and voices. For we see such a sight when God is dealing intensely with humanity...

Re 8:5 And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.

Re 11:19 And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.

Re 16:17 And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. 18 And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.

This also reminds us of the time God in his glory came to Mt Sinai to speak with Moses... *Ex 19:16 And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. 17 And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. 18 And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly...*

Heb 12:21 And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake.)

Also here before the throne, the Holy Spirit is now seen, represented by the seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. Now we know the Holy Spirit is not seven separate entities (neither is God 3 separate entities), but we have looked at this description of the Holy Spirit before, the number seven being the number of His perfection, the fullness of the Holy Spirit, the number of His perfect characteristics or attributes.

Re 1:4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne;

Re 3:1 And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God...

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

So this is just another description of the manifestation of the Holy Spirit in a visible form, much like John barely describes God but instead defines the colors or stones he sees as God's attributes, he does the same with the Holy Spirit, not a visual physical description but more of a description of the perfection of the Spirit as he appears before the throne. And then as John's eyes begin to drift around the area once more he sees in v6...

V6 *And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.*

Before the throne there is a sea of glass, of crystal, solid and clear, sparkling in all the lights (fire, rainbow, lightning, God's glory). I think H. A. Ironside explains this best, "The sea of glass of v5 reminds us of the sea of brass in Solomon's temple. That "sea" symbolized, like the laver {in the tabernacle} the Word of God because it contained the water used for priestly cleansing, and we are sanctified and cleansed by the "washing of the water by the word." But this sea {in Rev} is not for cleansing, so it is as crystal {solid} and later we find the martyred Tribulation saints standing on it {15:2}. It is the Word of God still, but it is no longer needed for cleansing because desert experiences are viewed here forever past. But the Word abides, stable and sure forevermore – the glassy sea filled with crystal – firm and glorious, on the which the people of God can stand eternally."

And I'll add to that that Jesus himself said in *Mt 24:35 Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.* His Word is here symbolized as the sea of glass as being forever fixed, in the eternal throne room of God, its purpose fulfilled but what it stands for to never be forgotten but to be an ever-present reminder of what the Lord Jesus done for mankind.

And lastly in v6 John sees four beasts, four living creatures around the throne with an appearance he has never seen before, but possibly has heard described before by the prophet Ezekiel.

So far in our study of ch4 we were shown the next major event on God's calendar, what would come after the church age, the event symbolized in verses 1 & 2 that would occur hereafter. For when John saw a door opened up in heaven, and heard an incredibly loud, trumpeting voice saying to come up hither we are given a picture of the Rapture of the Saints, for when John heard such a divine command he immediately, in a twinkling of an eye, found himself in the spirit in the throne room of God. And it is here that John sees such a vision one can hardly imagine and the apostle can hardly describe. For here John sees the heavenly throne, the place a believer can approach boldly in prayer to come and petition the one that sits upon that throne. And that is who John sees, who has the appearance of a jasper, a diamond like jewel, sparkling, glowing, the glory of God's aura and brightness all around, as well as the appearance of the sardine stone, like a ruby, with the redness of fire, for God is a consuming fire, and judgment is about to fall upon creation. And around this aura of God John sees an emerald rainbow circling the throne, the rainbow reminding us of God's promise, His covenant, with mankind and creation, that He would not destroy it again by water. But with this rainbow we see and hear thunderings and lightnings and voices coming from the throne, signifying the presence of God, the glory of God, the coming judgment of God upon the earth and upon sin, such a terrible and fearful image we are given, yet the emerald rainbow round about the throne tells us as just as God had mercy in his judgment upon Noah and his family when he judged the earth by water, so too will God have mercy in the upcoming judgment, the Great Tribulation, lest all mankind be destroyed; we know this as green is the color of God's mercy.

And it is around this magnificent sight that John sees 24 seats, 24 other less prominent thrones, with 24 elders sitting upon them clothed in the white raiment of a priest and crowned with the gold of a king and we looked at who these elders were, those who would be clothed in the white raiment of righteousness and given a promised crown and a throne, who in ch5 give praise unto the Lamb of God for their redemption. And thus we deduce that these 24 elders are representatives of the redeemed, the saved, the royal priesthood... *Re 5:9 And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;*¹⁰ *And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.*

And then we noticed that not only do we see the Father represented as the one on the throne, which we see pointed out in *Re 7:10* which reads... *And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.* But we are also shown the Holy Spirit before the throne and the seven divine aspects or attributes of His perfection represented by the seven burning lamps. And we will later see the Lamb, the Son, approach the throne in ch5. But again we have to be aware that this is a vision and God is not three separate entities or persons, even though it seems He is represented as such here as God is a triune God, the Elohim, one being with three equal personalities within that being. Keep that in mind as we look at these visions and interpret them.

And then finally in v6, where we left off, we saw the sea of glass, of crystal, representing the everlasting Word of God which shall not pass away and which cleanses believers much like the laver in the tabernacle, the sea is not flowing, it is solid, like crystal, symbolizing its eternalness, and then we were presented with four beasts or living creatures full of eyes before and behind around and in the midst of the throne of God so lets pick up there.

V6-8 *6 And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind. 7 And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle. 8 And the four*

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

Now I read quite a few descriptions about these four beasts in my studies, some believe they represent attributes or aspects of God and are not separate creatures themselves, others like myself, believe these 4 beasts are angelic beings, possibly cherubim or seraphim or some similar angelic order that are in intimate service to the Almighty. If you look at the first chapter of Ezekiel you will see similar creatures described, as well as many other similarities between these two chapters. For like Rev ch4, in Ezekiel you see fire and brightness, lamps and lightning, a crystal sea or firmament, a thunderous voice, a throne and one upon the throne with the likeness of a man, a rainbow, the glory of God in all its shining brightness, and then four creatures with wings and eyes with similarities of a lion, an ox, a man and an eagle. So it makes you wonder if Ezekiel had a similar vision to John's of the heavenly throne room.

And then when you look at Isaiah ch6 were that prophet sees a vision of the throne room of God we read.... *Isa 6:1 In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. 2 Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. 3 And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.* We see similarities in the angelic beings' wings and their praise of God. Now whether these are the same angelic creatures as in Rev 4, or if they are different variations of such or totally distinct and separate types of angels I do not know, but we can assume some things about the beasts in ch4 based on their description.

John says these creatures are full of eyes, covered with eyes, eyes before and behind and within, this would denote a divine wisdom, an all seeing omniscience, clear insight, super intelligence, being aware of all things where nothing is hidden from them. Their wings give the impression of speed and swiftness and constant activity. These beasts that are before the throne serve God incessantly, they are always active, seeking and searching and seeing, they rest not night and day. And then we see these four beasts, these angelic beings, have four distinct descriptions about them, one is like a lion, one an calf, one with a face of a man, and another an eagle. And we can see many characteristics of God or Christ in these. Such as the lion represents divine majesty, the calf or ox: strength and service, the man: intelligence, purpose, and personality, and the eagle: heavenly swiftness in detecting and judging evil.

In such symbolism we can also see a resemblance between the beasts and creation, for creation is the main theme of ch4 as we have seen God ready to judge creation, the rainbow denoting a covenant and mercy upon creation, and at the end of this chapter the four beasts and the elders give praise to the Creator. We read of God's covenant with creation in *Ge 9:9 And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; 10 And with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth.* In that we see these four beasts represented for here we see God's covenant is with Noah (the face of a man), with the fowl (the face of an eagle), with the cattle (face of the calf) and with every beast of the earth, and who is the king of the jungle? (the face of the lion).

Then we also see in the beasts a four fold picture of Christ in the gospels. The book of Matthew presents Christ as the King of the Jews, the Lion of the tribe of Judah which is depicted by the face of the lion. The face of the calf corresponds with the book of Mark who presents Christ as the sacrificial servant as the calf/ox/bullock which is used to serve man and then was used in some of the sacrifices of the Jews, *Mr 10:45 For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.* Luke then gives us the representation of the man, as that gospel presents the Lord Jesus as the Son of Man, the perfect man, showing us the humanity of Christ, that he is the Last Adam. And then John in his gospel gives us the picture of the eagle, linking Jesus with heaven, that he is deity, is

the Son of God, as He came to earth from his heavenly abode. Each of these beasts reflect an aspect of the likeness of the Lord. *“They are so much like Him because they are so much with Him. When Moses came down from the mount, unknown to him, the skin of his face shown with the shining image of his master. Those who spend time in the presence of God become like the Lord Jesus.”* (quoted John Phillips).

And it is these beasts, representative of so much divinity and godliness, that are in such close proximity to God that they resemble some of God’s majesty, who praise God constantly, they give praise without ceasing, crying Holy, Holy, Holy (a holy for each person of the trinity), Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. They magnify the power of God. Their purpose is to praise and they do so incessantly without end. They cry out and worship the almighty, omnipotent, all powerful, eternal God.

And look what happens when these four beasts give honor and glory and thanks to God, when they worship the Almighty, look who joins in, which we should take note of, that when we truly worship it will cause others to truly worship as well...

V9-11 *9 And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, 10 The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, 11 Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.*

Here we see the 24 elders, the representatives of those that are redeemed, when the 4 beasts give glory to God, the elders fall down before God, prostrating themselves in sincere humbleness before the throne and what do they do? They worship. They worship. They worship! We want to have an idea of what true worship is?, here is a picture, a denial of self and full acceptance of God, a realization of one’s own worthlessness and the full worthiness of God, one who is worthy of all love, all adoration, all praise, glory, thanks, all worship, for it is He who loved the world so much that He gave His only begotten Son, it is His mercy and grace that grants one salvation, that made the way for the redeemed to be redeemed, so one does not have to face the eternal torments of a dark and fiery hell. The elders abase themselves and uplift praise to the one who they acknowledge as worthy of such worship, to one who deserves it. For God is worthy of it all. Do you know what the old English word for worship used to be? Worth-ship. God is worthy and so He should be worshipped, especially by those who He had done so much for.

And in this worship the elders take their crowns, their rewards, and cast them before the throne. For they know they are not worthy of such a crown, they did not earn them, they do not deserve them, but it is God who deserves it all, for He is worthy. The elders do exactly what every living Christian should do, they give back to God what God has given them, for they give everything they have, they have nothing left from their earthly life, only heavenly/eternal rewards and they willingly and lovingly and devotedly cast such rewards at the feet of the one who made such rewards available. And everything we have, everything we are, is all because of God as well, and it is God who gave His all for us, so should we not give it all back to Him, to serve Him, to honor Him, to worship Him with everything at our disposal? Was not Abraham willing to give his own son Isaac to God? Did not Abel give the best of what God gave to him back to God? Did not Hannah who prayed for a son give her son Samuel back to God? What do we really think a living sacrifice is? We are to live a sacrificial life, sacrificing this life to the One who gave us everlasting life, because it is He who is worthy of such service and worship and dedication.

And that is exactly what these elders proclaim in v11, that God is worthy, He is worthy, He is due such praise, He is the one who deserves all the credit, all the glory and honor and power, God

deserves all this for what? Because He has created all things and those things were created for His pleasure... they were created to worship Him.

So now we see why so much has been referenced in this chapter about creation, for God is the one who made it all, without Him nothing exists, but because of Him there is creation, there is being, there is life. And that's something to worship Him for! To give God His due, His praise, honor, glory, power, thanksgiving, that is worship. But if you or me do not give God this when we come together to worship, where we abase ourselves, deny ourselves, and give God His due, uplift and magnify the name of Jesus, then we have not really worshipped, all we have done is have a social meeting. Worship requires more than just being present, it requires participation, not just bodily bowing down, but it takes a submission of the heart, it takes sincerity of spirit, it requires an intense strain on one's mental and emotional faculties. To worship with all our heart, all our soul, all our mind, power and strength is to totally, voluntarily, willingly, joyfully and fearfully give our entire being over to God, to deny Him nothing, to offer Him everything, because it is He who made us, who made us what we are, gave us what we have, so He is worthy to receive it all back, it is all His anyway including us. God is worthy!

I just want to show you how often these elders worship the Lord in this book, in order for us to see what they do, for if nothing else to give us an idea of what true worship is, so please take time to read the following... Rev 4:9-11; 5:8-14; 7:9-12; 11:15-19 & 19:1-4

Chapter 8

SERMON – WHAT IS THE RAPTURE?

I Thessalonians 4:13-18

How many of you know what an ambassador is? An ambassador is a high ranking official that is sent by one country as its representative to another country. They go to a foreign land or country and speak on behalf of their own nation. They educate others about their home country and advise and assist government officials from their own nation as well as the one they are visiting. But when a nation is about to declare war upon another, it is customary that the nation calls its ambassador home from the country they are about to attack, they pull him out before the war starts for the ambassador's protection and safety.

Now Paul writes in *2Co 5:20* *Now then we are ambassadors for Christ...* We that are saved are representatives of a far away country, we are ambassadors for the heavenly kingdom to this world. And when God gets ready to declare war upon this earth, when He is ready to pour out His wrath on this world in the form of the Great Tribulation spoken of in great detail in the book of Revelation, God will call His ambassadors home. Do you know what we call this event? We call this the rapture of the saints and that's what Paul is writing about here in these verses of I Thessalonians, and this is what I am going to try to preach on, on What is the Rapture?

Here in these verses, Paul has preached to the church at Thessalonica about the rapture and about the resurrection, where believers will receive new bodies and go home to be with the Lord. But some of the Thessalonians were concerned, were worried, about some of their loved ones that had been saved but had already passed away. They were worried that their loved ones who had died would have to wait to be resurrected, that they would not be resurrected at the rapture when the living believers received new bodies. They thought they might have to wait until after the Tribulation or even after the Millennial Reign or if they were resurrected, they might be disadvantaged in some way because they were dead. But here in I Thessalonians ch4 Paul assures these believers in Thessalonica that when Christ comes, that the dead in Christ will be resurrected and will be raptured right along with the living. Paul tells them this is as sure as the death and resurrection of Christ Himself, *14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again,*. He tells them this will happen and he tells them how it will happen.

Paul begins his explanation by saying in *v13* *But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.* He says I don't want you to have a misunderstanding or misconception concerning those that are asleep. He uses the words asleep or sleep here to refer to death. Paul is not talking about some kind of soul sleep or purgatory or anything, he is referencing the body of these believers. The body is asleep or is dead when the soul and spirit are not present. James 2:26 defines physical death for us, *For as the body without the spirit is dead,* When the spirit leaves our body, our body dies. And *2Co 5:8* *We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.* Paul says for the soul & spirit to be absent from the body is to be in the presence of the Lord. When a believer dies their soul/spirit immediately goes to heaven, but they do not have/receive a resurrected body. They get their new body, their resurrected

body, at the time of the rapture. How does that work. **Read v13-14.** *14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.* Paul says when Jesus returns, He does not return alone. Paul says that those that believe in Jesus, that have died and are now in heaven because of their belief, will be brought with Jesus when He comes to call all the living believers home. Their soul and spirit which have been in heaven since they passed away will return to this earth with Jesus. Paul says Jesus is going to come and He is bringing His people with Him. And when they return, then they will be given a resurrected body, and those that are alive will be changed into a glorified body without having to taste death. If you are alive when the Lord comes you will not have to die if you are saved.

Paul assures those in Thessalonica in **v15** that the living will not prevent nor precede those that are dead in Christ. He says those that are saved and have died that Jesus brings with Him will be resurrected and changed first, *v16 and the dead in Christ shall rise first*, and then those that are saved and are living are changed second. Paul is trying to comfort these believers and give them something to look forward to. Because at the time of the rapture, loved ones that are saved and have passed on will be reunited with the living. We will not only meet our Savior in the air but we will meet saved loved ones that have gone on before us. This is one reason I read this selection of Scripture at a believer's funeral or graveside service. I believe that those who are saved when the Lord comes to call us home will be coming with Him. All those that were saved and have went on to be with the Lord will return with Him, my grandparents, those that you know and loved, all those that I have heard you speak so fondly of, will return and receive a new resurrected, glorified body. That's why v18 says to *comfort one another with these words*, we have something to look forward to. Not only are we going to meet Jesus our Lord and Savior, not only are we going home to heaven, not only are we being called home before God declares war on this earth but we will meet loved ones once again, it will be a time of great reunion. This is not a time of sadness for believers but a time of joy unspeakable, our hope in our Lord will be fulfilled, this time is what we have been looking forward to.

Change/Translated/New Body

Now I mentioned a resurrected, glorified or a changed body, and from my understanding this is a physical body that our spirit will live in. But it won't be a corrupted body like we have now, one that's ruined with sin, but it will be a body like the body of Christ. *1Jo 3:2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*

Php 3:20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: 21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body

*1Co 15:49 And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. 50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. 51 Behold, I shew you a mystery; **We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. 55 O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? 56 The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.***

These new bodies won't get sick, won't age, won't get tired, will not be corrupted, will not be mortal. They will be eternal, immortal, incorruptible. Both the living and the dead that are saved by Christ will receive these new bodies at the rapture.

Rapture

Now so far I've used the term rapture but have not really defined it. But **v16-17** give a good description of it. The Lord descends from heaven, there is a shout, a trumpet, a voice and then the dead in Christ shall rise first. Those that believe but have passed away and have returned with the Lord from heaven will arise with their new bodies first, as they have been waiting the longest, and then we that are alive and are saved shall be, what's v17 say we shall be? **Caught up.**

What does that phrase **caught up** mean? Literally it means to seize or carry off. The Lord will come and grab us and take us home. This is what the word rapture actually means, to be caught up. Webster gives us a definition meaning to transport with joy, that rapture is an act of seizing and carrying away to sublime happiness. Scripture uses many terms and phrases to describe this event, but never actually uses the word rapture. Actually the word "rapture" comes from the Latin word *rapturo*, which is a translation of the Greek verb "caught up" found here in verse 17. And we use this term to speak of the removal of all of God's children from the earth, both physically and spiritually, both living and dead. This is what we are waiting and watching for. This is our hope. This is why we put our faith in Jesus Christ, that He was who He said he was, the Son of God that came to take away the sins of the world, that He done what He came to do, to die for all mankind, to die for the remission of our sins, to die as a substitute for each and everyone of us, and that He is going to do what He said would do, that He went to prepare a place for us and that He will come again to get us. *Job 14:3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.* We will be caught up together with them, together with those that were dead and we will be reunited with, we will be given new bodies, we will be caught up, we will meet our Lord Jesus in the air and we will be with Him forever. That's the rapture.

Pre-Tribulation

At the beginning of this message, I talked about an ambassador and how he would be called home before war was declared. That's why I believe the rapture is the next big event on God's calendar. Nothing stands in the way of the rapture, nothing else has to occur. We believe that God will rapture the church before the Great Tribulation, before God's judgment is poured out upon this earth. If you ever read the book of Revelation you will know all about the horrible things this world has to suffer thru during the Tribulation for its wickedness and evil ways. Mass destruction, wars, diseases, famine, natural disasters as well as supernatural disasters will be poured out upon this world. Billions of people will die. Not millions, but billions. Think of all the thousands that died in the tsunami a few years ago, think of all those that have died from plague or AID's or cancer or other diseases and viruses, think of all those that died in the great wars. That is nothing compared to what will happen during the 7 years of the Great Tribulation, when God judges this earth.

Now some think, Christians must go thru this time of tribulation and the rapture happens at the end, some think we will be raptured half way thru the Great Tribulation, but we believe, I believe, the rapture happens before this, we believe that God will call us home before all this happens, that He will call His ambassadors home to safety before the Great Tribulation. Why? *1Th 5:9 For **God hath not appointed us to wrath**, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.*

Ro 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Ro 5:9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. 10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

Job 5:24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. We don't have to suffer God's wrath, God's judgment, or condemnation because Jesus bore all of that on the cross for us. If we have accepted Him as our sacrifice, our substitute, our Savior, we don't have to suffer thru God's war on this sinful world.

And we are given multiple types & examples of this in Scripture of God carrying away His followers before destruction fell. Think of Enoch, *Ge 5:24 And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.* And *Heb 11:5 By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.* {translate means to carry over or to remove} Enoch was seized by God and taken to heaven before God poured out His judgment on the earth in the form of the flood. Enoch is a type of the church. Noah and his family are a type of Israel. God protected Noah thru the judgment like He will Israel in the tribulation, but He removed Enoch before the destruction fell.

Think of Lot and his family that were removed from Sodom and Gomorrah before God rained down fire and brimstone in judgment of those cities's wickedness. And in *Re 4:1 After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.* Here we see John the apostle being told to come up hither, and in the book of Revelation we do not see the church mentioned from the end of ch3 until the last chapter of the book. And if Revelation details so much of the end times, of the Great Tribulation, how is it the church is not mentioned during all this time of great destruction upon the earth? How does God not mention how the church survives all this? Why isn't the church mentioned? Because the church is not here anymore, we have been told to **come up hither**. Remember v16 back in Thessalonians says the Lord will descend with a shout, and I think that shout is the same one John heard "Come up Hither", just as the Lord raised Lazarus from the dead and told him to come forth, we will be caught up, told to come up hither at the command of our Savior and Lord.

We also see in v16 that there is a trump that will sound, the trump of God. We know Israel used a trumpet to announce many things, to declare war, to begin special times and seasons as well as to gather people for a journey. That trump is going to gather us for a wonderful journey. Whether that trump is an actual trumpet or the voice of the Lord as a sound of a trumpet, I don't know. And then the voice of the archangel, what this is I am not sure either unless its Michael and the angelic host giving a shout of victory when Jesus comes or its Jesus speaking with that kind of authority, to tell us to come up hither. But this time of rapture of those who have placed their faith and trust in Jesus Christ will be a wonderful, wonderful time. We are saved from God's wrath, reunited with loved ones, are given new bodies, and most of all we get to see and to be with our Savior forever and ever.

When?

The only question we ask now, is when will this happen? The short answer, I don't know. *Mr 13:32 But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. 33 Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.* No one knows when the rapture will occur but God alone. That's why we are told to watch and wait. We are not told to look for signs of His coming, we are to watch for His coming. *Tit 2:13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;* This is just another reason why we believe the rapture takes place before the Great Tribulation, because if it didn't we could follow the book of Revelation and see when Christ returns at the battle of Armageddon, when He comes to set up his kingdom here on earth. But according to Scripture, the rapture can take place at any moment, in the twinkling of an eye,

and we do not know the time. So if we can't tell when He is coming and that His coming is the next big event, that means He can come at any moment, His coming is imminent and we need to be ready.

Even Paul seemed to think as he wrote these letters to the Thessalonians that he could be raptured instead of facing death. In v15 Paul says “**we** which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord” and in v17 he says “Then **we** which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them”. Paul even thought the rapture could happen at any time, even in his day, and that was 2000 years ago. He was ready and waiting to see the Lord return. So Paul didn't know when Christ was coming back, nobody knows when God is going to tell His Son to go bring my children home. Paul writes in the next chapter *1Th 5:1 But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. 2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.* How many thieves do you know give you hints as to when they are going to come rob you? So why would Jesus tell us when He would come seize us and carry us off? We would plan for it and live however we wanted up to that time and then repent. But that's not how it works. That's why He tells us to be ready, to be prepared for His coming because the rapture can happen at any time. *Mt 24:44 Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.*

So my question to you as I close, are you ready to meet him in the air? Are you looking forward to His coming and bringing loved ones that gave their hearts to Him with him? Are you ready for a reunion? Are you ready to leave this world and its sin and evil and wickedness behind? Are you ready to be raptured? Are you prepared to be raptured? Let me make this very clear, the rapture is for believers only, saved people only, its not for good people, not for church members, not for baptized people, because you may be all that, but still be unsaved, the rapture is only for those that have believed upon the name of Jesus Christ, trusted Him by faith. So if Jesus returned today to take His ambassadors home, would you be going with him to heaven or would you be left here all alone, wondering what in the world just happened. Are you comforted by these words, or are you troubled by these words? If this troubles you, you need to get right with God today, get saved today, because He could come at any moment and then it will be too late. *Re 22:20* Jesus says... *Surely I come quickly.* And John then adds *Even so, come, Lord Jesus.*

Chapter 9

REVELATION –CHAPTER 5

Revelation Chapter 5 continues what was shown to the Apostle John in Rev ch4, as these two chapters are a secondary introduction to the rest of the book of Revelation, of what things are to come. If you recall in ch4 John was told to *Come up hither*, which was symbolic of the rapture of the church, for John was immediately in the spirit and in the throne room of God, where he sees the many wonders there, the throne and the one who sat upon the throne, the emerald rainbow, the 24 elders representing the redeemed of both the Old and New Testaments, and not only did John see in his vision God the Father upon the throne, he sees the Holy Spirit before the throne represented by the seven lamps of fire. He also saw the sea of glass and the four beasts, the four angelic creatures with likenesses of a lion, a man, a calf and an eagle, representative of the characteristics of God and Christ, and then John was witness to a most exciting worship service dedicated to the Creator, to God who the elders and four beasts call worthy to receive glory and honor and power for his creative power. And now in ch5 with John still in the throne room, where he has seen all these wonderful sights, he has his attention drawn to a book...

V1 *And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals.*

Here John sees at the right hand of the Father a book, which is more like a scroll or rolled up parchment (instead of what we think of as a bound book) which has writing on both the front and the back, it is completely filled with writing, and it has 7 seals upon. Now my understanding of such rolled up scrolls/books is that the parchment paper, after it has been written on to a certain point, is rolled up to that point and a waxen seal placed upon it (usually stamped with a signet) and then it is written on further then rolled up further and another seal is placed upon it, then its written on some more, rolled up more and another seal placed, and so on and so forth until the entire scroll is rolled up and a final seal placed upon it. So here is a scroll with 7 sections to it marked by seven seals. So in order for one to read the entire scroll/book all 7 seals must be broken.

Now concerning this book, it contains 3 groups of sevens, the seven seals, later on the seven trumpets and then the seven vials or bowl judgments. Once this scroll is opened, the seals broken, at the breaking of the seventh seal we begin the seven trumpets and then at the seventh trumpet we begin the seven vial judgments. But the question is what exactly is this book, what does it represent? Why are the trumpets and vials linked with it? The answer to this question helps us understand everything else in Revelation, if we misinterpret this we will not properly understand the rest of what the Lord is telling us. This book, this scroll with the seven seals is the title deed to the earth and its inhabitants and gives the right to rule both to the one who possesses it. Whoever has the right to open this deed is entitled, has possession of the earth, possession of all upon it, and the right to rule them all. Adam was actually given this deed at the time of creation, for God gave him, mankind, dominion over the earth, over the beasts, over the vegetation, over all life but this deed, this right, this inheritance, was taken from Adam by Satan during the fall. Mankind forfeited all rights to the claim of rule over creation because of sin, man lost everything, the entire creation because of sin, and from that point on, creation and mankind have been waiting to be redeemed, to be purchased back, they await

one who is worthy to buy back this inheritance. *Ro 8:22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now...* until the time of redemption.

And to fully understand this we must understand the principles of the kinsmen redeemer according to Jewish Law: if one lost what was rightly theirs (due to debt or death or such) one who was near kin could come and redeem the property of their impoverished or deceased relative, they would in essence purchase or pay the debt and themselves have the right of ownership. In the book of Ruth we have a perfect example of this where Boaz redeems Ruth as he is near kin to Ruth's deceased father-in-law, Elimelech. Boaz purchases all rights and claim to Ruth and her family, she being redeemed rightfully became Boaz's wife. Boaz is the kinsman redeemer. He redeems that which his kin had lost. One could be a kinsman redeemer for debt or loss of property, for slavery, or for vengeance for a kinman's murder. But the kinsman redeemer had to have three qualifications: 1. they must be a kinsman, 2. they must be able to redeem/able to pay the price, and 3. they must also be willing to redeem. We see in the book of Ruth Boaz approaching one who was nearer kin to Ruth to see if they wished to redeem her, but they were either not able or not willing or both, thus Boaz took upon himself the responsibility as he was willing and able.

So here with creation and mankind, man has lost his right to rule, he is in debt to sin; creation and mankind groan and travail waiting to be redeemed, they yearn to be released from the curse of sin. And here is John in the heavenly throne room witnessing the book that holds the title of creation and mankind, this is what needs to be taken and possessed, but the question arises in v2, who is worthy to take the book, who is worthy to possess it all, who is near kin, who is able, who is willing to open it, to loose the seals and claim ownership? Who is worthy to lay claim to all things?

V2 *And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?*

What I find interesting here is that its not just any angel that proclaims such a question, but it is a strong angel, a high ranking angel of phenomenal power and divinity, who himself has to ask who is worthy as he is not. A mighty angel of God has to ask who is the rightful heir of the world? Who has the title to claim creation as his own? Who is worthy to possess it? Who has paid the price to redeem it? And at such a proclamation, at such a question of supreme importance, everything grows quiet. Not a peep is heard, not a whisper, not a sigh, not a breath...

V3 *And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.*

No one answers. No man is found worthy. There may be many willing to rule the world, but none are found worthy of it. No man steps forward. Not one in heaven, not one in the earth, not one in hell was found worthy or able to open the book or to read it or even look upon its contents. No redeemer of mankind steps forward, they all look away in shame due to their unworthiness. Will man forever be left in the bondage of slavery, will creation always suffer under the curse? Such questions are enough to break the Apostle John's heart, for he, understanding the great importance of this book, what all is riding on the answer of "who is worthy?", knowing mankind's need of redemption from sin, knowing the travesty that has been inflicted over the centuries upon creation because of the wrong ownership, it is too much to bear, and since no man can be found it breaks John and he begins to weep.

V4 *And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon.*

No angel or any man steps forward to claim what was lost, out of the innumerable multitude no man steps forward to possess the right to regain what was forfeited, no man has the right to be the

kinsman redeemer. Here we see the complete moral inability of man, he can not redeem his own soul much less all of creation. And so John despairs, he weeps...will redemption be fulfilled?, will things always remain in such a pitiful shape?, will sin always abound? John, in his vision, in heaven, in the throne room, before all the majesty and God Himself weeps and sobs, tears stream down his face, such sorrow and sadness. He weeps because God's plan for redemption for man and creation can not be completed without the book being opened. But as if to comfort John, look what happens...

V5 *And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.*

One of the 24 elders, one of the representatives of saved believers, gets up from his throne, walks over to John and quietly whispers to him in the silence as if to comfort the broken apostle, and says almost with a glimmer in his eye ... *Weep not:* {do not sorrow, do not be sad, do not shed a tear} *behold,* {look there, cast your attention yonder and look for...} *the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.* The elder urges John to wipe the tears from his eyes for he has almost missed a most glorious sight, behold the Lion, the one of the tribe of Judah, the majestic king, the conqueror, the courageous, the victor, the overcomer, the one with power to rule and reign, behold the Root of David, the creator of David and his line who is also of the lineage of David, the son of David, who has the right to the throne of David, the Messiah! Behold this one has prevailed, has been found worthy in all ways to take the book, to open the book, to break the seals of the book, to look upon and read the book, one has been found worthy, look John a Redeemer has stepped forward! And so John wipes away his tears and looks once more towards the throne, he searches for a strong and fierce Lion, for a king of the line of David, but what does he see?

V6-7 *And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. 7 And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.*

John looks for a lion but instead sees a Lamb, for this Lamb is the Lion, as John sees the Lord Jesus, the one who spoke to him to write of what he saw, the one whose breast John had once rested his head upon, he sees the one he walked and talked with, the one he saw nailed to the old rugged cross, tortured and tormented, this is the one he saw die upon Calvary but also the one he saw alive and well on the third day after such a tragedy, the one he saw resurrected from the grave, this is the one he saw ascend into heaven to be with the Father, this is the one he knew and loved; John sees the Lamb, the Lord Jesus who is innocent, meek and gentle, who is as John the Baptist declared *Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world* (John 1:29). John sees the one who conquered sin by his own sacrifice, he sees the Redeemer of mankind, the kinsman redeemer, the one who is worthy to take the book, who has the right to take the book and lay claim to the world for he purchased/redeemed it all with his own blood. This is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the Messiah, the Christ, the Root of David, the Lion of Judah, the Lamb and Son of God, John sees that it is Jesus who is found worthy to take the book!

Much like God the Father is found worthy in ch4, Jesus is worthy as well for Jesus is God, part of the triune God. That is why he can approach and is in the midst of the throne of God, that's why he can come and take the book out of the right hand of the Father, for that is where Jesus is stationed, at the right hand of the Father. *Heb 1:1 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;3 Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;* This is one of the most important times, one of

the most important scenes, since time began, when Jesus the Lamb of God takes the book, the title deed of man and creation, ready and willing to redeem it, for in the Old Testament we had the question “where is the lamb” asked by Isaac when Abraham was ready to sacrifice his son, in the New Testament we have, as already stated, the proclamation “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”, and now we will soon have proclaimed “worthy is the Lamb”. And it is Jesus who is this Lamb!

And we can see this is no ordinary lamb, for John describes this Lamb in such a marvelous subtle way. John says he beheld in the midst of the throne, in the midst of the beasts and the elders, there in the center, standing was a Lamb as it had been slain. This Lamb has the markings of a sacrificial death, this Lamb had died, this Lamb had suffered, this Lamb had given it all, given its life, John can easily see the nail pierced hands and feet of Christ, he can see the spear wound in the Lord’s side, and yet this Lamb that had been slain, that had given his life, who had shed his blood to redeem the world, is now standing. He stands in the midst (v6) for he is alive! He is alive forevermore, He is well, He is strong, He is powerful, mighty, righteous, and has overcome death itself, and he is worthy to take the book for he purchased that right with his blood! John sees the Lord Jesus here as we shall see him in eternity, easily identified as the sacrificial Lamb of God, with an eternal reminder of the price he paid for our salvation, forever bearing the scars of the price he paid, he truly is the Lamb of God. *Did you know that in the Old Testament Jesus is only referred to directly as the Lamb twice (Isa 53:7, Jer 11:19) and only twice in the gospels (John 1:29, 36), only once in the book of Acts (8:32), and only once in the epistles (I Pet 1:19), but he is referred to as the Lamb 28 times in Revelation.* (John Philips). John sees the Lord Jesus in his glory, in his godliness as the Lamb, for look at how John describes Jesus...v6... *having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.*

John sees Christ is all his perfection, the number seven being symbolic of such. And here Jesus has 7 horns, this does not mean that Jesus in some grotesque way has 7 horns growing out of his head, but a horn in the Bible is symbolic of power, so John sees the perfect power and authority of Jesus, the 7 eyes speak of wisdom, Jesus is perfect in his wisdom and intellect, and that wisdom is directly linked with the 7 Spirits of God that are sent to all the earth, speaking of Christ’s perfect presence throughout creation. Now this picture is not something we typically think of about Jesus, but let me give you a description we might understand a little better. Perfect power (horns) would refer to his omnipotence. Perfect wisdom (eyes) would refer to omniscience, and perfect presence (Spirits) would refer to his omnipresence as well as Christ sending the Holy Spirit as the Comforter to take His place and to be with all his followers when Jesus left this earth. All three of these characteristics are only possessed by God. And here is the Son of God, part of the triune God, in all his glorious perfection, and as God (who we have seen is worthy in ch4 for his creative power over creation, which all personalities of the Trinity participated in), we now see that God the Son is worthy to take the book, to reclaim the lost title of creation and mankind, to be given dominion over all, eternal dominion, for he paid the price for redemption, he paid the price for sin for he became sin for us. *Da 7:13 I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.14 And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.*

And it is this Jesus, the Lamb, who approaches the throne and takes the book out of the hand of the Father. He claims it because he paid the sin debt of creation, he purchased the world to be his own. Even though it was his when he created it, he gave it to man who lost it thru sin, yet Jesus purchased it back on the cross, he redeemed it. But up to this point in time the Lord Jesus has not yet claimed the title deed of this world, not just yet, but here in the throne room, in the hereafter, after the rapture of the church, the Lord Jesus now takes the book and is ready to break the seals (which he

begins to do in ch6) and to lay full claim to all. Creation will be set free from its bondage to sin and death and soon, very soon, Jesus will return to the earth to rule and reign all creation. This Lamb will defeat the great red dragon and lay claim to all the earth. It is his for he created it, it is his for he purchased it at Calvary, and now it is his for he is ready to take it by conquest. So is it any wonder he is described as worthy?!? The Lord Jesus now lays claim to what is rightfully and properly His, He lays claim to what He has purchased thru his love and His life, Jesus takes the book! And what happens when the Lord Jesus takes the book? Proclamation of his worthiness is echoed throughout heaven and earth.

V8 *And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.*

Much like what happened in ch4 when worship for the Creator broke out, the four beasts and the 24 elders fall down and worship, but here they worship the Lamb, they worship the Redeemer, the Son of God. The time for weeping is over, the time for worship has began for one had been found worthy! And notice how they worship, in ch4 the elders (who are representatives of the redeemed) they worship with words and they worship with gifts (crowns), crying out that God is worthy of such worship, and now here in ch5 they worship with prayer, the golden vials full of odors, incense, which in the Bible are symbolic of prayer, *Ps 141:2 Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.* But these are the prayers of who? The saints, the saved, the believers, those who have prayed to the Lord for salvation and have asked to be saved by placing their faith in the Lamb and being washed in the blood of the Lamb. Its prayers of the redeemed! Prayers of thanksgiving and praise, prayers of honor and glory!

But the elders also worship with music and song. For here the elders each have a harp, beautiful music is made to sing praises to the Lamb, to magnify him, glorify him, praise him for his act of redemption and his now taking of the final steps to complete God's perfect plan of redemption by taking the book. So here we see in heaven there is worship, and every believer worships with voice, with sacrifice and giving to God, with prayer and with music and song. And that should be how our worship here on earth should be, all for the point of exalting the Lord Jesus. We are all going to do it up there, we will feel no shame to shout and sing and pray aloud in heaven for our worship will be all about him and all for him. Worship will be focused on him and no one will worry or care what others think because all will only be thinking of Jesus and how he redeemed their unworthy soul. And we know this for look at the new song that is sung in perfect harmony and volume (without practice and without error).

V9-10 *9 And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; 10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.*

This new song is about the Redeemer, it is centered about Christ, it is the Redeemer's song. And please note here that it is the redeemed who sing it, not the angels, actually angels only sing in one place in the Bible (Job 38), and here the angels have nothing to sing about for they can not be redeemed, this new song does not apply to them. But the first words sung by the redeemed declare the answer to the strong angel's question in v2, who is worthy? thou art worthy! The Lamb is worthy, the Lord Jesus is worthy of such worship, he is worthy to take the book for he purchased with it his own blood, he has the right to it. And as owner he can open the seals and read forth the entire contents of the book, so justice will be done, sin will be judged, the curse lifted, wrong righted, redemption completed.

And why else is he worthy, for he was slain!, the song sings. He has redeemed us, the believers, the saved, he has united us once more, broken down the wall of sin, filled in the gap of separation, and brought us back into union with God. It was the Lamb who done this, the man-God, the God-man, the Lord Jesus as divinity manifested in the flesh to be the kinsman redeemer, to come to earth to pay the price to have the right to all mankind and their eternal souls. And we as believers today need to be aware of this, that we still await that day to where we are wholly redeemed, where we are made perfect, changed in a twinkling of an eye. You know our souls/spirit are redeemed right now as believers, but our bodies are not, our bodies will be made new (glorified) at the rapture, but this world still groans and travails and awaits God's completed plan of redemption. *Eph 1:13 In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, 14 Which is the earnest {deposit, down payment, a pledge or promise} of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.*

2Co 1:22 Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

Eph 4:30 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

Lu 21:28 And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.

Ro 8:21 Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. 23 And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

I want to break here and make a point that H.A. Ironside brings out about the pre-tribulation rapture and what we see here in ch4&5. Speaking of the book and the seven seals, we know according to God's word that the tribulation period can not happen until those seals are broken and the book opened as we see in ch6, but here in ch5 we see the Lamb does not break the first seal of the book until the redeemed are seen crowned in heaven (the 24 elders, representatives of the redeemed, have their crowns, their rewards). And furthermore none of the redeemed are crowned/rewarded until they are judged before the Judgment Seat of Christ, and the redeemed are not judged until the coming of the Lord Jesus in the rapture. *2Ti 4:8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.* The crowns/rewards are given out at the judgment, which happens after the rapture but before the breaking of the seals on the book, which is before the great tribulation. So here we easily see in ch4 and 5 that after the church age the rapture happens, we are told to come up hither, and in heaven the saved are judged for their rewards, then the Lamb takes the book, opens the book breaking the seals and the great tribulation begins. And it is this catastrophic event that is probably also on the hearts and minds of those giving worship to the Lamb here for they do not have to face such wrath and judgment, for they have been redeemed, redeemed by the blood, so they worship even more.

(Now back to the song in v9) The Lord Jesus paid the price of our redemption with his blood. And by that precious holy blood the Lord Jesus saved out of every kindred (common ancestor), every tongue (common language), every people (common race) and every nation (common country/rule/government). This encompasses the entire world, all of mankind. For every human being is part of each of these categories. And in such a salvation of mankind, thru such a gracious act, the Lord Jesus has made such sinners kings and priests, they/we have become part of the heavenly royal priesthood, *1Pe 2:9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:* and as such we will one day rule and reign with our Lord and King, the Lion and Lamb of God here on earth during the millennial kingdom, when the Lord Jesus sets everything straight.

Re 20:1 And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. 2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, 3 And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season. 4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that

were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. 5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

And now with such a song echoing throughout heaven, look at what John now sees. For around the throne, around the Lamb, around the 4 beasts and the 24 elders, is an innumerable host of angels.

V11-12 *11 And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; 12 Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.*

The elders have sung about the worthiness of the Lamb, and now the angelic host declares with a loud voice “Worthy is the Lamb!” They agree whole-heartedly with the words of the elder’s song for the Lamb is worthy of such worship and adoration, for He is the Lamb of God that gave it all for all. *In Genesis 22 we had a ram that was substituted for Isaac, a picture of Christ giving his life for the individual. At Passover we see a lamb slain for each family. Isaiah states that Jesus died for the nation of Israel {Isa 53:8; John 11:49-52}. And John the Baptist states that the Lamb died for the whole world for it is this Lamb that does take away the sin of the world {Warren Wiersbe}*. From one individual to all of humanity, the Lamb paid the price for redemption and salvation, so is there any question of why he is worthy? This Lamb that was slain yet conquered death and hell and who lives forever more now has the right to receive all power (miraculous or mighty strength), all riches (all wealth, possessions, all things), all wisdom and strength (strength of force) and honor (highly esteemed) and glory (worship/praise) and blessing (to be adoringly spoken of, a religious benediction). He is worthy! The Lord Jesus is worthy! Worthy of our worship, worthy of our praise, of our prayers, of our song, of our sacrifice. He is worth it all! John Bunyan states “*Oh, this Lamb of God! He had a whole heaven to Himself, myriads of angels to do His pleasure, but this could not satisfy Him. He must have sinners to share it with Him.*” And its those sinners he has redeemed that cry out his worthiness.

V13-14 *And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. 14 And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.*

What we read in v13 will include us, we will participate in such adoration of the Lamb that was slain. It is not only the redeemed and the angels that give praise but all of creation now gives praise to the Lamb. But not just angels, but both fallen and unfallen angels, the cherubim, the seraphim, the archangel, the demon hordes, the angels bound near the Euphrates, even Satan himself, and along with them will be all of mankind, every soul, living and dead (heaven & hell), and every creature in all creation, every one in heaven, alive on the earth, under the earth, all that are in the sea, every beast, every fowl, every fish, every bug, every living single cell organism, all cry out that the Lamb is worthy, all acknowledge him as Lord. *Php 2:6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. 9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.* At last from every possible corner of creation and from every single tongue, dead or alive, saved or unsaved, angel or man or beast comes the united acknowledgment that Jesus Christ is Lord, all acknowledge him as such and are in full agreement. What a time that will be! An ecstatic, electric time of true and pure worship

that is solely focused on the Lord Jesus! And He is worthy of it all! He is worthy of blessing and honor and glory and power (dominion)... *Da 7:13 I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.14 And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.*

This universal praise is ascribed to the one that sits upon the throne, God the Father, and to the Lamb, and in v14 the four beasts add a resounding Amen! But notice also after such an astounding worship event, the 24 elders, representatives of all the saints, fall down and worship the Lamb even more. They can not get over the fact of what the Lamb has done for them and how worthy he is of their praise, they know how unworthy they were of Christ's love and sacrifice, and for such a one to do what the Lord Jesus done to save each one of them from an eternal hell and instead give them everlasting life, he deserves it all, and by him taking the book, he takes it all, for it all is rightfully his.

So to sum up what we have looked at in ch5 Bro Jerry Honeycutt gives a neat little outline....

1. The great book: v1
2. The great question: v2
3. The great search: v3
4. The great sorrow: v4
5. The great comfort: v5
6. The great victory: v6-7
7. The great sight: v8
8. The great song: v9-10
9. The great throng: v11-14

Chapter 10

SERMON – HEAVENLY WORSHIP

I Chronicles 16; Revelation 4

Something I have noticed in our studies of the book of Revelation, and something I have tried to bring to our attention as we've come to it, is that every time we see the 20 and 4 elders, we see they are visibly and audibly expressing their worship of God and the Lamb. They do not sit quietly by, they are not stoic spectators, but they are involved participants in their heavenly worship. They each rejoice and give praise and glory to the one who is worthy of such worship. They forget themselves and are totally focused on the Lord. And what bewilders me is these 24 elders who represent us, the saved, the redeemed, they all worship in unity and fervor and wholeheartedness, for in heaven we will all worship our Lord, in heaven there is proper unadulterated, unhindered, worship. Everyone participates. Everyone is engaged, everyone is involved in this worship. But the question is and what bothers me, and bothers me about my own self, is that if the 24 elders represent us in heaven, willfully and joyfully worshipping, worshipping with energy, with freedom, with expression, what keeps us from worshipping like that here on earth? What keeps us so reserved? So unenthusiastic? So cold & unmoved?

And as soon as I say that many will say we are not Pentecostal or charismatics, we are not here to put on a show, which is true and I wholly agree, but why do we define ourselves by negatives, by what we don't do? We don't do this, we don't do that. That's not how you define a faith, that's what the atheists do, they define themselves by a negative, they don't believe in God. But what do we as Baptists say a lot of the time, we don't dance, we don't drink, we don't play loud music, we don't wear this, we don't go there, we don't, we don't, we don't, sounds like we don't have any fun, but if all we do is define our worship by what we don't do that doesn't sound very inviting or exciting and doesn't really encourage anyone to participate. What we should be doing is defining our worship by what we do, by the positives, but the question is what do we do when we worship?

Because the thing is, God wants worship, desires worship, saved us to worship, created us for worship, so why is it that the children of God, those of us who have been adopted into the heavenly family, who have been washed clean of all our condemning sin, been washed white as snow by the blood of Christ and have been granted everlasting life by God's love, mercy and grace, why is it we don't or won't worship Him in the same fashion we one day will? We always talk about what our worship will be like in heaven, but what are we doing now? What holds back our worship now? We have the same reasons to worship, we are worshipping the same God, the same Savior. True we may not be in heaven right now but we have the assurance and promise of God that we will be one day, and that's as good as if it has already come to pass, and sure we may not understand everything to its fullest extent here on earth like we will in heaven, but why would not knowing everything about God keep us from worshipping God for what we do know about Him? Why should what we do know or don't know now about Christ decrease or diminish our worship, because in all honesty what we do know and understand about him should cause us to constantly cry unto the Lord all the more, to glorify him among the nations and lift his name in praise. What little we do know is more than enough to cause us to worship him. And the thing is we are told over and over in Scripture to worship, to worship God, to praise the Lord Jesus in the here and now, not later but now, no where is it said we

are to wait until we get to heaven to worship, but we are to give honor and glory and praise while we are here upon this earth.

*John 4:23 But the hour cometh, **and now is**, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. 24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*

1Co 6:20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

Heb 13:15 By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.

Ps 86:12 I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart: and I will glorify thy name for evermore.

Ps 29:2 Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.

Ps 34:3 O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together.

Ps 118:28 Thou art my God, and I will praise thee: thou art my God, I will exalt thee.

David's psalm... *1Ch 16:8 Give thanks unto the LORD, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the people. 9 Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him, talk ye of all his wondrous works. 10 Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the LORD. 11 Seek the LORD and his strength, seek his face continually. 12 Remember his marvellous works that he hath done, his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth;... 23 Sing unto the LORD, all the earth; shew forth from day to day his salvation. 24 Declare his glory among the heathen; his marvellous works among all nations. 25 For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised: he also is to be feared above all gods. 26 For all the gods of the people are idols: but the LORD made the heavens. 27 Glory and honour are in his presence; strength and gladness are in his place. 28 Give unto the LORD, ye kindreds of the people, give unto the LORD glory and strength. 29 Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come before him: **worship** the LORD in the beauty of holiness.*

And not only are we urged to worship, but its basically a command to believers to worship, look at what Jesus told Satan... *Mt 4:10 Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve....* here Jesus references the God given commandments to Israel, he quotes from... *De 6:13 Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name.*

De 10:20 Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name.

Ex 34:14 For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God:...

And that of course reminds us of the 10 commandments given to Israel... *Ex 20:3 Thou shalt have no other gods before me. 4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: 5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God,...*

Mr 12:30 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. So if Jesus says we are to worship God and only God, and God told Israel, his people, to worship Him, and we believers are now God's chosen as well, chosen thru grace, thru the calling of the Spirit, the hearing of the Word and the blood of Christ, should we not worship Him as well? Are we not to show forth praise, to exalt his name, to verbalize and vocalize our worship of Him?

So what I want to do is look at the 24 elders and the saints in heaven, examine their worship and see if we can't get some idea of what our worship is to be like and can be like when we gather in the house of worship, for that is what we are gathered here to do isn't it? To worship.

Now to begin with we have to know what worship really means, and I could give you the dictionary definition which states that worship is "to adore, to pay divine honors to, to reverence with supreme respect and veneration, to honor with extravagant love and extreme submission; to perform acts of adoration or religious service" but lets look beyond a wordy definition to what worship actually is. Now the Old English word for worship used to be Worth-ship. It wasn't pronounced worship but worth-ship, because true worship was showing great adoration and respect to one that was worthy of it. Worship was given to One that was worthy of all one's heart, all one's love, all one's devotion, faith, trust and honor. Praise and glory and honor and thanksgivings were given to the one who was worth giving it all too. And from my feeble understanding there is only one worthy of all that, and that is the Lord Jesus, for here among mankind there are none good, no not one, our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, garbage to be thrown away,

none of us are worthy of such praise, but there is one in heaven, who sits upon the throne who is good, is righteous, is holy and pure and loving and is worthy of our worship. And if to worship means to be in total submission to one who is worthy, giving great adoration, respect, honor, love, giving all of oneself to one that's worthy of it, lets look at those who give such worship in heaven.

The 24 Elders: Rev 4:4. Now of course the question arises is who are these 24 elders? Who are these that sit in their own thrones around the heavenly throne clothed in white raiment and wearing golden crowns? Well according to their raiment they are priests, they are clothed in white, clothed with the righteousness of the saints *Re 19:8 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.* These elders are also crowned as kings, crowned with gold and sit upon thrones. And aren't thrones and crowns promised to the saints? Christ told those that overcome he would give them a crown of life (2:10) and in *Re 3:21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.*

Jas 1:12 Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

1Pe 5:4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

So what we see here is the 24 elders who are both kings and priests are representatives of a **royal priesthood**. And we read the same of saved believers in *1Pe 2:9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: 10 Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.*

*Re 1:4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; 5 And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, 6 **And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father;** to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*

These 24 elders represent the redeemed saints in glory, they represent us, believers, the saved, the redeemed, this is confirmed by **Rev ch5:8-10**. These 24 elders are the redeemed who have overcome Satan and the world because they wear the victor's crown and robes of righteousness, and they worship before the throne.

So now that we know what worship is (a recognition of one's worthiness) and we know who the 24 elders are representative of (the redeemed), lets look at the few occurrences of their worship recorded throughout Revelation to get an idea of what their worship is like. Lets begin reading in **Rev 4:6-8**. And look what happens when these four beasts give honor and glory and thanks to God, when they worship the Almighty, look who joins in, which we should take note of, that when we truly worship it will cause others to truly worship as well, **worship is contagious ...v9-11.**

Worship is to be a total denial of self and a full acceptance of God. Here the 24 elders, the representatives of those that are redeemed, when the 4 beasts give glory to God, these elders fall down before God, prostrating themselves in sincere humbleness before the throne, abasing themselves before the Lord to worship. They totally submit themselves, bowing down, falling down upon their faces, realizing their unworthiness, their past sinfulness, realizing how small they are before a holy and mighty God, the Creator of all things. We want to have an idea of what true worship is?, here is a picture, a picture of total denial of self and of full acceptance of God, a realization of one's own worthlessness and the full worthiness of God. These elders who sit upon thrones in heaven consider themselves as nothing before God. They have the mind set of *Ro 12:3 For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.* So they worship the one who is deserving and worthy of all their love, all

adoration, all praise, glory, thanks, all worship, for it is He who loved them so much that He gave His only begotten Son, it is His mercy and grace that granted them salvation, it is He that made the way for the redeemed to be redeemed, it is He that holds our entire existence in His hands, who has the power to grant us access to heaven or to cast us into the depths of hell. The elders see the mightiness of God and they worship Him. They humble themselves and fall down before God upon their faces and uplift praise to the one who they acknowledge as worthy of such worship, to the one who deserves it. For God is worthy of it all (v11). God is worthy and so He should be worshipped, especially by those who He has done so much for, a God who has quickened them, who has rewarded them, who has exalted them. He is due such praise, He deserves all the credit, all the glory and honor.

Worship is a giving of one's self, as a sacrifice to God. In their worship before the throne the elders take their crowns, their eternal rewards, and cast them before the throne (v10). They do this for they know they are not worthy of such a crown, they did not earn them, they do not deserve them, but it is God who deserves them, for He is worthy, He made it all possible for them to have these crowns. The elders do exactly what every living Christian should do, they give back to God what God has given them, they give everything they have, they offer all, like the widow in the giving of her two mites, she gave all she had. *1Pe 2:5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.* The elders have nothing left from their earthly life to offer so they give what they have, their heavenly/eternal rewards, what they have been given by God for their entire life here upon the earth, they willingly and lovingly and devotedly cast such rewards at the feet of the one who made such rewards available. The best they have, all they have, is turned over to God. We see something similar pictured in the sacrifices of the Israelites in the tabernacle and temple, they offered their best livestock, gave the spotless, the unblemished, they slew them upon the altar to give to God. They gave their most precious, most valuable. What God had blessed them with they gave back to God. Just like everything we have, everything we are, is all because of God, and it is God who gave His all for us, so should we not give all that we are back to Him, to serve Him, to honor Him, to worship Him with everything at our disposal? What do we really think a living sacrifice is? We are to live a sacrificial life, sacrificing this life to the One who gave us everlasting life, because it is He who is worthy of such service and worship and dedication.

And isn't it something that the very first mention of the word worship in the Bible speaks of Abraham's willingness to offer the supreme sacrifice to God to show his devotion and faith to God, when Abraham takes his son Isaac to offer his boy's life notice what Abraham says to his servants... *Ge 22:5 And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.* Abraham was willing to give it all, he had faith in God, trusted God, so much he was willing to give everything to God, and many others we read of in the Bible gave it all as well, others sacrificed their very lives, either in life or in death or both by giving everything to God, so is that not how we are to worship and show our faith and devotion as well? To give of ourselves, our entire selves, our whole beings to God in worship?

But if you or me do not give God this when we come together to worship, where we abase ourselves, deny ourselves, and give God His due, uplift and magnify the name of Jesus, then we have not really worshipped, all we have done is have a social meeting. Worship requires more than just being present, it requires participation, involvement, and don't get me wrong its not just an outwardly show of some ritual, but it takes an inward submission, a submission of the heart, it takes sincerity of spirit, it requires an intense strain of devotion on one's mental and emotional faculties. To worship with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, all your power and strength is to totally, voluntarily, willingly, joyfully and fearfully give your entire being over to God, to deny Him nothing, to offer Him everything, because it is He who made you, He who saved you, He who gave you what you have, so

He is worthy to receive it all back, it is all His anyway for He paid a great price to redeem you. God is worthy of your sacrificial worship! And if such worship begins on the inside, just like a tea kettle filled with boiling water its going to be seen or heard on the outside.

So not only is worship contagious, and a denial of self and a giving of oneself, we see that **worship is also vocal, audible**. In 4:10-11 the elders express what is on their hearts, whats the last word of v10 that's used in their worship? "saying". They verbalize their praise of the worthy one. But lets go a little farther and look at ch5 for more vocalized worship. **5:1-10**

First we see that the elders **Worship with Music and Song**: They each have a harp, beautiful music is made to sing praises to the Lamb, the Lord Jesus, they sing to magnify him, glorify him, to praise him for his act of redemption. In V9 we see they sing a new song. This new song is about the Redeemer, it is centered on Christ, it is the Redeemer's song. The elders sing of the worthiness of the Lamb, they show His worth in their worth-ship, in their love, adoration and respect for him. And the Lamb is worthy of such worship, for they sing of his worthiness to take the book, to open its seals, and for his death, they sing of when he was slain on the cross of Calvary to redeem us, when he united us once more with the Father, when he broke down the wall of sin that separated us and brought us back into union with God. It was the Lamb who done this, and worthy is his name. The Lord Jesus paid the price of our redemption with his blood. And by that precious blood the Lord Jesus saved us out of every kindred, every tongue, every people and every nation people, he saved those that were unworthy and undeserving of such. He lifted up the sinner and made them a saint, transformed the old man into the new, brought what was dead to life. And thru such a gracious act of redemption, the Lord Jesus has made such sinners kings and priests (v10), they/we have become part of the heavenly royal priesthood and as such we will one day rule and reign with our Lord and King, we will have the honor of sitting with and serving him. And so the elders, representatives of all the saints, sing the praises of the Lamb, they worship with song and music.

Worship in prayer: But not only do the 24 elders offer music and song in their worship, they also offer prayers in their worship. Prayers that God hears. Fervent prayer, joyful prayer, intimate prayer. In **v8** the elders have golden vials full of odors, incense, which are symbolic of prayer as they drift towards heaven. These vials contain the prayers of the saints, the saved, and these prayers are an offering to God, a sweet smelling savor, prayers are a personal communication with God, a communing with God in worship *Ps 141:2 Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice. 1Ti 2:8 I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.* We as believers are to pray without ceasing, to give prayers of thanksgiving and praise, prayers of intercession and supplication, prayers of honor and glory, we are to offer prayers in our worship for in our worship we are to speak to God, to bless God, to exalt the name of Christ! **v11-13**

But notice also after such an astounding worship event, the 24 elders, representatives of all the saints, fall down and worship the Lamb even more, **v14**. They can not get over the fact of what the Lamb has done for them and how worthy he is of their praise, they know how unworthy they were of Christ's love and sacrifice, and for such a one to do what the Lord Jesus done to save each one of them from an eternal hell and instead give them everlasting life, he deserves all their worship.

Worship even in Suffering and Tragedy – the Tribulation Saints. Now something else I want you to see, is those who suffer greatly upon the earth, who live during the most tragic time upon the earth, those who are left after the rapture of the church and who later come to know the Lord Jesus as their Savior, even they, the tribulation saints offer worship to the one that is worthy because he loved them enough to save them and give them everlasting life and eternal purpose. **Rev7:9-17**.

Revelation 11:15-18 Worship with Thanksgiving

- they worship by giving thanks, why? The time has come to...
- for Christ to take authority/rulership & now reign
- judge the wicked, justice to be served
- judge the righteous and reward them both small and great

Revelation 12:7-12a Worship with Rejoicing

- rejoicing for the adversary & accuser has been cast out
- rejoicing because the Lamb helped them overcome

Revelation 19:1-10 Worship in Anticipation of Celebration

- Alleluia="Praise the Lord", first time in NT
- v10 ref 22:9 last mention *Re 22:9 Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.*

Worship God. That is our purpose. That is what we are made for. To worship God, not only in His house of worship but in our lives we are to worship him. But we gather in His house to worship as a family, a body of believers together, for our worship can be contagious, it can inspire and encourage others to express their love of the Lord with freedom. We worship by humbling ourselves, by not focusing on ourselves, but by focusing on the one that is worthy of our worship. We worship by offering God everything that we are, we give unto him sacrifices. We worship audibly, vocally with words of praise, with singing, with prayers. We worship even when we don't feel like it, in troubled times and suffering times we are to worship, Job did, *Job 1:21 ...Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.* Job was able to do this as worship is a choice, we choose whether or not to worship, we can worship in the best or the worst of times because God supersedes all of it, and our circumstances whatever they may be should not hinder our worship. We should worship with thanksgiving, for all that God has done and is going to do. And thinking of all that should cause us to worship with rejoicing, especially as we look forward to what lies ahead for those that know the Lord Jesus as their personal Savior, heaven awaits, perfect heavenly worship awaits, eternal worship of the worthy one awaits. We have so much cause to worship the Lord, to praise Him, to declare His worthiness with our best worship. So lets do as the angel told John, worship God.

Chapter 11

SERMON - JUDGMENT IS COMING

Ezekiel 26

Here in this section of the book of Ezekiel we see the prophet speaking of things to come, but not for the nation of Israel, this is not a warning to them of coming judgment, because Israel has already been overtaken by the Babylonians, they are presently suffering God's judgment as they are in the midst of their 70 year captivity with Ezekiel being one of those captives, but instead we see here God has now turned His attention to the coming judgment upon the nations that surrounded Israel, for these nations were involved in their own sin, sins of idolatry, of wickedness, and they had not aided Israel in her time of need, they had not lifted a finger to defend her, these neighboring nations had not been a blessing to the apple of God's eye but instead had been a curse, and so God says He will curse them, judge them, fulfilling His promise to Abraham, God said in *Ge 12:3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee...* These neighboring nations had welcomed the destruction of Jerusalem and Israel, because the Israelites were a constant reminder to them of the falseness of their pagan beliefs and the truth of Jehovah God, for God had blessed Israel, had prospered His people in spite of many obstacles and adversaries, He had been with them, and had given them victory over many of the surrounding nations in battle while these nation's own idol gods remained silent when they called upon them for divine aid, so many of these nations bore ill will towards Israel, especially so for them coming in and taking the Promised Land. So we see that many of these nations that Ezekiel mentions could have cared less about Israel and their suffering and their defeat.

Yet Israel was not innocent in all this, they had not remained faithful to God as they should have been during this time, they let sin pollute and corrupt their country and allowed such sin and idolatry to draw them away from God and so God judged them, God judged their sin by letting the Assyrians and then the Babylonians invade, plunder and conquer and take the entire nation into captivity. And these neighboring nations rejoiced at such a fall, they loved seeing Israel and Judah humiliated. I can assume they asked such mocking questions that we even hear today "where is your God now?" "call out to Jehovah to save you if he is so real and powerful and loving".

This almost pictures the derogatory attitude towards Christ as he hung upon the cross, where Jesus' crucifiers mocked his divinity, where they laughed at his claim to be king of the Jews and even the Son of God; if he was such they said let him rescue himself, let him step down from the cross in his own power. Mankind in his sin has always laughed at God, mocked God with the belief that sin will go unpunished, that there is no divine judge or judgment, that man can do as he pleases with no ramifications or consequences, that God either does not exist or doesn't care or is powerless to do anything about it. But we should be very aware that God does exist, that He does care, that He does have the power to judge sin because here is Jerusalem, it had been destroyed, and these other nations had taken pleasure in it, but they missed the message God sends them, for not only did God allow Jerusalem to be destroyed as punishment for Israel and their sin, but He allowed such judgment to warn these other nations of coming judgment for their own sin. *Ga 6:7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.* They sowed sin and therefore they will reap judgment.

Pr 11:31 Behold, {if} the righteous shall be recompensed{rewarded} in the earth: {how} much more the wicked and the sinner {?}.

1Pe 4:17 For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? 18 And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

So here in Ezekiel ch26, as well as ch27 & 28, we have the coming destruction of Tyre prophesied, we are given the reasons why such destruction comes, and we are even told how that destruction will take place, much like how we are all told by the Word of God that we all sin and come short of the glory of God and that our sin must be dealt with, and He warns that our sin will be dealt with, for our sin will either be forgiven by being washed in the blood of Christ by us placing our faith in him and being saved thru the grace of God or we will bear the burden of the punishment for our sin ourselves, we will be judged, for as Nu 32:23 states ... *ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out.* And we all know that the wages of sin is death, death is the verdict of those found guilty in sin, for as Ro 5:21 states *That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.* We, like all men, have been given a choice, much like the nations around Israel, they were given the opportunity to help or to hurt, to choose right over wrong, and many down thru the centuries have chosen to hurt, to do wrong, even today many nations would like to see Israel wiped off the map, and even America who used to be one Israel's staunchest of allies is turning her back on God's chosen people. And I believe, although I'm not going to try to bring it out, we can see a lot of resemblances between Tyre and America, especially in ch27, in all their might and wealth and sin and their fall in judgment, but the point is God will only put up with sin for so long, His longsuffering does have its limits, and then His judgment does fall. This earth will be judged someday, sooner rather than later, God promises that in His Word, and so will all mankind, we will all either be judged as believers who have accepted Christ's redemption of our sin or we will face the Great White Throne Judgment for our sin (and none who face that judgment have a favorable outcome), that's a promise, and to show you that God's promises always come true I want us to look at what God told Ezekiel here about the upcoming judgment upon Tyre, for even though it took centuries to be fulfilled God's word against Tyre came true. Their sin was severely dealt with, judgment came because of their sin, and we all need to be keenly aware of that for judgment is coming.

Here in ch26 we are looking at the city of Tyre, the capital city of Phoenicia, what is now modern day Lebanon, the city is found on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. It was a great commercial center and was at the heart of all trade and shipping and merchandising in Phoenicia as it had one of the few natural harbors that existed on the coast which supported all the trade Tyre was involved with. It was an extremely wealthy city, a powerful city for it traded far and wide, ch27 tells us it traded with Spain, India, Greece, Cyprus, Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Arabia and Persia, trading in gold, silver, iron, lead, tin, copper, brass, wheat and grain, honey, oil, wool and linen and rich clothing, livestock and horses, precious woods, spices, ivory and ebony, jewelry and dyes of all kinds, especially a rich purple dye. The city also sported a mighty military, with great soldiers from many nations to defend the walls and a large fleet with some of the best sailors to guard the harbor. This city was well known, well respected, well protected, and highly valued not only by its citizens and its country but by those all around who dealt with it, for this city made many very, very rich. Yet in all its greed, all its love of money, Tyre hungered for more, and so when Babylon laid waste to Jerusalem, when Babylon slew and took the Israelites as slaves, Tyre rejoiced, for it reckoned that meant more for them, they could prosper even more at the calamity suffered by their neighbors. They rejoiced in the death of Jews, in the conquering of God's chosen people in their Promised Land, and they ignored what brought such judgment upon Israel: sin. And so God now turned His attention to Tyre, not only for their rejoicing of Israel's fate, but for their own ungodliness, their idolatry, for too long had their

irreverence to God and their sinful ways gone on. So God tells Ezekiel to prophecy against this city of Tyre... **v1-6.**

V3 – many nations, wave after wave until it is no more

V4 – top of a rock – bear, desolate, your grandness and wealth shall be wiped away

V5 – the spreading of nets – you will be no more than a small fishing village, a place where fishermen go to dry their nets, not to sell and trade their wares

V6 – the results, the wages for you sin will be death upon your citizens

God pronounces judgment upon Tyre and its rulers, *v15 Thus saith the Lord GOD to Tyrus; Shall not the isles shake at the sound of thy fall, when the wounded cry, when the slaughter is made in the midst of thee?* and then we see that Ezekiel proceeds to tell them exactly how God is going to enact this judgment. Keep in mind that Ezekiel spoke this years and in some instances, centuries, before what he says comes to pass, so one can not say that God did not give Tyre time to make amends, to repent, but instead their sin abounded and so judgment came. First it would come in the form of Babylon, the very ones that had destroyed Jerusalem, where Tyre had laughed and mocked at such devastation, they would now attack Tyre.

V7-11.

It was not very long after Ezekiel's prophecy here that Babylon did lay siege to Tyre just as he prophesied. In 586 BC Nebuchadnezzar and his armies attacked Tyre, and for 15 years besieged this city, and finally in 571 the Babylonians prevailed and broke thru the gates, swarming the city, but oddly enough, they found the city almost empty, this is because during those 15 years of siege the people of Tyre transferred all their belongings/wealth to an island a half mile from shore. They abandoned the old city of Tyre and founded a new one on this island. They reckoned that their walls of stone had not protected them so they believed a barrier of water would defend them against any other besiegers. And so with all the spoils of war now out of reach from the Babylonians, for they had no way to get to and attack such an island city, Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the mainland city, reducing it to rubble, I'm guessing he was furious that his prey and all their treasures remained in sight but just out of reach, and the fact is, God didn't seem to think that Nebuchadnezzar got enough out of his efforts for attacking Tyre for we see in ch29:18-20 that God gave Babylon Egypt to spoil and plunder as well... *Eze 29:18 Son of man, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon caused his army to serve a great service against Tyrus: every head was made bald, and every shoulder was peeled: yet had he no wages, nor his army, for Tyrus, for the service that he had served against it: 19 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will give the land of Egypt unto Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and he shall take her multitude, and take her spoil, and take her prey; and it shall be the wages for his army. 20 I have given him the land of Egypt for his labour wherewith he served against it, because they wrought for me, saith the Lord GOD.*

But the point is everything that Ezekiel proclaimed here came to pass, Nebuchadnezzar did invade Tyre with a mighty army, he slew many of the people of Tyre over a 15 year time frame, he built siege engines and his own protections against the defenders, he used war engines to attack the walls, and by sheer numbers and will the Babylonians broke thru the gates of Tyre and the city was laid waste and left in ruins. But this did not end Ezekiel's prophecy against Tyre, for the people still thrived, the city still existed, it was not totally destroyed, it was not as v4 stated "scraped bare" and made like the top of a rock, it was not totally laid waste becoming utterly barren and desolate. In fact for 250 years after this invasion the island city of Tyre grew and prospered, but we must look back at v3 to remember the promise of God, for there God said "many nations" were going to come against Tyre, Babylon was only one nation, it was only the start.

The next nation to come against Tyre to enact God's judgment came in the form of Alexander the Great, who stepped onto the scene and began to conquer the known world. When he and his armies arrived at Tyre in 322 BC, he demanded they open their gates to him, but feeling secure on their island the citizens of Tyre refused Alexander's demands and prepared for another siege. Now realizing he could not attack the city by ship as he did not have a fleet that could match Tyre's,

Alexander decided to build a causeway, basically a bridge a half mile long, reaching from the shore of old ruined city of Tyre all the way to the new island city, and for the material to construct such a causeway he used none other than the ruins of the mainland city left behind by the Babylonians two and a half centuries ago. He used the stone and the rubble and the wood that was left behind and threw it into the water to build a path to the island. This bridge Alexander built was about two hundred feet wide and half a mile long, Alexander's army did exactly what is proclaimed in v12 in order to defeat Tyre, but before I read that, please notice that in v7-11 the word "he" or "his" is used making reference to Nebuchadnezzar and his attack, but in v12 the word "they" is used referring to Alexander and his exploits against the city, the many nations as v3 referenced, and then in v13-14 the word "I" is used referring to God as His hand is in all this from the beginning for it is his judgment being poured out upon Tyre. **V12-14.**

History tells us of this siege that Alexander had his soldiers start pitching rubble into the water to build the causeway to the island, leveling it off as they went so they could easily march over it. As they got closer to the island the water got deeper which slowed down construction, and to make their task even more difficult, the people of Tyre constantly bombarded the attackers with missiles. So Alexander built mobile shields called "tortoises" for protection. And knowing that when his army reached the city they would have to scale the walls, Alexander built mobile siege towers that were 160 feet high. The idea was to roll these towers across the causeway and push them up against the walls, then a drawbridge on the front of the towers would lower and enable the soldiers hiding within the towers to march across the top of the walls and into the city. During all this planning and construction, Alexander's men were under constant attack from the people within the city and from the Tyrian navy. Realizing that he needed ships to defend his flanks, Alexander returned to the cities of the other nations he had previously conquered and demanded their assistance, when they agreed this fulfilled the prophecy that God "*will cause many nations to come up against thee, as the sea causeth his waves to come up*" (26:3). Alexander's plan succeeded. He broke thru and overthrew the city. It took Alexander seven months to conquer Tyre. Alexander had the city destroyed in a rage as he was furious at the time and effort it took to take the city as well as by the way the Tyre defenders had executed their prisoners, for the defenders had slew Alexander's men within sight of the invading army. And so of the estimated 40,000 inhabitants of Tyre eight thousand of the people were slain (2000 of them crucified) and thirty thousand were sold into slavery. The causeway Alexander the Great built can still be seen to this day, yet the city of Tyre is no more.

The city never recovered from this defeat, the city is now very much like the top of a rock, bleak, barren, and is actually used by fishermen to dry their fishing nets to this day, *Eze 26:5 It shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea: for I have spoken it, saith the Lord GOD:.* God's promise came true. Judgment came just as He said it would... *Eze 27:27 Thy riches, and thy fairs, thy merchandise, thy mariners, and thy pilots, thy calkers, and the occupiers of thy merchandise, and all thy men of war, that are in thee, and in all thy company which is in the midst of thee, shall fall into the midst of the seas in the day of thy ruin.... 32 And in their wailing they shall take up a lamentation for thee, and lament over thee, saying, What city is like Tyrus, like the destroyed in the midst of the sea?*

God warned them, warned them of coming judgment, yet all His warnings went unheeded, much like the warning he gives mankind today. Look at what God warned Tyre of... **V19-21.**

And is not the promise of an eternal hell for those who are not forgiven of their sins given by God as well? *Jas 1:15 ... sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.* Sin must be dealt with, either in judgment as the city of Tyre was, or thru forgiveness, thru redemption where another has already paid the price of judgment. God says here to Tyre when He judges, when he deals with sin, one is made desolate, v19 "*I shall make thee a desolate city*", one is covered up in judgment v19 "*I shall bring up the deep upon thee, and great waters shall cover thee*", and one will be brought down into the low parts of the earth,

(v20), one will descend into the pit, a pit of darkness, of despair, of eternal death, a pit of hellfire and brimstone, of loneliness, hopelessness, of weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, where one will never be found again. One will also be made a terror, one will be horrified and terrified at the wrath of God upon their sin (v21) and one shall be no more and will never be found again (v21), *Eze 27:36 ... thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt be any more..* God had at one time searched them out and called out to the lost, but many refused that call to be found, so when the time comes for judgment and the judge's decision/verdict is enacted, nothing else can be done. Hell, absolute separation from God is their choice, their punishment for sin is forever determined as God's word always comes true.

But the good news is God gives us a way of escape, a way to avoid such judgment, all one must do is call upon the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, for it is he, the Son of God, the Lamb of God who has already suffered the wrath and judgment of God upon the cross of Calvary, he willingly took our pace, paid our price, so we could be recipients of another promise, the promise of everlasting life.

Jas 2:5 Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?

1Jo 2:25 And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.

1Jo 5:11 And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

2Ti 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus,

2Pe 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

One can have grace that is sufficient and have the blessings of God or be desolate, one can be covered by the waters of judgment for one's sin or they can have that sin thrown into the sea of forgetfulness, where God will remember their transgressions no more, *Mic 7:19 He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.;* one can go down into the pit or be lifted up to sit at the table of the Heavenly Father in glory, one can be terrified or be overjoyed, one can be remembered no more as if they never were or they can have everlasting life and walk in the presence of their Savior. It's a choice the Lord gives to all, because God promises sin will be dealt with, either thru judgment or thru redemption, one leads to an eternal pit, eternal death, eternal hell, the other to eternal life. And truly the choice comes down to whether you accept or reject the Lord Jesus. So my question to you is how is God going to deal with your sin, will he judge it or has it already been judged upon Calvary?

Chapter 12

SERMON – THE PRINCE AND THE KING

Ezekiel 28

In the previous chapter's sermon we looked at ch26 of Ezekiel and the proclamation of judgment by God upon the city of Tyre, judgment for their cursing of Israel, judgment for their idolatry and greed, judgment for their sin. And we saw how God's judgment came upon this wealthy and powerful city in the form of many nations, how Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon laid siege to it, and how that during that siege we saw the inhabitants move all their belongings to an island a half mile off shore, so the king of Babylon in a fit of anger destroyed what was left of the old city as his prey laid just outside his grasp and Tyre survived. But many decades later Alexander the Great and his armies of nations previously conquered also laid siege to Tyre, Alexander attacked the island city by using the rubble of the old city of Tyre to build a causeway/bridge to the island where he broke thru and took the city. There he slew quite a few of the inhabitants and sent most of them into slavery, destroying the city in the process, Tyre was made desolate like the top of a barren rock and has never been rebuilt since then just as Ezekiel prophesized. So we saw that God's judgment does come to pass, His word is true, He keeps His promises, He does deal with sin. He may be longsuffering, He may be loving, He may be merciful, but God hates sin. He loves us as much as He hates our sin. God hates sin so much it brings forth His wrath, His vengeance, His righteous indignation and divine judgment, His destructive hand. And we should all keep this in mind for just as Tyre's sin brought forth death and destruction, so too will our sin bring forth such death, for we know the wages, the result, of sin is death, the judgment of God.

And so what I would like to do is continue that thought, as ch28 of the book of Ezekiel deals with God's proclamation of judgment upon two distinct people, the prince of Tyre (v1-10) and the king of Tyre (v11-19) where we see a lamentation (a deep expression of grief) for the judgment upon this king for great was this king's fall. Ch28 makes us aware that behind this great city of Tyre and all its wealth and power and influence was a man, a leader, one who may have started out with good intentions but became corrupted, prideful, wicked, demonic. This man who was the prince of Tyre was pulled away into sin and that sin brought his downfall, a downfall proclaimed by the prophet Ezekiel. But the king of Tyre, this king is no mere man, he is much more powerful than that, more manipulative than that, he is one who calculates and schemes and controls such men as the prince of Tyre, working from behind the scenes in the shadows, polluting the inner thoughts and hearts of such men, for we see here the king of Tyre is none other than Satan himself, who in his own iniquity fell from the favor of God, and so down thru time he has been trying to lead others astray, he has been trying to regain the power he lost, the glory he lost, by using men and women, especially those in powerful positions, corrupting them, enticing them, to turn them and others away from God and to follow him, to turn them into antichrists, into those that work against God and His plan, who deny his Son and who follow the road of sin.

Example: Judas, the Pharaoh, Herod, Hitler, Joseph Smith, Stalin, many false prophets and teachers we have today, Jeremiah Wright, KKK, the Masonic Lodge.

We read of such antichrists in *1Jo 2:22 Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.*

2Jo 1:7 For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.

And one day Satan will accomplish his goal of finding the one man fit to rule the world thru deception and power in the form of the one called the Antichrist. *1Jo 2:18 Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.* But again as we all know this antichrist will also fail, just as Satan himself failed and was cast forth from heaven in shame due to his great sin. But this is why we, as weak willed individuals, must always be aware of the father of lies, of the tempter, of the serpent, the wicked one, for if one as great and powerful and wise as he can succumb to the temptation of sin and bring judgment upon himself, then what hope do we have to overcome such temptation? What hope do we have of overcoming him who tempts us by our own power? And if we give in to such sin, as the city of Tyre and the prince of Tyre did, do we not see that such sin brings forth God's judgment, destruction and death?

Our sin is a lot more important to God than many of us let on, for He truly hates our sin, but He loves us enough to send His only begotten Son to this earth to suffer God's judgment upon such sin in our place, to be made sin for us. God hates sin so much he allowed His Son to die upon Calvary in order to make a way of escape from sin for those He so loves. Because of the blood of Jesus we do not have to face God's wrath, he made a way, thru the blood of Christ, yet one will not and can not go that way if they let the king of Tyre, Satan, sway them, and influence them, if they let the devil control them for he is anti-Christ, anti-God, anti-redemption, he is against all things of God and will use everything in his power to convince you to choose him rather than God, for he even tried to tempt Jesus the Son of God to follow him instead of the Father, and if he is willing to try to pull one as great as Jesus down to his level, just where do you and I stand in our ability to resist him? So lets look at the prince and the king of Tyre here in ch28 so we can see why we should choose the King of Kings and not this would be king and become just another one of the devil's princely antichrists, for this king and all his princes will suffer the judgment of God.

First off lets look at the prince of Tyre, and here we should keep in mind, he is representative of all men and women who have given in to temptation, given in to corruption, who have sinned and have chosen that sin and sinful influence over God, he is representative of the one and many antichrists throughout the ages. **V1-5**

Notice the first thing we see about this prince is he is lifted up, lifted up in pride (v2), one of the many attitudes of humanity that God despises. *Pr 6:16 These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: 17 A proud look,...*

Pr 8:13 The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.

Why does God hate pride? because it is anti-god.

Ps 10:4 The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts.

Pride brings forth judgment and destruction...

Pr 16:18 Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.

Pr 29:23 A man's pride shall bring him low:...

Pr 18:12 Before destruction the heart of man is haughty,...

*1Jo 2:16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the **pride** of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.*

*Eze 16:49 Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister **Sodom**, **pride**, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. 50 And they were **haughty**, and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away as I saw good.*

This man, this prince, in his power, on his throne over the city of Tyre, is so rich and mighty and influential and intimidating, that he becomes so deluded by his pride and Satan's whispers in his ear that he calls himself a god, he thinks he is all that, that he is the reason the city prospers, that it is

he who has control and power and so he desires worship, others bowing to him, and showing their allegiance to him. He wants it all. *“I am all powerful, wealthy and wise, I can not be touched here in the fortress in my island city. All love me, all adore me, all want to be associated with me, I must be a god!”* But the one true God speaking thru Ezekiel says in v2 *“thou art a man, and not God”*. God basically says to this prince, “No you’re not, even though you may think you are a god, you may love yourself as one, you may lift yourself up, you may be wiser than many, cunning and deceptive, and can outsmart many in your deals and schemes, you may even be wiser than Daniel (v3), who serves in the palace of Babylon and interprets dreams, and nothing may escape your gaze or your attention, and by such great intelligence and all the great and far reaching trade and merchandising that you are involved in you have grown very wealthy and powerful (v4), you may be a ruler of this city and of its people, the commander of this island, you may be looked upon in favor by many, many others, but a god you are not. You just think you are so wonderful because of all the stuff you have and by your own delusion of reality yet you are a mere little man who has nothing, you are just a man lost in sin (v5)”.

And this should be a warning to us all, no matter how good our fortune may be in this world, no matter how great others perceive us, no matter what great things we may achieve, it is not because we deserve it or truly earned it, for it all comes from the grace of God, all good things come from above. Everything that you and I are and ever will be, everything that we may possess in this lifetime, from intangible things like abilities and talent and wisdom to physical things like land and wealth and power, it all comes from God. We are nothing without Him, so there is no reason to get all lifted up, with our nose in the air and look down on others who are less fortunate or don’t have as much or are not as wise or educated or wealthy or even saved. We all need to remember just who we are, unworthy sinners whom God pulled out of the muck and the mud by his mercy and grace. We are nothing without Him, that’s why He is worthy of all our praise and worship for what He has done, He is the one who should be highly esteemed, not ourselves, He has done it all, we are just the recipients. And if we exalt self, focus on self, love self more than we do God, such a life of pride has consequences.

Yet here this prince of Tyre has forgotten all that, he thinks he has worked for it, earned it, deserves it. *I am pretty fantastic he thinks, look at all I have accomplished, no one else could do this (a lie whispered in his ear by the serpent), none of this would be without me, I am a blessing to these people, they need me, they should serve me for what I have done for them, I gave them all this, the least they could do is honor me, appreciate me, the least they could do is worship me.* See how pride deludes the mind? This prince is lifted up in pride thinking it was he and only he that has given him rule over such a fantastic city, yet he forgets there are many much bigger and better places throughout the world, his pride gives him tunnel vision, to where he only sees himself as bigger than he is, more important than he is, better than he really is. And we all face that danger every day of our lives.

We must remember God is everything and we are nothing, but when I say that I don’t want you to get the idea that you are unimportant or worthless. For God loves us. He paid a great price for us to ransom us from the bondage of sin, we are on the heart and mind of God continually, but without Him we wouldn’t even exist, He created us and without Him we are not, without Him we have no guidance for our lives, no purpose, no eternal value to our life. But that’s why He wants a relationship with you, to love you, guide you, give you purpose, give you value, for if you walk with Him you will see He deserves the glory, not us, for with God nothing is impossible, we have everything we will ever need with God. But without Him we are on our own, working to receive temporary praise, worth, power and such, but it is all fleeting, for we take nothing with us when we die, the Bible teaches us to lay up our treasures in heaven, store up eternal rewards, and the only way we can do that is to choose Jesus over ourselves. Pride should not be an issue for a Christian, yet it is probably the biggest stumbling block to all of us. Pride prohibits our worship, pride causes us to

stumble, pride spots our righteousness, pride leads us down the wrong path. Pride caused sin to enter into the world thru the twisted words of Satan to Eve... *Ge 3:3 But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. 4 And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: 5 For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. 6 And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.* Is that not exactly what the prince of Tyre wanted, to be as a god? To be lifted up, to be above others, have power/control over others? And as we shall see that is exactly what caused Satan's downfall as well. Pride.

And since God hates pride, hates sin, his judgment is pronounced upon the prince of Tyre.

V6-10.

God pronounces death and destruction upon the prince of Tyre, his brightness shall be defiled, be extinguished. The invaders will come and conquer (this we know they did). The prince will be taken to the pit, to the grave, you will suffer and die like many in your "invulnerable" city says God. Your sin has brought my wrath (and God's wrath destroys and consumes), your sin, your pride has come before your fall, has brought forth your death, you are about to reap what you have sown, and are you really going to say to the one that is about to kill you, to slay you, that is about pierce your heart with a sword that you are still a god? Are you going to beg for your life by saying don't kill me for I am a god (v9), what kind of god is that?, that begs for mercy, that has no power over his would be killer? Do you get the sense here that God is mocking such prideful thoughts of this prince? God says "You prince of Tyre, will be a man in the hands of the one who slays you, not a god, and as a man you will die. You will die like the heathen (the uncircumcised) by the hand of a stranger, for I have spoken it."

Dealing with sin is not a pretty picture. Sin denies, sin humiliates, sin separates, sin destroys, sin kills. It brings out the worst in God, rejection, judgment, damnation. And we know it brings out the worst in humanity. Sin and what it does is not pretty and what God has to do to deal with it is not pretty. His judgment is fearful and terrible, His wrath is devastating, but just think of the way He made for one to escape sin and judgment, think of what He allowed to be done to His only begotten Son to make a way for sinners to be forgiven of their sin. What happened to the Lord Jesus wasn't a pretty picture either, where Christ was tortured and humiliated and marred beyond recognition all for a sinner to be saved, that's what God allowed to be done so that you and I could be redeemed. Dealing with sin no matter how you look at it is not pretty, yet to the repentant sinner the Lord Jesus and what he done for us and what he suffered is the most beautiful picture of love we can imagine. So why do so many choose the wrong path, well, I think the next person we look at may have something to do with that, let's see what sin can do to even one of God's most powerful and majestic of creations, the king of Tyre, Satan himself. **V11-19.**

From just this reading one can see this king is more than a mere man. For he is of supreme and high intelligence and perfect in beauty, not the monster many imagine when they think of Satan, with horns and a tail and pitchfork (which images all come from pagan mythology). The Bible tells us he is an angel of light. This king has been in the Garden of Eden, and that should raise some flags there for no man other than Adam has been in that garden, but we know of one trickster that was there. This king was adorned with all kinds of precious stones and jewels, having great authority and power in heaven, and his voice (his tabrets and pipes) was of divine workmanship, talk about a silver tongued devil and his speaking half-truths and lies and whispers of temptations and wicked urgings. I believe this voice was created at one time to sing praises to God but now only whispers hate and sows doubt and fear. V14 calls this king the anointed cherub that covereth, and a cherub is a type of angel of great power, this king is one who protected heaven, one that watched over the throne of God, who

was bright and shimmering with holiness, who was upon the holy mountain of God and in the midst of the stones of fire, divine and holy places of God and heaven, but for some reason this king no longer has those duties. And we know why, for there was sin found in this angelic creature of perfection, sin that corrupted, sin that brought judgment, for this king grew in power by his merchandising of sin, by his trade and exporting of sin into the world, **v15-16a** and what sin could bring such a downfall? The sin of pride. And we are shown in the book of Isaiah the pride that this king, this devil was corrupted by ... ref. Isaiah 14:12-17.

We also read of Lucifer's fall in *Re 12:7 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, 8 And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. 9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.*

See the sin of pride even ruined one of the most powerful angels in creation, pride corrupted Lucifer and made him into Satan, pride turned him against God, made him anti-god, antichrist, and that is why even as he is cast to the earth he still works thru his pawns, thru other antichrists to sow discord and destruction and even more sin, he hates God and hates all things of God, and that includes believers and the church, so he will do everything to pull down and destroy each and everyone associated with such. He wishes to corrupt them and turn them against God as well. That's why we should always be on the look out for pride in our life, how we look at ourselves, at others and at God and His word and instruction of our lives, when we begin to think its not for us, that we are above biblical rebuke and reproof in some way, we are on the same path as the prince and king of Tyre, we are on our way to a great fall. Remember even the church of Laodicea fell into this sin of pride, *Re 3:17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:* Their pride made them believe they didn't need God, and that is like a lot of Christian's today, they don't think they need God, they depend upon their stuff and their wallet. So we should be ever mindful of our sinful pride for it does bring God's chastisement and judgment, for even such a mighty and powerful being such as Satan, as Lucifer, was punished for his sin of pride and will one day receive eternal judgment for his sin. **v16-19.**

V16 Profane = irreverent to sacredness (stepped into position not meant for him) , contemptible, distasteful, polluted, impure, unholy, obscene, defiled

Lucifer was cast out of heaven, along with a third of his angelic followers, all because of his pride, his wanting to be worshipped, his wanting to be like God, to be God. So punishment has come in part, he was cast out, but judgment for his sin will come in full one day soon, where Satan will be humiliated before all, where such a powerful being as he is made low, he shall be cast into the lake of fire and burn for all eternity for his iniquity, *Mt 25:41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:*

Re 20:10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

Lucifer, Satan, will be forgotten, it will be as if he never existed, one who wished to be worshipped by all will be forgotten by all as he burns for ever and ever, accompanied by his minions and unfortunately those he has deceived, who have chosen to follow his ways of pride instead of following the Lord Jesus, those who have followed the way of antichrist, *Re 20:15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.*

So we see that sin, no matter how high and powerful you are, no matter how strong and wise you think you are, pride can bring even a prince and king low. That's why we need a true King to help us, one who has made himself low to suffer the judgment of our sin so that we don't have to, to know what it is to face sin and face the devil, yet a king unspotted by sin, uncorrupted by sin, one that is true and holy and all powerful. One who came and served us in love instead of trying to dominate us thru

power or deception. King Jesus has already suffered our judgment upon the cross, God's wrath was poured out upon him, he suffered so that we might be saved. So which king would you rather follow, the king of Tyre, fallen and doomed, a king of pride and deception, a king of anti-God, or would you rather choose the King of Kings and Lord of Lords who will have supreme victory and will rule the world in the days to come. Your choice of whether to accept or reject the Lord Jesus has a lot to do with your pride. The prince of Tyre faced judgment. The king of Tyre will face judgment. How about you, will you face judgment or will you choose the one who faced it for you?

Chapter 13

REVELATION – CHAPTER 6

In Revelation ch4 & 5 we are given a vision of the things that will be hereafter, after the church age, which is completed with the age represented by the Laodicean church and the rapture of the saints. In John's vision he has seen the heavenly thunderings and lightnings and even a rainbow that precedes the coming storm, he has seen a wonderful worship service of the Creator and of the Lamb, who is deemed worthy to take the seven sealed book at the right hand of the Father. This book is the title deed to all creation, but included in it are the judgments of God to be poured out upon creation in order to deal with sin. Creation must be cleansed before the new and rightful owner takes possession of it, for doesn't the car salesman wash and clean the car before the title of that car is transferred to a new owner? Well, that's kind of the idea with creation here and with what we see God do to deal with sin upon the earth. For now the Lamb, the Lord Jesus, has taken the book and here in ch6 he begins to break the seven seals that bind the writings of this book.

With the breaking of the seals we see the beginning of the tribulation period, the beginning of the seven year time frame of Daniel's 70th week as seen in Daniel 9:20-27 what with the coming of the four horsemen of the apocalypse, the first 4 seals that are broken. Now we realize that there is a time of peace within that seven years, when the Antichrist is revealed and begins to assume power and take control over the world, but at the midpoint of that seven years he commits the abomination of desolation when he will require all to worship him, when he breaks his peace treaty with Israel and a literal hell breaks loose upon the earth. Jesus describes this time in *Mt 24:21 For then shall be **great tribulation**, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. 22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.* But for all of this to begin, the Antichrist must first come on the scene. *2Th 2:3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and **that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition**; 4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.*

Does not the Bible say there are many antichrists in the world *1Jo 2:18 Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.* And does this not sound like the Prince of Tyre preached upon in the previous chapter? One who thought of himself as a God, who desired worship as a god, lifted up in his sinful pride. I showed you that not only is there one main antichrist, but many antichrists in the world, and this prince of Tyre was one of those types, but here in ch6 we see one who is THE Antichrist, one who will be revealed, who will be the devil's man, the son of perdition, not the Son of God, although he will imitate the Lord Jesus, for as we all know Satan is an imitator, a deceiver, the Father of Lies. He is not God, does not possess the power of Christ so all he can do is trick everyone into believing he is the Christ, the peaceful king, the all knowing diplomat, the problem solver. And this is who we see step onto the scene at the beginning of the tribulation period, when the Lord Jesus in heaven breaks the first seal, the antichrist is revealed upon earth.

Here we have the Apostle John, in his vision, in the heavenly throne room, watching the Lord Jesus take the book, break the seals, and then the apostle is told by one of the four angelic beasts around the throne of God to come and see, John gets a front row seat of what will transpire upon the earth. So to make it clear, Jesus opens the book in heaven and that's causes events to be set in motion

upon the earth, that's the viewpoint we have here. With the breaking of the first seal John sees the antichrist come on the scene.

V1-2 *1 And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see. 2 And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.*

Here John hears more thunder, as the great storm of destruction is drawing ever closer. One of the beasts says to John "come and see". And what does he see? He sees a rider upon a white horse, who has a bow and a crown and he goes forth conquering and to conquer. Now there are many who believe this is the Lord Jesus returning, riding on his white horse coming to conquer in his return to earth as we see in ch19. But the problem with that thought is Jesus is in heaven opening the book at that very moment, and ch19 is the end of the tribulation period where this event is just the beginning. So that leads us to believe this rider is one trying to imitate the Lord Jesus, riding a white horse coming to conquer. Remember the devil is an imitator, one that comes as an angel of light and Jesus said in *Mt 24:4 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. 5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.* This here is Satan's mocking imitation of the second Coming, thus this rider is the Antichrist.

The white horse symbolizes royalty, as a prince riding his white steed. Horses in the Bible represent God's activity upon the earth and different powers in action and here the last events are set into motion with the revealing of the antichrist. Horses are also only used for war or preparation for warfare in the Bible, they are never used for peaceful purposes but always stand for military powers, such as when Jesus does return to earth riding on the white horse, and this is of course why he did not enter Jerusalem riding a horse as a conqueror would, but instead rode in on the back of a donkey. But what is deceiving here is the color of this horse, it is white, which symbolizes peace, thus this rider is coming to achieve a "peaceful" victory as he is imitating the Prince of Peace, we know this as his bow has no arrows, he has no weapons. He is coming to conquer with words and diplomacy, with answers to the world's problems, not with weapons of war. The bow also speaks of distant (future) warfare and far reaching objectives, not actions that have immediate results, but plans that take time to come to fruition. Thus we see there is cunning and strategy in the antichrist's long reaching plans. The bow also speaks of limited power, for when a bow has no arrows it is not very effective in warfare, especially in close combat. But when the Lord Jesus comes riding a white horse he comes with a sword not a bow and he means to wage war and blood will flow (Rev ch19).

But here we do not see such an image. We see a rider, with an impotent bow, on a peaceful horse, and we notice he has a crown. Not a crown he has taken, not a crown of a conquering king, but a crown that is given to him, a crown of achievement like the crown of olive leaves the athletes of the Olympics receive. The Lord Jesus wears a crown of a king, a diadem, not a crown of achievement, in addition he also wore a crown of thorns in the world's rejection of him, yet here the world embraces the antichrist, giving him a victor's crown. I believe this crown represents the rule and authority that will be given to the antichrist when he gives the world peace for a season. All will look up to him, all will praise his efforts, his genius. He will be like a god to mankind, he will be worshipped. And don't you dare say man would never act like that, all you have to do is go back to the last two national elections to see how the president was treated like some messiah, even some television reporters referred to Obama as a god hovering above us, and many artists painted pictures and such that depicted him as some sort of divine being. And have you heard of the clip going around the internet lately, a video a little boy's parents took of him praying to Obama, what's wrong with this world?! That's sickening and an abomination. But if man is willing to do that for someone who is not the

antichrist, although as Brother Dewey Williams once said “I believe the president is second cousin to him”, then what will man do when THE Antichrist comes on the scene? He WILL be worshipped and praised as a god, he will be supremely uplifted in pride and great will be his fall. Jesus says in *Job 5:43 I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.*

And notice that such a peaceful man, one who comes with polite and politically correct words, with diplomatic ideas that will impress the leaders of the world, what purpose does he ride forth for? To conquer. As soon as he goes forth he has a scheme in the back of his mind, his ulterior motive from the beginning is to conquer the world, to rule, to be worshipped as god. He sets forth to form a worldwide dictatorship. The future world ruler comes as a peacemaker but will usher in a reign of war, bloodshed, famine and death, especially against those who are sided with God. But see how he imitates the Lord Jesus. Jesus came as a peaceful Lamb to die for the world, not to conquer it, but he will come back one day as the Lion, he will still bring peace but also devastation, just not to the redeemed. God had his man for the job in the form of Jesus Christ, and here we see Satan has his man in the form of the Antichrist. And following is a short list that describes this antichrist {*Brother Jerry Honeycutt's list of facts concerning the Antichrist p30 Vol 2*}.

- he will not be revealed until “the day of the Lord” II Thess 2:1-3
- he comes from a Gentile nation 13:1
- his rise comes thru his peace program Dan 8:25
- he is characterized by great intelligence Dan 8:23
- he will be a talented orator Dan 7:8, 20
- he will cause craft to prosper Dan 8:25
- he will rule over ten nations 13:1; 17:12
- three of the original ten rulers are eliminated in his rise to power Dan 7:8, 24
- his influence will be world-wide 13:8
- he shall establish a covenant with the Jews Dan 9:27
- he breaks that covenant with the Jews Dan 9:27
- he sets himself up as God Dan 11:36-37; II Thess 2:4; Rev 13:5
- he will be energized by Satan 13:4; Dan 8:24
- he blasphemes the true God Dan 7:25; Rev 13:1, 5-6
- he will be a miracle worker II Thess 2:7-9
- he will be accepted by all who have heard and rejected the gospel II Thess 2:10-12
- he will control Palestine and set up his headquarters in Jerusalem Dan 11:42, 45
- he will be supported by a corrupt religious system 17:3-5
- he will be promoted by a false prophet 13:11-18
- he will destroy the religious system 17:16-18
- he will be conquered by the Lord at the end of his seven year reign 19:19-21

So do you see why such warning is given in the Bible of the Antichrist (whom we believers will not see due to the rapture) and other antichrists like him, which are now in the world and we struggle with daily? 2Jo 1:7 *For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.*

1Jo 2:18 *Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.*

When the Antichrist does come on the scene, peace will be a large part of his plan, but that plan is ended when he desires to be worshipped, when he commits the abomination of desolation. Then peace will end and war will engulf the world.

V3-4 3 *And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see. 4 And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.*

Here the second beast tells John to come and see as the Lord Jesus opens the second seal of the book. John sees another horse, red in color, approaching with a rider. Now, as to the identity of this rider he is more symbolic of what the first rider, the antichrist, sets into play - War. This rider, like the next two riders, is more of a force or power rather than a single being or personality. Remember this is a vision and there is a lot of symbolism here. I think this because thru this rider peace is taken from the earth, world war breaks out, and there is no single person who is doing this, rather it is mankind vs mankind.

Now the red horse's color, already symbolic of warfare, also symbolizes bloodshed and murder and killing. There will be strife and struggle and fighting and war when this rider comes, there will be war without, nation against nation, ally against ally, and there will be war within, civil war, class warfare (poor vs rich as we will see in the 3rd seal), racial warfare, armed rebellion, man against man, brother against brother, and much blood will be spilt. This world will see war and violence on a scale never known before. *Mt 24:6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. 7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.* We also see this rider has a great sword given to him, another symbol of mighty catastrophic war and bloodshed (unlike a bow with an empty quiver). You think of all the available weapons and technology mankind has today and how destructive our militaries are. Nuclear and atomic warfare, biological and chemical warfare, guns of all kinds and capacities, drones and robots, all kinds of technology capable of mass destruction, bombs and missiles, tanks and jets and ships and satellites and intercontinental ballistic missiles, destroyer mounted rail guns, the sheer ability to kill the world's entire population many times over from miles away, all this will be turned loose upon mankind, with the Antichrist at the helm. You think of all the wars America has been in, WWI, WW II, Vietnam, Korea, the Gulf wars, Civil, Revolutionary and all the others and how tragic those were of lives lost, of the atrocities committed against man, all those combined will not touch the tragedy one will see during the tribulation. And as with all war we then see supplies begin to run short, food becomes scarce, fertile land is laid waste and so famine sets in.

V5-6 *5 And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. 6 And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.*

Here the third of the four beasts around the throne speaks to John and urges him to come see. And here the beloved apostle sees a rider upon a black horse, which is symbolic of Famine (reference Jer 14:1-2; Lam 5:10) as well as economic disaster. For as I said war causes shortages, and shortages drive up costs, the scarcity of basic needs causes governments to step in and take control and begin rationing food and other supplies. WW II caused even the US to ration certain supplies, some of you might remember that. We see this rationing depicted in this verse by the scales, the pair of balances, this third rider is carrying, a way of measuring out, rationing out, an allotment of food for every individual. So after war breaks out, food has to be measured out, as the cost of food sky rockets with inflation, the basic principles of supply and demand set in and low supply and high demand means exorbitant prices. And John hears a voice referencing such prices in v6 ... *A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.*, a measure (a day's supply of wheat) for a penny (a day's wages), or one can choose three measures of barley, a lesser quality grain that was typically given to slaves and animals of biblical times for a day's wages. One would have to work an entire day just to have enough food for one day for himself, this does not count his family and others depending upon him to feed them. So along with famine we see malnutrition, hunger and

even starvation setting in, for not everyone will be working or be able to afford such prices. There will be no freezers fully stocked, refrigerators crammed full or pantries overloaded, shelves will be bare, gardens ransacked, people will steal and plunder and even kill to feed themselves and their families. Anarchy will set in. The world will be in chaos, or atleast among the masses, for John also hears the voice that calls for the oil and wine to not be touched, not to be hurt, not to be affected by high costs or inflation. Oil and wine are considered luxuries, the food of the rich, while wheat and barley are food for the poor. The rich will apparently enjoy some luxury while the poor starve. Here we see class warfare, poor vs the rich, the haves vs the have nots, and if you have not been paying attention to whats happening in America, you are missing this very thing being staged, tax the rich give to the poor, take from those who have and spread the wealth around, hate the haves, love the have nots. One of the many antichrists is already prepping the way for such civil warfare in this country. This scarcity of food, economic disaster, chaos in the streets is one way I believe the antichrist will assume control over the world economy, all so he can feed the masses, he will satisfy their basic needs in exchange for their worship. *Re 13:16 And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads:17 And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.18 Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.* But during all this war and famine, there is always another step, where people starve and do all sorts of atrocities to survive, we now see pestilence and death set in.

V7-8 *7 And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. 8 And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.*

As the Lord Jesus opens the fourth seal, the fourth beast tells John to come and see, and here he sees a pale horse which depicts pestilence, sickness, and deadly disease. And no, this is not Clint Eastwood in Pale Rider, but in fact it is two personages. One rides a greenish, corpse colored pale horse and his name is Death and then we see that Hell follows him. We must remember Christ has the keys to death and hell (1:18), he has power and control and authority over them, and one day both death and hell will be cast into the lake of fire, suffering the second death (Rev 20:14), but for now they are loosed upon the earth with the breaking of the fourth seal. Death rides forth with Hell nipping at his heels like a rabid dog. We see in these two powers the ability to claim the physical body in Death and the spiritual soul in Hell, and now they ride forth to claim their prey. And power is given to them, by none other than the Lord Jesus, for it is He who holds the book and has set these two powers loose and who has the keys of authority over them. They are given power to kill one quarter of the world's population. To kill with sword (war, murder, strife, all acts of violence), with hunger (famine), and with death (disease, pestilence) and with beasts of the earth (all types of animals that are hungry as well, think wild animals, dogs, rats, swarms, diseased animals, etc, and included in this I believe could be viruses, parasites and deadly bacteria, all those are living organisms and as we know they can kill swathes of people in one go in the form of plagues and epidemics (not to mention any biological warfare agents used). This world has at least 7 if not 8 billion people on it as of right now, so that means around 2 billion of those will die with the breaking of the 4th seal, there were only approximately 230,000 people killed during the tragic tsunami of 2004 in the Indian Ocean, 60-85 million in WWII, and with the 4th seal we have only just begun, still before us are the rest of the seals, the 7 trumpets and the 7 vials of judgment. *Mt 24:7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. 8 All these are the beginning of sorrows.*

So far we have been looking at the events set into motion by the Lamb, the Lord Jesus, taking the book that was at the right hand of the Father and breaking the seals one by one and opening the book, the title deed to the earth. Remember this occurs in the hereafter, the time after the church age, after the dispensation of grace, for the church age ended with the rapture of the saints, of all saved believers upon the earth being removed. And with that the tribulation period begins, the time frame referred to as Daniel's 70th week. This started with the first seal being broken and the antichrist being revealed upon the earth (also remember we have the viewpoint from heaven looking down upon the earth to see the results of each seal that is broken), the antichrist comes on the scene with talk of peace and diplomacy when truly his ulterior motive is to conquer and to be worshipped as we see in the following verses...

II Thessalonians 2:1 Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, 2 That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. 3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; 4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. 5 Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? 6 And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. 7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. 8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: 9 Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, 10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: 12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

This Antichrist, this son of perdition, mimics Christ the coming king by bringing a false peace, the antichrist comes riding a white horse like Christ, but instead of peace he brings bloodshed and disaster. Yet it is this very man the world will bow down to, will proclaim to be leader, dictator, god (where they rejected the true Prince of Peace and crucified Him); this will usher in the next 3 horsemen, as the Lord Jesus in heaven breaks the 2nd thru the 4th seals, and the horsemen that appear are instruments of God's wrath and judgment to be poured out upon the earth.

The second rider on the red horse brings war and violence on a scale never before seen, and as with all great wars, famine sets in, thus the 3rd rider. With this comes scarcity of food and basic supplies, governmental rationing of such things, which then leads to many going hungry, starving or resorting to ill means to feed themselves and their families. But with so many dying from war and famine and even by the hands of their own neighbors, that much death can only lead to disease and pestilence being spread, and thus the 4th rider appears, Death comes in and along with him comes Hell. One has power to take life from the body, the other has power to take one's soul. And when these two come on the scene, one quarter of the world's population will die, catastrophically and violently in an unparalleled bloodbath upon the earth.

So is it any wonder we see such worship of the Lamb in heaven by the elders and the saved. For we being part of that gathering will not have to face such tribulation, we will not have to face the judgment poured out upon the earth. We will not have to resist THE antichrist, we will not have to face war on such a scale or famine or pestilence or violence or horrible death, yes we may have to face events like them, even death, but nothing of the severity that this world will see when the Lord Jesus opens the book and breaks the seals. That is why he is worthy of our worship and praise, we will not have to suffer thru this awful time, for we as saved by grace believers are not appointed to wrath (I Thes 5:9).

And now here in ch6:9-11 we see the scene shift once more as the 5th seal is opened. Our view is directed once more back into the throne room of heaven where John sees the souls of those

martyred during the tribulation. As we begin looking at these verses I want us to think about how they compare to Jesus' words in Matthew 24:3-14.

3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? 4 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. 5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. 6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. 7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. 8 All these are the beginning of sorrows. 9 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. 10 And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. 11 And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. 12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. 13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. 14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

V9 *And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:*

The Lord Jesus in heaven now opens the 5th seal of the book, and John sees under the altar of heaven souls of those that were slain. Now the first question that comes up is who are these souls? These are not the saved of our dispensation, the age of grace, as that age has ended and all of the believers of that age are raptured before the tribulation (remember the church and Old Testament saints are represented by the 24 elders), but we must remember there will be multitudes of people, both Jew and gentile, who will be saved and thus martyred during the tribulation.

Re 7:9 After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; 10 And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.... 13 And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? 14 And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

The reason for the existence of these believing martyrs is that as the Apostle Paul tells us that the spiritual blindness of the Jews will be removed and Israel will be saved for they will come to realize their rejection of the true Messiah and their spiritual state due to that rejection and they shall turn to Jesus during this time of Jacob's troubles. *Ro 11:25 For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. 26 And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: 27 For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.* Many will be saved during the tribulation by the same gospel that John the Baptist preached. *Mt 3:1 In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, 2 And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* The gospel of the kingdom will be preached, the return of Christ will be preached, many will believe and be saved, all by faith in Jesus Christ, but such belief will antagonize the antichrist and the world, these tribulation saints will refuse the mark of the beast brought on by war and famine, they will be as Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (who refused to bow and worship a mere man and were thrown into the fiery furnace) but unlike those three Hebrew children the tribulation saints will be killed/martyred for their stand and their faith, they will be hunted down and butchered. And so John sees this growing remnant, the souls of those martyred here in heaven, but the odd thing is he sees them under the altar.

So the next question is what does under the altar mean? Well John sees them under or at the bottom or at the foot of the altar. Now in the Old Testament a priest would present an animal sacrifice by pouring the blood of the animal out at the **base** of the brazen altar, but here the lives of those martyred were poured out as sacrifices to the glory of God, their lives are poured out at the base of this altar as a sacrifice unto God. Two altars are mentioned in Revelation, "the golden altar" of incense, *Re 9:13*; and the altar of burnt-offerings, mentioned here, and *Re 8:5; 14:18; 16:7*. These saints have been gathered here as an offering to God because they willingly gave their lives for their beliefs. Paul

said something similar to such a life offering in *2Ti 4:6 For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. And in Php 2:17 Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.*

Now the word martyr actually means witness, so these saints will be killed for their witness of the truth of Christ and his coming kingdom, their witness that Jesus is coming to overthrow the antichrist and rule the world with righteousness and justice, they will die for their testimony of the truth. See we as redeemed believers are to be a living sacrifice as pointed out in Romans ch12, but here those that believe during the tribulation period will actually give their lives in death as a sacrifice unto God, for John says they were slain for the word of God and for their testimony. They were truly as the Apostle Paul wrote *2Ti 1:8 Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; For we read in Re 12:11 which I think refers to these saints... And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. And now they are in heaven under the sheltering protective care of their Lord, under the altar, having brought glory to God by their stand and statement of faith.*

V10 *And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?*

In v10 we hear these martyrs cry out with a loud voice. These tribulation saints cry out to the Lord, the holy one, the true one, the just and right one, “How long do we wait for you to judge, how long must we wait for vengeance upon those that slew us?” These saints cry out for vengeance, how long will they have to wait for God to do something, to bring justice and judgment upon their enemies. Many who suffer unfairly at the hands of others can cry out a similar question (ex. Christians being killed in Egypt & Mideast), but the comforting thing we read in *Rom 12:19 ...Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.* Vengeance and payback are in God’s hands, and none can escape His all-seeing, all powerful, divine judgment.

This cry is also similar to the imprecatory Psalms, where the writer cries out for vengeance upon his enemies, asking God to smite them. *Ps 94:1 O LORD God, to whom vengeance belongeth; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself. 2 Lift up thyself, thou judge of the earth: render a reward to the proud. 3 LORD, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph? 4 How long shall they utter and speak hard things? and all the workers of iniquity boast themselves?* These martyrs cry for justness to be done, for judgment upon the wicked, for vindication of their murders. This may not sound very Christian to some, wishing judgment upon others, but we must remember the age of grace has ended, the time for judgment has arrived, they await the ultimate judge to appear and set things right. The martyred saints cry for Jesus to come and right the wrongs done to them as referenced in II Thessalonians 1:8... *In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ..* God replies to the martyred saint’s cries in v11.

V11 *And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.*

This remnant of martyred believers are given white robes, which is also seen in ch7:13-14, for they are saved by faith in the Lamb, much like those of the Old Testament, they placed faith in the coming Christ, yet these tribulation saints were awaiting the Lord’s second coming to earth, his earthly kingdom, but it is still faith in Jesus that washes them clean of their sins.

But what is now said to this remnant to calm them and their cries for vengeance? They are told to rest for a little season, to wait, to be patient. Why, what are they to wait for? Well it is explained to them, they are not going to be alone, they will be joined by many more of their fellow servants, many more upon earth will be martyred, slain before this is all over with. They are to wait until the Great Tribulation is over and Christ comes and avenges them by destroying his enemies as the true rider

upon the white horse, these martyred saints will have their day of vengeance when Jesus comes back to this earth. *Re 20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.* Jesus is going to have the victory, the final say!

V12 *And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;*

When the Lamb opens the 6th seal an earthquake occurs, but not just any kind of earthquake, the verse says it's a great earthquake, a mighty and powerful and devastating quake. Now I will tell you some commentators do not take this earthquake literally, they believe it applies more to major societal disruptions, the downfall of government rule and mankind and his civilization being thrown into utter chaos and anarchy. But just from the reading of these verses I can't agree with that, even though much of that may happen in the end times, for I don't think all of mankind would fear like they do in v15-17 if this was just the downfall of laws and society, as many people live in areas where chaos rules, where laws do not apply, where government has no authority, but you don't see them running and hiding and cursing the wrath of God for it. So I believe the 6th seal is a literal earthquake, that shakes the earth to its very foundations, as Jesus himself said in Mat 24 there would be earthquakes in diverse places. And we see in the Bible that God does use the shaking of the earth to get mankind's attention, for did not the earth quake at Jesus' death upon the cross and at his resurrection? *Mt 27:50 Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.51 And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;*

Mt 28:2 And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.

And we see there are more earthquakes that happen later in Revelation, for example after the two witnesses in the streets of Jerusalem ascend to heaven we read in *Re 11:13 And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.* And then at the opening of the 7th vial we read in *Re 16:17 And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done.18 And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.19 And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.20 And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.21 And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.* This description sounds very similar to what happens here at the 6th seal doesn't it, just larger and more devastating.

Now what happens under this seal was actually foreseen by the Old Testament prophets. *Isa 13:6 Howl ye; for the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty.7 Therefore shall all hands be faint, and every man's heart shall melt: 8 And they shall be afraid: pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth: they shall be amazed one at another; their faces shall be as flames. 9 Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it.10 For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine.11 And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.12 I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir.13 Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger.*

Joe 2:10 The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining:11 And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth his word: for the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?

Joe 2:31 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come. 32 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.

Joe 3:15 The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining.16 The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel.

Even Jesus referenced this time... *Lu 21:25 And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring;26 Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.27 And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.*

The earthquake here in ch6 will be off the charts of the Rictor Scale and I believe it will cause other catastrophes. We can't ignore tsunamis, although flooding is not mentioned here it's a distinct possibility. But I do believe there will be great coastal damage with this quake of the 6th seal as we see in v14 the islands are moved out of their places, some disappear, some move, some may even be created, this quake is going to change the global map. Also we see in v14 that the mountains move as well, whole mountain ranges are pushed up or down and even a few dormant volcanoes will most likely come to life, as one would expect volcanic eruptions with such a quake, for if you have tectonic plates shift that much you could very well have eruptions all over the planet to relieve the vast pressures under the earth's crust, in addition to this one would expect explosions and gases and ash and magma to be all blasted into the atmosphere with such volcanic eruptions, which is what I believe John is describing for us.

For after the great earthquake the sun becomes black as sackcloth of hair, this is the same kind of sackcloth that one would wear in mourning. Now when I think of this sackcloth I imagine its not the best of material, kind of like a burlap sack, and that if one puts it over their head, there are thin places in the material or gaps between the strands where some light makes it thru, even though it is still dark in the sack its not pitch black. So what I believe John is saying here is one can see where the sun is but due to the quake and all the volcanic activity with smoke and ash being blown into the atmosphere and carried by the wind currents around the earth, the sky becomes immensely dark and clouded with all this debris, and thus the sun is obscured, some light makes it thru but not much, almost like its dusk, even at midday. And just as the sun is obscured the moon is as well, it becomes a dark almost black red, barely able to be seen in the night sky. Remember when Mt Saint Helens erupted the ash produced from that was in the atmosphere for months if not years and actually altered the global temperature because of the ash blocking the sun, so just think what 10 or 20 Mt Saint Helens would do.

V13 *And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.*

Here we see even more catastrophe. Now what John describes here with the stars of heaven falling to the earth could easily be a mighty meteor shower where earth is bombarded with large rocks from outer space. It can not be literal stars, for one star would destroy the earth in an instant. Remember our sun is a star, and a small one in comparison to others, yet you can fit 1.3 million earths inside the volume of our sun, so if these are truly stars that fall to earth, our whole solar system is destroyed, so it can not really be stars, and the Greek word for star here supports that, as it means star both literally and figuratively, meaning it could be some other kind of light or body in the sky.

So what is John describing? Well like I said it could be a cosmic rain of death, where God has sent large meteors crashing to earth, causing untold devastation, for a large enough meteor can have the same devastating effect as a nuclear bomb, that's what the scientists say created the Gulf of Mexico and killed the dinosaurs. But I actually don't think this is referencing meteors (at least not in totality) for when we look at the context here and compare this Scripture with the earthquake we read about at the 7th vial judgment we see a similarity. Lets look at that selection of verses again... *Re 16:17 And the*

*seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done.*¹⁸ *And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.*¹⁹ *And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.*²⁰ *And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.*²¹ *And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.* After this earthquake it seems there were volcanic explosions that caused massive rocks to be blasted into the air to rain back down upon mankind, so could not John be describing something similar here in ch6, maybe its magma blasted into the atmosphere, glowing and shining globs of molten rock that streak across the sky like a star falling to earth by the hundreds or thousands, for John says they are many of them, just as if you went up to a fig tree that was heavily laden with figs and just shook it and caused many of those figs to fall to the ground. So this could be more volcanic activity in v13 or it could be a vast meteor shower that “coincidentally” happens at the same time as this quake.

V14 *And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.*

v14 continues the description of this cataclysmic event. Now I must admit I have to use my imagination to figure out what the heaven rolled up like a scroll is describing. There are other references to the heavens being rolled up as a scroll in the Bible but for the sake of time I’m not going to get into them although it might put some light on our understanding of this phrase. But the gist of this, and I could very well be wrong, is that the heavens, what we see in the sky at day or most likely night here disappear, for when a scroll is rolled up one can not read it, its closed, so my guess is the sky, the atmosphere is closed off by rolling billowing clouds of ash and smoke and dust, thus obscuring the sun and moon, and the stars totally disappear, the only true light coming from the devastation of the stars falling upon the earth. From all this destruction I think man will see he is truly alone, as the earth will be truly sealed off from the rest of the universe and man will see he is all by himself to face the wrath of God, no one will help him, no one will come to his aid. And as we see in v15 this will affect every living soul on the planet, it will affect them equally with no preference to class, rank or standing.

V15 *And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains;*

Such a worldwide earthquake that causes untold amounts of damage will bring kings, great men, chiefs, rich and poor alike, slave and freeman alike, and even mighty and brave men to their knees. They scramble to find some hole in the ground to protect themselves, they search for peace and safety but do not find it. They hide in caves and in the rocks of the mountains trying to find somewhere they will be safe, some place to survive the ruin raining down upon them, but it is useless, hopeless with such devastation taking place. This attempt to hide from God in the end reminds me of the beginning of mankind in his sin when Adam and Eve hid from God in the garden, man has always tried to hide his sin, but nothing is hid from God and his justice will be meted out. Warren Wiersbe writes “*If men and women will not yield to the love of God, and be changed by the grace of God, there is no way for them to escape the wrath of God.*”

But the strange thing is man does not beg for forgiveness, they do not beg for mercy, they do not repent, instead they cry out to be hid, they cry out for death, they cry out to the mountains and rocks instead of God.

V16-17 *16 And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: 17 For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?*

These people cry out for death from protection from the wrath of God (the one who sits upon the throne) and the wrath of the Lamb. What a paradoxical statement that is. Wrath and Lamb should never go together, maybe wrath and Lion, but you don't think of lambs being wrathful, dangerous or even scary, they are cute and fluffy and peaceful, unless we are talking about the righteous and divine and holy Lamb of God that is Jesus Christ. For Jesus deals justly with evil, with sin, for this wrath is evidence of His holy love for all that is right and his holy hatred for all that is evil. *Job 3:36 He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.* These people that cry out to the mountains and rocks show us just how stubborn and prideful and willful man can be, for these people have not believed, they have rejected Jesus, rejected God, rejected the truth, refused to submit to the Lord, refused to submit to His will and instead have accepted the Antichrist and his lies and that has led them to their destruction. They cry out to the creation instead of the Creator. They tremble and fear from what they now realize is true, that God is real, he is in control, that the Lamb did die and came to life to save mankind's souls, that Jesus is the Savior, but now it's too little too late and so they now stand at the brink of suffering divine wrath being poured out upon their wickedness. So they cower in fear at the wrath and judgment of God and the Lamb, and ask who shall be able to stand? And the answer is no one, no one except for those who have the seal of the living God, which we are introduced to in ch7.

Chapter 14

REVELATION –CHAPTER 7

Here in ch7 of Revelation we come to the first parenthetical passage of Revelation, its called that because its like the Apostle John has put parenthesis around this chapter as what he says is inserted between the opening of the 6th and the 7th seals. In this particular parenthetical passage John deals with two groups of people, the 144,000 sealed Jews and the martyred tribulation saints; those that will be sealed and protected when the angels begin pouring out God's judgment upon earth during the trumpet judgments and those that will believe upon Christ and die by the hands of the antichrist and his followers in the worst persecution this world has ever seen. Remember we saw the souls of some of these martyred saints at the opening of the 5th seal under the altar crying out to God to be avenged, and asking how long would it be before they were avenged, and God had told them to wait for they would be joined by many others who would die for their testimony and the word of God, for many more would be saved during this apocalyptic time. So with that lets begin looking at the first group John introduces us to in ch7...

V1 *And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.*

A key to understanding the chronological order of events here is paying close attention to the wording God uses, so what does this verse begin with? "*and after these things*", after what things? The first 6th seals. All of ch6 has happened, the coming of the antichrist with false peace, for instead of peace he institutes war, famine, pestilence, where many upon the earth perish. Also believers in Christ are already being martyred by the antichrist and his minions and then the great earth quake hits. All of this has happens due to the Lord Jesus opening the book, breaking the first 6 seals, and after these things comes the parenthetical passage of ch7.

Remember we had the same phrasing used after the church age in Rev ch4 where we saw the rapture pictured, *Re 4:1 After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.* And now here in ch7 after the 6th seal and before the 7th, John now averts our attention to 4 angels surrounding the earth, standing upon the four corners of the earth, meaning they stand at the 4 compass points of the world, north, south east & west. These four angels control the winds of the earth, they cause the wind to stand still. Why this is we are not really told but I imagine this keeps a lot of the smoke and ash and dust of the volcanic activity of the 6th seal at bay or keeps it from spreading for a little while. Its keeps all that pollution and destructive volcanic debris at bay, it keeps all that from harming the sea and the trees, vegetation upon the earth for a few moments. What we see here is that after such a shock of a quake, after all the catastrophe that has happened so far, we see a lull in the storm, the storm we saw coming with the thunderings and lightnings coming forth from the throne of God but now the wind stands still, all comes to a stop for a few brief moments. There is a break, a short time period, before the storm reengages and intensifies. And I wonder if this coincides with the event in *Re 8:1 And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.* The wind stands still, there is silence in heaven for about half an hour and then the repercussions of opening the 7th seal take place.

But the question is why is this lull in the storm needed? We are given that answer in v2-3.

V2-3 *2 And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, 3 Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.*

Here we see a 5th angel ascending, traveling upward from the east and he has a seal, the seal of the living God. Some believe this angel is the Lord Jesus himself but I'm not convinced of that fact yet as he is the one opening the book in heaven, not yet having returned to earth in order to be ascending or rising into the eastern sky.

But this angel, whoever it is, has the seal of the living God. Now a seal is placed upon something to signify ownership, that what ever is sealed is owned by whoever owns that distinct seal. A seal also implies protection of said object by that rightful owner. So here is the seal of the living God, and whoever this angel places this seal upon belongs to God and is under His protection. And this 5th angel cries unto the other four angels who have been given the power to hurt the earth and the sea and basically tells them to wait a moment, to wait on hurting the earth and sea, to not let the wind blow and take all the dangerous things in the atmosphere around the planet which will drastically alter all life upon the earth, for remember the sunlight will be blocked out, there is ash and dust and most likely toxic gases released by the massive earthquake and probable eruptions. So these angels have stalled the wind that would take all this around the world for a moment until the 5th angel seals the servants of God in their forehead, because the 5th angel has asked them to wait until this sealing is done.

Now what this seal is or what it looks like we really don't know, but it seems to be some symbol or word or more specifically a name... *Re 14:1 And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, **having his Father's name written in their foreheads.*** Now we read something similar about the redeemed saints, the overcomers of the Philadelphian church age. *Re 3:12 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.* It seems that there is or will be some seal, some mark upon believers, the church in heaven and the 144,000 on earth alike. *Re 22:1 And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. 2 In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. 3 And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: 4 And they shall see his face; **and his name shall be in their foreheads.*** We also know that the devil mimics such a mark with the mark of the beast. But this seal of the living God will protect those that are sealed from all the destruction that is about to fall, the judgments that will hurt the earth and the sea, it will protect them from natural disasters, from demonic attacks and from the antichrist himself. How it will protect I do not know. But God is able, he protected Noah and his family, the three Hebrew boys in the fiery furnace, Daniel in the lion's den, and many others in miraculous ways, so I have no doubt he can protect those that are sealed here. But this seal upon the forehead is not just for protection, it is for a purpose, that purpose will be to preach Jesus to a world at its end, God in His mercy and grace gives mankind a last chance, one more opportunity to turn to Jesus and be saved before its everlasting too late. How God must love us to not just outright reject us in our sin and our rejection of Him; in such a wicked world where the church has been removed God still has a heart for mankind.

We are given a picture, an example, of a mark that protects one from destruction in the book of Ezekiel ch9 where God sends slaughterers into Jerusalem as punishment for sin. In that chapter the mark placed upon the forehead, is a word, this word is the last letter of the Jewish alphabet and looks like a "t" and actually means a cross. So those that cried out to God for the sin of their people were

sealed in the forehead before destruction fell, just like what will transpire for 144,000 before the 7th seal is opened. And now the question comes, who are these servants that are sealed with the seal of the living God, who have God's protection upon them to preach during the great tribulation?

V4-8 *4 And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.5 Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand. 6 Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nephthalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand. 7 Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand. 8 Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.*

The first thing we notice is all of these 144,000 sealed servants are Jews, they are all from one of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel, 12,000 from each tribe. They are not gentiles, they are not the church, they are not Jehovah witnesses or anything like that, they are God's chosen people. But something we notice here is the tribe of Levi is substituted for the tribe of Dan, why is Dan omitted when Levi had no inheritance with the other tribes as we see in the book of numbers?, *Nu 18:20 And the LORD spake unto Aaron, Thou shalt have no inheritance in their land, neither shalt thou have any part among them: I am thy part and thine inheritance among the children of Israel. 21 And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation. 22 Neither must the children of Israel henceforth come nigh the tabernacle of the congregation, lest they bear sin, and die. 23 But the Levites shall do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they shall bear their iniquity: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations, that among the children of Israel they have no inheritance. 24 But the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer as an heave offering unto the LORD, I have given to the Levites to inherit: therefore I have said unto them, Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance.*

Jos 13:14 Only unto the tribe of Levi he gave none inheritance; the sacrifices of the LORD God of Israel made by fire are their inheritance, as he said unto them.

Another question is why is the tribe of Joseph named but not the tribe of his son Ephraim, who is usually connected with his brother Manasseh? Why are these two tribes, Dan and Ephraim, omitted and the tribe of Joseph and Levi included? I do not have an answer for you, the Bible seems to be silent on this matter. Although some have speculated that since in the Old Testament both of the tribes of Dan and Ephraim were prominent in their connection with idolatry that they may actually side once more against God during the tribulation. Dan was the first tribe in the book of Judges to turn to idolatry and we read of this tribe in *Ge 49:17 Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward.* These two tribes also allowed Jeroboam to set up golden calves to be worshipped in Dan and in Bethel. And because of such a connection some have surmised that these tribes may actually side with the Antichrist or even have the antichrist come from their ranks. But again that's all speculation, only God knows His reasons here.

The key thing to remember though is these are Jews, who have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, they are saved and are now sealed for protection and for preaching.

Psalms 91:1 He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.2 I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. 3 Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. 4 He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler. 5 Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; 6 Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.7 A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. 8 Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked. 9 Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; 10 There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. 11 For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. 12 They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.13 Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet. 14 Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. 15 He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him.16 With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation.

Through the ministry of the 144,000 many will come to know the Lord, Jews and Gentiles alike, although those that do accept Jesus as Savior will be martyred. John Phillips writes of the 144,000... *“Those sealed will go unscathed through the Great Tribulation. They will be a perpetual thorn in the side of the Beast and a constant reminder to the devil that, while millions may bow to his will, God still has him on a leash and says to him, “Thus far and no further.” The mobilized armies of the earth will not be able to touch a hair of the heads of these sealed ones. The concentration camps and torture chambers of the Beast’s fearful inquisition will leave them unscathed. The fire will not kindle upon them, nor will the smell of smoke be on their garments. The floods will not be able to drown them. The secret police will have dossiers as thick as prison walls, but they will be unable to harm them. The seal of God rests upon them, and they are saved and secured, come what may. They will be a living proof to the devil that not only is his secular power strictly limited by divine decree, but in the end he cannot win. If he cannot conquer these, then he cannot possibly win in the end. No matter how many millions he liquidates in his insane rage, he is obviously under the control of God.*

So then, the 144,000 are sealed to defy the totality of Satan’s secular dominion. They are a reminder to him that every knee does not bow to him and that God is sovereign and in invincible control.”

V9 *After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;*

Notice the phrase “after this” appearing once more, thus telling us what is about to happen occurs after, after what? After the rapture, after the 6th seals, after the sealing of the 144,000, after what we have just read. Thus this speaks of those that are saved during the great tribulation. And the wonderful thing about this is we see God in His wonderful mercy giving mankind one last chance, for John sees an untold multitude saved during the most horrific time earth has ever experienced. Only eight people were saved during the flood, but here with judgment coming down, with the antichrist in power, an untold number of those who gave their lives to Christ during the tribulation period are now gathered before the heavenly throne.

These tribulation saints come from all nations and kindred and people and tongues, much like the redeemed of the church that worshipped in ch5 *Re 5:9 And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; 10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.* These saints are from everywhere and from all walks of life, martyrs from every corner of the earth. They stand accepted before the throne of God the Father and before the Lamb, the Lord Jesus, they stand in victory clothed with white robes (that were given to them in 6:11) and with palm fronds in their hands, with the robes signifying virtue and victory and the palms rejoicing. Remember when Jesus had his triumphant entry into Jerusalem palms were used and the shouting of Hosanna echoed throughout the streets, *Job 12:12 On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, 13 Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.* Those in Jerusalem rejoiced for Jesus, just as these saints do now, for it is because of Jesus they are here, it is not because of their death, their martyrdom or anything they have done, but it is all because of Jesus the King of kings and Lord of Lords. And they recognize that with their praise.

V10 *And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.*

They praise God and the Lamb for grace and mercy, for eternal salvation, and their praise begins yet another worship service in heaven.

V11-12 *11 And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, 12 Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.*

The saint’s worship stimulates and inspires worship from all the angels. So moved are these divine beings at such a display of faith and praise and sacrifice that the angels can’t help but worship

the magnificent God. Notice they surround all in the throne room, they are around the throne, around the 24 elders, around the 4 beasts, an untold number of thousands upon thousands upon thousands of angels fall down on their faces and give praise to God, for does it not say **all** the angels? What a sight to see, all of the angels, legions of angels, worshiping and praising God. They were inspired to worship because of the tribulation saint's worship. How inspired do you think John was to worship when he saw this? Isn't it something that the martyrs begin to worship, then the angels worship because of them, and my question is does my worship, your worship, inspire others to worship? Does our glorifying of God cause others to glory in Him?

V13-14 *13 And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? 14 And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*

In v13 we see one of the 24 elders approach John and ask him if he knows who these are that are standing before the throne praising God dressed in white robes, and John answers he does not know, so the elder tells him exactly who they are, these are they that have victory thru the blood of Jesus Christ, those who have believed in the Lamb during great tribulation due to the preaching of the 144,000. These are believers of the post-church age that have washed their blackened sinful robes in the crimson red blood of Jesus Christ and made them white as snow, pure and holy and righteous all because of Jesus. *Isa 26:9 With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.*

V15 *Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.*

Like the redeemed of the church age, the tribulation age saints are saved for a purpose, saved to serve the Lord. These saints are rewarded for their faith, bestowed upon them is a position of high honor, they serve before the throne of God, these faithful who gave it all get to be the closest to God on His throne and serve him day and night. The devil gave them his worst while they were on earth but God will give them His best when they are in heaven. What a wonderful picture of God rewarding enduring unflinching faith.

And a most marvelous thing is stated at the end of v15, this verse states that not only will these saints be before the throne but that God shall dwell among them. This word "dwell" actually means that God will spread His tabernacle over them, thus reminding us of when Israel marched out of Egypt and God was with them in the pillar of a cloud and of fire. After Israel was given the instructions to build the tabernacle and institute the Law, God dwelled amongst them, He tabernacled with them. The same idea is given about the Lord Jesus in the 1st chapter of John where we read *John 1:14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.* Here Jesus tabernacled or dwelt among us, he was present with us in the temple of his flesh, his glory was seen and manifested, we saw the glory of God and his grace in the form of Christ. And here the tribulation saints get to see the grace of God all about them as He will be with them and they with Him for all eternity. Where on earth they had fear and insecurity, they will now have eternal security, victory and divine protection. We see this fulfilled in the future with the new heaven and the new earth... *Re 21:1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. 2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. 4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.*

V16-17 *16 They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any beat. 17 For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.*

These saints will never face what they had to face on earth during the tribulation ever again. Remember the third seal brought famine and those that refuse the mark of the beast cannot buy or sell. *Re 13:17 And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.* These saints will hunger and starve for their faith on earth, many will perish by starvation or thirst, for the waters of the world, as we will see, will be polluted and poisoned... *Re 16:4 And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood.* These believers will also be hunted down so they must go and hide out under the heat of the sun and be at the mercy of the environment and outdoors, and with the atmosphere in shambles nothing will protect them from the scorching rays and heat of the sun (note they will suffer but they will not be the ones blaspheming God, these saints accept their lot in life and are just grateful to have been given one last chance to be saved), *Re 16:8 And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. 9 And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory.* Belief in the Lord Jesus during this time will be a death sentence in more ways than just being killed outright, these believers will suffer like never seen before, yet their faith will be rewarded, their acceptance of Jesus will be greatly blessed for the Lamb himself will feed these saints, He will care for them, love them, lead them to fountains of waters. Where in hell a drop of pure cold water will be nonexistent, in heaven these saints will have fountains of it, refreshing, renewing, reviving waters of heaven, and the living water Himself, Jesus will be with them, they will serve him, he will reward them. And their tears, tears that were shed in plenty on earth shall be wiped away forever by God, their fear, sorrow, sadness and terror shall disappear and they will know everlasting joy, love, victory and peace.

What a picture of grace. But we as the church and of the church age should not be jealous of such wonderful treatment of these saints. For we have been given the blessing of receiving grace thru faith and being able to be a living sacrifice, and be part of the bride of Christ. The church will be rewarded as well as these tribulation saints, but it is far easier now to trust Jesus and live our lives than it will be to do so during the tribulation where those that are saved will have their days or even hours or minutes numbered before they die a tragic death for the Lord. We should be ever grateful for the grace of God during this age of grace. But the wonderful and awe inspiring thing we see is that during the tribulation an untold multitude will choose this very path of faith and martyrdom, and they deserve the blessed rewards they get.

Chapter 15

REVELATION –CHAPTER 8

In the last chapter we looked at the first parenthetical passage of Revelation where the Apostle John paused right after the breaking of the 6th seal to inform us about the 144,000 sealed Jews and the tribulation saints. And now we are ready to continue watching the Lamb, the Lord Jesus, finish opening the book, for here in ch8 he breaks the 7th and last seal. Thus far we have looked at the 7 churches, and we will be looking at the 7th seal for a while because it contains all the 7 trumpets and then the 7th trumpet contains all the 7 vial judgments. So all of what we read about the trumpets and the vial judgment are all part of the 7th seal.

7 Seals: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 →

The 7 Trumpets occur at the breaking of the 7th seal: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 →

The 7 vials occur at the sounding of the 7th Trumpet: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7

In the opening of the previous seals we saw the coming of the Antichrist, war, famine and pestilence spread across the earth, we saw believers who greatly suffered and were martyred during the tribulation and then we saw a great earthquake with quite a few catastrophic ramifications, but now we see God's judgment intensify far beyond that, for we have just seen the beginning of sorrows, it all goes down hill for the world now.

V1 *And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.*

When the Lord Jesus opens the 7th and final seal of the book, silence reigns supreme in heaven for thirty minutes. There is silence in a place where there is always activity and singing and worship. The praises of the redeemed and the angels all go silent almost in anticipation of what will come next. We have seen what has happened with the last 6 seals, so what will take place now that the Lord has opened the final seal, what will happen to the earth now? Everyone waits with bated breath. This is very much the quiet before the storm for following will be revealed all the judgments of God upon those who have spurned His salvation. During this time of silence seven angels appear before the throne and are each given a trumpet.

V2 *And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.*

The results of opening the 7th seal are about to take place, they prepare to sound their trumpets, but wait, we see another angel appear, a special angel, a unique angel before the first trumpet is blown...

V3-6 *3 And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. 4 And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand. 5 And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake. 6 And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.*

This is no ordinary angel. This angel comes and officiates before the golden altar of heaven and offers incense and presents the prayers of the saints before God. This is an angel-priest, which truly there is no such being. So who is this angel? I'll quote H. A. Ironside for the answer... *"Who is this angel priest? I think you will agree that he can be no created angel. Scripture never speaks of any created angel offering incense with the prayers of saints to make them acceptable to God. Throughout the Old Testament, the preincarnate Christ is again and again presented as the Angel of Jehovah. He was the angel who appeared to Abraham; He was the angel who guided the children of Israel; and He was the angel who wrestled with Jacob and put his thigh out of joint by the brook of Peniel. He was the angel who appeared to Moses in the mount when the prophet prayed that he might behold God; He was the angel who appeared to Joshua to lead the people of Israel against their foes in the land of Canaan; and He was the angel of Jehovah again and again manifesting Himself throughout the entire dispensation. In the book of Zechariah, He is the angel-advocate who stands to plead for Joshua the high priest. So we again find Him in the book of revelation presented as an angel-priest who still has a people on earth for whom to plead."* This angel is none other than the Lord Jesus himself, officiating His office as High Priest and Mediator in heaven for his people, for it is he who takes the prayers of the saints and makes intercession on their behalf before God, for it is thru his name, the name of the Son, that we pray thru to the Father. We pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son and our Savior and it is he who takes our prayers and makes them as they should be before God. *1Ti 2:5 For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;*

Ro 8:34 Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

The prayers and the incense that Jesus, the angel of Jehovah, has are a sweet-smelling savor unto God. Included in these prayers are the prayers of the redeemed, remember the 24 elders had prayers, *Re 5:8 And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.* He also has the tribulation saints' imprecatory prayers, where they cried out for God's vengeance, and not to mention those prayers from those that are still upon the earth praying "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done" and for Jesus to come quickly. It is these prayers that Jesus is responding to, prayers for judgment upon the wicked, for wrong to be righted, for peace to come to Jerusalem, for the King to return. The Intercessor presents these prayers to God and God sends His answer of judgment upon the earth. The Lord Jesus takes the censer and fills it with the fire of the altar and hurls it to the earth, the answer to all those prayers is coming, and again we see the might and majesty of a holy God in the voices, thunderings, lightnings and earthquakes as judgment is about to break, the storm is upon them. Wrath is about to poured out and so the seven angels prepare to sound their trumpets.

But before we look at the blowing of the first trumpet, let's talk about trumpets for just a moment. In Numbers ch10 we see that trumpets had three important uses in Israel. They called the people together (Num 10:1-8), they announced war (Num 10:9), and they announced special times (Num 10:10). A trumpet sounded when the Law was given, trumpets were blown when the king was anointed and enthroned, and not to mention the trumpets that sounded when the walls of Jericho fell, they announced judgment upon the city just as these 7 trumpets here announce judgment upon the earth and God's war upon the Antichrist. {Reference Joshua 6:1-16}

V7 *The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.*

First Trumpet. There is no reason given for us to think this description is symbolic, so therefore we take this as literal, as this mimics one of the plagues upon Egypt when Moses was dealing with the Pharaoh. *Ex 9:18 Behold, to morrow about this time I will cause it to rain a very grievous hail, such as hath not been in Egypt since the foundation thereof even until now. 19 Send therefore now, and gather thy cattle, and all that thou hast in the field; for upon every man and beast which shall be found in the field, and shall not be brought home, the hail shall come down upon them, and they shall die. 20 He that feared the word of the LORD among the servants of Pharaoh made his servants and his cattle flee into the houses: 21 And he that regarded not the word of the LORD left his servants and his cattle in the field. 22 And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch forth thine hand toward heaven, that there*

may be hail in all the land of Egypt, upon man, and upon beast, and upon every herb of the field, throughout the land of Egypt. 23 And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven: and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground; and the LORD rained hail upon the land of Egypt. 24 So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation. 25 And the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt all that was in the field, both man and beast; and the hail smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree of the field. 26 Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, was there no hail.

When the first trumpet sounds hail, fire and blood rain from the sky, thus burning a third of the trees upon the earth and all the grass. Think of the devastation this will cause and how many will die, both animal and man, from the fires and the dwindling food supply. Think of the devastating wildfires that have occurred out west, this will be like them but on an even greater scale. This judgment was prophesied by Joel, *Joel 2:30 And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. 31 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come. 32 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.* What we see is the end result of this trumpet is death.

V8-9 *8 And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood; 9 And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed.*

Second Trumpet. Here we see John trying to describe something he is not quite sure how to, for he uses a phrase “as it were”, meaning what he sees isn’t actually a mountain, its not literally a mountain burning with fire, but its like or is similar in size or mass and in effect to a mountain on fire. What he is probably describing is a massive meteor impact, one that enters the earth’s atmosphere and crashes into the sea, either leaving a fiery trail or a massive explosive plume or both. For when this object hits the water, the waters become not as blood, but actual blood, much like what happened during another of the plagues upon Egypt. *Ex 7:17 Thus saith the LORD, In this thou shalt know that I am the LORD: behold, I will smite with the rod that is in mine hand upon the waters which are in the river, and they shall be turned to blood. 18 And the fish that is in the river shall die, and the river shall stink; and the Egyptians shall lothe to drink of the water of the river. 19 And the LORD spake unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and stretch out thine hand upon the waters of Egypt, upon their streams, upon their rivers, and upon their ponds, and upon all their pools of water, that they may become blood; and that there may be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood, and in vessels of stone. 20 And Moses and Aaron did so, as the LORD commanded; and he lifted up the rod, and smote the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh, and in the sight of his servants; and all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood. 21 And the fish that was in the river died; and the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink of the water of the river; and there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt.* How the water is turned to blood here I do not know, either by a miracle of God or possibly from all the death it is going to cause in the waters, for we see a third of the sea creatures die with this impact along with a third of the sea’s ships. This does not even mention the coastal devastation this will be caused by this happening in the sea, it will most definitely cause tsunamis the world over. Some scientists have debated on what will happen if a large meteor ever struck one of the oceans, and if the projectile is big enough it could cause a tsunami hundreds of feet high. If this happens on the Atlantic think of all the major port cities and harbors that would be engulfed, not to mention smaller islands, and all the lives lost and all the blood shed. Speaking of this water turned to blood, many soldiers who were involved in the D-Day invasion of Normandy spoke of how the waters were turned red with blood, so imagine all the death and tragedy of D-day on an ocean wide scale. Again the end result we see here is death.

V10-11 *10 And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; 11 And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.*

Third Trumpet. Here we have what appears to be a second large meteor entering the earth's atmosphere, yet this one does not seem to make impact with the earth's surface, instead it streaks thru the sky and most likely burns up on entry, notice the wording John uses "burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters;". A lamp lights up the night, this meteor lights up the darkened sky, but as it burns up and disintegrates it unleashes toxic gases and particles along its path of trajectory which then fall across a wide area and make their way into the natural water supply, thus affecting a third of the rivers and water reservoirs. Now this star that falls is actually given a name, it is called Wormwood, which is where we get our word absinthe and means undrinkable. Wormwood is also a name of a very poisonous herb which can produce convulsions, paralysis and death. Basically this name means poisonous. And thus this falling star poisons a third of the fresh water upon the earth, so that when men or animals and possibly even marine and plant life partake of it, it kills them, for John says many men died because of these waters because they were made bitter or toxic.

Now I will give you an alternate view of this trumpet judgment, as we know in the Bible a star can also mean an angelic being, and some have theorized since this star is named it is actually a personality, an angel, that poisons the waters and not a meteor. But no matter what Wormwood is, we see once again the end result of this trumpet is more death.

So thus far we have had devastating wars, famine and pestilence, a fourth part of the earth killed by Death and Hell, along with this believers are killed/martyred by the thousands, then the great earthquake happens that moves mountains and islands and probably causes massive tsunamis, such a quake also affecting the atmosphere by blacking out the sun and moon, most likely caused by immense volcanic eruptions which rain down rock and ash and dust, causing substantial devastation, so much so that men cry out to be hid from the wrath of the Lamb. Following this came hail and fire and blood raining down, burning away all the grass and a third of the world's trees. Then a meteor makes impact in the sea, turning a third of the sea into blood, destroying a third of the sea life and a third of the shipping industry. This is followed by a second meteor named Wormwood which burns up in the atmosphere and scatters toxic chemicals over a wide area thus polluting and poisoning a third of the world's fresh water reservoirs and rivers, slaying many more men. Up to this point there has been death on an untold magnitude, millions if not billions of people have lost their lives, and then the 4th trumpet sounds.

V12 *And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise.*

Fourth Trumpet. Where the previous trumpets affected the land, the sea and fresh water, this trumpet affects the world over for it affects the heavenly bodies. This could be more atmospheric effects, such as gas, ash, smoke, etc. totally blocking out the sky, or it could be other orbiting meteors eclipsing the heavenly bodies, or even the earth's rotation or orbit could have been altered from all the previous judgments. But no matter what the cause, we see light and warmth further diminished. Much like the darkness that plagued Egypt (and remember Egypt is a type of the world)... *Ex 10:21 And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness which may be felt. 22 And Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven; and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days:23 They saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days: but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.* Here with the 4th trumpet we see it is getting harder to breath, harder to survive, harder to avoid death. No food, no water, no shelter, no growth, animals and men are starving, death is everywhere, shipping and food are scarce, supplies and their distribution are destroyed, vegetation is ruined, no light, no heat. The world is coming to an end. Then John sees a peculiar sight.

V13 *And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!*

Woe, Woe, Woe, this is a warning to all the inhabitants of the earth, there has been such terrible catastrophe yet there are three more trumpets to come and what they unleash will be worse than all that has transpired thus far. But isn't it odd that the world gets this warning? Not really when you think that God even in His wrath and judgment is still merciful. For upon the earth are still the sealed 144,000, protected from the tragic events and they are still preaching. They are still spreading the good news, still offering hope where there seems to be none. There is still time for those who are still alive to accept the Lord Jesus before its too late.

Chapter 16

REVELATION –CHAPTER 9

In the previous chapter we looked at Revelation ch8 where the Lord Jesus opened the 7th seal and a great silence fell across heaven. With that, 7 angels appeared with seven trumpets along with another angel who we identified as Christ officiating in his role of high priest, where he stands before the altar of heaven with the prayers of the saints, presents those prayers to God, and then sends the answer that has been anticipated for centuries to earth: judgment upon wickedness and evil, and a step closer to his return and the reign of peace upon the earth. But before the King returns, before he sets up his rule, before peace reigns, these 7 trumpets must sound. So with that the first angel blew his trumpet and hail and fire and blood rained down from the sky, killing many, destroying a third of the world's trees and all the grass. Then the second angel sounded his trumpet and what seems to be described as a great fiery meteor entered the earth's atmosphere and made impact in the sea. Again much death and destruction is caused, a third of the sea becomes blood, a third of the sea creatures are killed, and a third of the ships in the sea are destroyed. We don't see mentioned the coastal impact from such a meteor strike what with tsunamis and the explosion itself, but we do know more death ensues from this trumpet judgment. Then the third trumpet sounded and another star fell from heaven, called Wormwood, this either being another meteor that burns up on entry into the atmosphere spreading its toxic chemicals across the earth which gets into the water supplies and poisons the rivers and reservoirs or it is an angelic personality that does this, whichever it is, the end result is more death. And then the 4th trumpet was blown and a third of the light that shines upon earth was blacked out, a third of the sunlight, moonlight and the stars, this has repercussions such as stunted plant growth, less oxygen production and less heating of the earth. What a dark and dreary and absolutely frightening time to be living and trying to scratch out enough to survive from day to day, especially with all the other judgments that fell with the opening of the previous 6 seals. And then we saw an angel, as ch8 ended, flying across heaven, crying woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth, warning, warning, warning, the first 4 trumpets have blown and they have brought catastrophe, but there are yet three more trumpets to be blown which will be much more tragic than all the previous. And so the 5th angel sounds his trumpet.

V1 *And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit.*

Now here we see the 5th angel blow the 5th trumpet, and at this sound a star falls from heaven, but this star is no mere star or meteor or any kind of natural occurrence, for this is a supernatural occurrence for this star is a he, it is a personality, it is an angel or some kind of divine creature sent from heaven. We know this because we read that unto **him** are given the keys of the bottomless pit. This being is given a specific task and specific authority to do one thing, to open the bottomless pit. Now many have stated various identities for this angelic creature. Some say it is Satan for he too fell from heaven. Some say it is Jesus for it he who has the keys to death and hell. Some say it is a different fallen angel, others think it is the same angel mentioned in ch20, which I tend to agree with. *Re 20:1 And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. 2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, The*

reason I say that he is a holy angel is if Satan had the keys wouldn't he be trying to unlock his followers every chance he got, and if it's Jesus, this shows he returns to earth before his return in ch19 which is false, and if it is a fallen angel why would Jesus give his keys to a fallen angel, so that leaves by the process of elimination an angel from heaven. For just like the other holy angels that have unleashed horrible things upon earth I believe this is another of God's holy angels who has been given the power, the authority, the key from the Lord Jesus to unlock the bottomless pit, which unleashes another divine judgment upon the world.

Now the second question that needs to be addressed is what is the bottomless pit? From what I can gather, this is a reference to a specific area of hell, some sort of inescapable portion that is prisonlike, the Greek word used for such a place is "Tartarus", and describes the deepest, darkest abyss of hell. The actual meaning of the word bottomless pit is "abyss" and is defined as "depthless, an immeasurable depth". This is the lowest of the low, the darkest of the dark, in a sense the furthest away one can get from God. This is a special place for super powerful fallen angels to be imprisoned, for we see some angels were bound or chained when they were cast out of heaven. *2Pe 2:4 For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell {Tartarus}, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;*

Jude 1:6 And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.

When Jesus confronted the demons of Legion, those demons begged to not be sent to this pit, this abyss. *Lu 8:31 And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep.* And we know that even though Satan is not in hell now, that he is in the world walking about seeking whom he may devour, and that he will one day be cast into the lake of fire, but for a thousand years during the millennial reign of Christ, Satan will be imprisoned in the bottomless pit, the abyss, Tartarus, until he is freed for a short while.

So here we have an angel from God on a mission, given the key to unlock the deepest most dire and dangerous portion of hell, the bottomless pit, a place of demonic imprisonment, and what happens when he unlocks it?

V2 *And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.*

As if it wasn't dark enough already, a great smoke spews out of hell to darken the sky even more. John describes it as smoke from a great furnace, almost like an erupting volcano, which in various mythologies some believed the gates of hell were actually located at the base of a volcano. But think of the heat, the blackness and the stench of this smoke belched forth from the pit, how choking and suffocating the black clouds of hell must be, and here it is unleashed into the world. But the acrid smoke with the stench of brimstone is nothing compared to what exits the pit next.

V3 *And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.*

Here we have one of the most frightening things man has ever seen or been witness to. For from the bottomless pit comes an innumerable swarm, an army not of mere insects, not of some creepy crawly things of this world, but locusts from the pits of hell. Demons. Fallen angels freed from their imprisonment, released from their torment. Ready and eager to cause hurt and fear and pain and take vengeance upon all in their way. Now normal locusts are a scourge to mankind for when they swarm they gather in the millions and devour every edible piece of vegetation there is, and remember one of the plagues of Egypt were locusts that destroyed crops and grasses and fields. But here these

demonic locusts are different. They do not come for sustenance, they do not come to feed, they come for torment.

V4 *And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.*

These locusts possess intelligence, they receive commands, and obey, they are told not to hurt the grass, the trees or any green thing, but they are to only hurt those who do not have the seal of God in their forehead. Now who are those that have the seal of God? The 144,000 *Re 7:3 Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.*⁴ *And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.* The Jewish preachers are protected from these demons, but unfortunately it does not look like their converts are and most definitely not are those that have rejected the Lord Jesus.

V5 *And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man.*

Here we see power given to this demonic army not to kill but to torment mankind, for as we see back in v3 unto them is given supernatural power, power as the scorpions. And they torment with this power, just like when a scorpion strikes a man and its poison is delivered. But this torment is given a time table, a period of five months of extreme anguish and suffering v10 reads... *And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months.* These demons have a poisonous agonizing sting, one struck with it suffers five months of anguish, wishing for death they are in such pain, but they can do nothing about it.

V6 *And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.*

These men will want to die, they cry out for death, but death will escape them, they will not die, will not be able to commit suicide, will not be able to dull the pain. How can this be? Well, the sting of a normal scorpion is not generally fatal (although 25 species of over 1000 types of scorpions can kill a man) but the sting does produce the most intense pain that any creature can inflict on the human body. Also the poison of a scorpion is typically used not just to kill but to paralyze its victim in order for it to consume its victim, much a like a spider's bite. So what if (and I am speculating here) these demon's stings in some way incapacitates or paralyzes their victims so they are conscious and aware of what is happening, can feel all pain and sensations, yet can not move or have any control over their bodies, and it may even be accompanied with some sort of psychological or mental torment, hallucinations and such, some sort of nightmare that one can not awake from. One would then feel the demonic sting, the satanic venom coursing thru one's body, burning and causing agony beyond most people's endurance, and then to have this foul creature crawling on them, touching them, taunting them, torturing them, yet the victim can not move, can not stop them, and so wishes for death, but for 5 months they are in a catalytic state, feeling only torment, helpless, hopeless and in unbearable agony.

I do not believe that the power of death is removed here, but it's the sting that causes death to flee from its victims, they can not seek it, can not find it, for they can do nothing to achieve their own death as they have no power to do so, they are in some way incapacitated by the demon's sting and so helplessly suffer. Some commentators even believe this sting has to do with demonic possession, where a victim is actually possessed by the demon and therefore has no control over themselves, they hurt and torment their own bodies and psyches but are unable to stop themselves, think of the maniac

of Gadara who was possessed, who lived among the tombs and constantly cut himself. Either way or however these locust's stings cause such torment, it is almost beyond endurance, strong and mighty men will weep and beg to die, all because of these demons from the bottomless pit.

V7-10 *7 And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men. 8 And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions. 9 And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle. 10 And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months.*

In v7-10 we have a description of these demonic locusts, and here we must pay close attention to John's wording, as he uses the phrases "as it were" or "were like" which denotes a similarity but not an exactness, symbolism is rich in these verses.

First John says they have a likeness of horses prepared for battle. I believe this refers to what we talked about when we spoke of the horsemen of the Apocalypse of the 1st thru the 4th seals, where we saw that horses in the Bible are symbolic of war and battle, and that's what these demons are, they have been freed and are eager, straining and striving to cause much injury to mankind. They delight in the torment they cause, they are ready to go to war, eager to charge into the mass of humankind and cause as much chaos and carnage as they possibly can. This also refers to the form or shape of these beings, whether this speaks of size, 4 legs, or armored strong sweaty warhorses we do not know, but these demonic beings do seem to be a combination of various creatures (horse, scorpion, man, lion, with wings - whether bat, bird or insect we do not know).

Second they have what seems to be a crown of gold on their head. Whether these are actual crowns or horns or if they are symbolic in the demon's ability to conquer all in their path I am not sure. But we can see that nothing can stand against these demons, John Phillips speaking of the demon's unstoppable power writes "*man has no weapon against them, no medicine, no psychiatry, no incantation, no discovery of science will avail*". This crown they have is a victor's crown, so these demons have victory over man for 5 months in their torment. They are a powerful conquering host.

Third these locusts have the faces of men. This shows that they possess high intelligence, they can think, can follow commands, and show emotion and expressions, possibly even speak and communicate. They contemplate and conspire, they meditate upon how to torment their victims best, they think of the cruelest acts and most vile and painful ways to cause harm without causing death. These are expert torturers from the pits of hell.

Fourth, they have hair as a woman. A woman's hair is considered her glory (I Cor 11:6-7), it is beautiful and attractive, and this may be relaying that there is something eerily seductive about these demons, maybe they lure men into traps with their attractiveness before revealing themselves in their true form, remember Satan himself can appear as an angel of light. So perhaps there is something both beautiful and frightening about these demons that mankind finds irresistible. Or maybe this hair has something to do with glory being corrupted and perverted into an unholy terror.

Fifth, they have the teeth as the teeth of lions. How fitting, for they are minions of the lion that walks about seeking whom he may devour. These demons are fierce and strong. Mighty in their torment. Vicious and terrible. Painful and deadly is their bite.

Sixth, they have breastplates as it were of iron. Not only are they nigh invulnerable, impervious to attacks, they are also insensitive, uncaring to the pain they cause. They are unmoved by the cries of their prey. Their heart is hardened, hard as iron, nothing moves it, nothing touches it, they live to hurt and they delight in it. They are merciless tormentors.

Seventh, they have wings that when they flap and flutter sounds like an army of chariots and horses coming to battle. A roaring noise that warns of doom approaching. Like the earthly locusts these demons swarm and fly thru the air, they are swift and can go anywhere. There will be no hiding from them, and none can escape or find refuge from them.

Eighth, as we have already stated, they have tails like scorpions with stings in their tails, most likely filled with poison or neurotoxins all to cause pain and torment to men for a 5 month period.

What horrible, insatiable, wicked creatures these are, that have been freed from the pit and whose only desire is to cause agony and pain. What malice, how vile, the filth and the fear these demons will spread as they swarm across the earth, a cloud of winged demons cloaked in the smoke and ash of hell itself. Yet these demons are not like some mindless swarm, some army of dull-witted bugs, but we see in v11 they have a leader that rules them and commands them, that directs their attacks of torture, and they have the intelligence to obey.

V11 *And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon.*

Where Solomon wrote in *Pr 30:27 The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands*; these demonic locusts have a king, the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name is Abaddon and Apollyon, both mean Destroyer. Whether this king is Satan himself or one of his subordinates we are not sure, but it seems to me it would be Satan. For it is he who is come to steal and to kill and to destroy. It is he who is the prince and power of the air that these locusts fly thru. It is he who fell and a third of the angels fell with him. And it is at his direction these demons obey, part of his organized hellish army. They torment all the earth for a long period of 5 months, all except those with the seal of God, the 144,000 remain untouched by these filthy beings.

V12 *One woe is past; and, behold, there come two woes more hereafter.*

What an awful, horrendous time, natural disaster after natural disaster has fallen and now supernatural disasters begin plaguing mankind. And then we realize that these demonic locusts are only the vanguard of an invading army from hell, for now the 6th trumpet sounds and as severe as this woe is there are two more trumpets of woe to go.

V13 *And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,*

Here John watches as the 6th angel sounds his trumpet and following this blast the apostle hears a voice, a voice from the golden altar before God. Now I believe we have seen who this voice belongs to before, for the last time we saw the golden altar we saw an angel before that altar who was Jesus Christ himself officiating as high priest and dealing with the prayers of the saints (ch8:3-5), so I believe John hears the Lord Jesus giving a command to the 6th angel of the 6th trumpet in v14.

V14 *Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.*

Jesus tells this angel (like he told the previous one) to go and unleash 4 fallen angels that are imprisoned in the Euphrates River. Now we know that when Satan and his angels were cast out of heaven, some of those angels, most likely the more powerful ones, were bound and chained, imprisoned, for we read in *2Pe 2:4 For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;*

Jude 1:6 And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.

We also know how the demon locusts were freed from their imprisonment in the Abyss, where Satan will one day be imprisoned for 1000 years. So here in the freeing of these four demonic powers from the river, is further proof that some of those evil spirits were locked away, so as not to endanger or hinder mankind.

Now, why these four angels are imprisoned here on earth in the river and not in the bottomless pit we are not told. Maybe there are other places like this across the earth, where evil spirits are bound and locked away, it would put some truth behind some myths and folklore of evil or “haunted” places (there is no such thing as ghosts, so any kind of supernatural phenomena has to be either angelic or demonic activity). Because if you consider the fact that the Euphrates River was part of the cradle of civilization, where the Garden of Eden was located, where man took his first breath and is also where sin originated, where Satan deceived mankind, thus this area is tainted with evil and corruption and it may be partly due to these beings’ incarcerated presence. But for whatever reason they are unleashed from their imprisonment to wreak havoc upon the earth.

V15 *And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men.*

This verse states the exact plan of God for these four angels. As these four demons were prepared for this specific time. God is always on time, his time table, his calendar, His wristwatch is always exactly accurate. And so when these demons are loosed, when the exact year, month, day and hour arrive for which they have been prepared and which God has anticipated, the Lord Jesus will give the command, and the 6th angel will come and unleash these demons for their prepared purpose. Now, what have these four been preparing and what have they been preparing for?

V16 *And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them.*

These four demonic entities are the four generals of a massive demonic army. We thought the demonic locusts were bad, but here we have an army of 200 million infernal cavalry, hellish horsemen. These are not mere foot soldiers, these are knights of hell. We truly get a sense here of what Ephesians ch6 warns us about. . . 11 *Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.* 12 *For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.* So vast is this army that John can’t count it but fortunately he is told the number of them. 200 thousand thousand. 200 million evil spirits, fallen angels, demons mounted upon demonic steeds. A terrifying sight to behold, especially when we realize that during WW II the US only had 12 million men enlisted. John attempts to describe them.

V17 *And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone.*

Notice John specifically says he sees the riders as well as what they ride. He calls them horses but the description he gives does not describe any natural horse (and again we need to remember the symbolism of what the horse stands for in the Bible, coming warfare and battle). John says these horses have heads like lions, not exactly a lion but like one, similar to, strong, fierce, ferocious, with a maw filled with razor sharp teeth meant to bite and rip and kill. And instead of a roar coming from these lion-like mouths, we see fire and smoke and brimstone issue forth from these steeds. We’ve all heard of fire breathing dragons, but what about fire breathing horses or lions, these demonic steeds spew forth the very fires and smoke of hell upon the victims they ride down as they charge into battle.

But it is not only the end with the head that one must be wary of, look at v19 for further description of these steeds.

V19 *For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt.*

Not only is power in the demonic steed's lion-like mouth, but they are also dangerous from the rear, for their tails are not limp horsehair, they are long and muscular tails, like a serpent, and apparently these tails are dangerous, and my guess is, they are similar to a crocodile's tail, that can slap and strike and club somebody, knock them to the ground capable of even breaking bones, for John says these tails have heads, which makes me think of some of the pictures of dinosaurs I've seen, where one would have a tail but at the end of the tail would be a large mass of bone which would be swung around to fight and defend themselves. But whether this steed's tail with a head has eyes and teeth, we are not told, maybe this demonic horse-thing can bite you from either end. We are not sure, but we do know these creatures are dangerous, not natural and are evil and eager for battle. This is a big creature whatever it is for it has to be big enough to carry a rider and breathe killing fire. And we haven't even got to the ones riding upon the mount, which if we go by what we know of knights mounted on horses, the rider is usually much more dangerous than the mount, but here even the steeds are dangerous and terrifying.

Now John also gives us a description of the rider back in **v17** *And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone.* These riders are blazing, what with breastplates of multi-colored fire, for they have the color of a jacinth, which colors range from a reddish-blue to a deep purple to yellow. These riders burn with a colorful flame and have the stench of brimstone upon them and they guide their steeds towards their victims which ride down and destroy their prey without mercy. Fallen angels of burning light. That's all the description we have of the riders, and that's scary enough, for what would man do to any of these things to defend himself? Bullets won't hurt them, fire and explosions cause flame so would most likely not kill it. How would one stand against so many, how would one overcome such nightmares come to life? Many will have to think upon this because we see in v18 the purpose of this infernal army led by the four demons of the Euphrates.

V18 *By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths.*

The phrase "By these three" is referring to the previous verse where we saw the demonic steeds breathing three things: fire, smoke and brimstone. It is by these three things that a third of men upon the earth are killed. A third of what is left of the world's population will be obliterated by this massive army of hell that has been prepared for this very purpose. Where the locusts were released to cause torment and specifically told not to kill, these demons have direct orders to slay. Such a judgment is far worse than any natural disaster, quake, starvation or disease, for these creatures are wickedness incarnate, vulgar and cruel, evil to the core and who will hunt down and wage war upon humanity. This seems almost unbelievable, so fantastical or mythical, yet if we are to take the Bible literally and we do, and there is no sense of symbolism being used here, we accept it as truth whether we fully understand it or not. Now I will say in order to be very clear that this does not describe the battle of Armageddon, despite the use of the similar number of 200 million, as no mention of the kings of the east or Armageddon are made, and we still have the vial judgments to go before that time

arrives. But despite the terror of these beings who are bent on man's destruction, this is not what I find to be the scariest in these verses, for look at the reaction to this 6th trumpet of woe.

V20-21 *20 And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor bear, nor walk: 21 Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.*

Despite all the death, the carnage, the torment, the bloodshed, the horrors of hell unleashed, those that have survived such catastrophe do NOT repent. Here we see judgment does not necessarily lead to repentance, punishment does not always lead to drawing one closer, instead it can have the opposite effect, of pushing one away. And these men were pushed as far away as they could get. Instead of turning to Christ and being rescued, they actually bow down and worship some of these demons, remember we said something about the locusts having a seductive quality about them, well here man worships Satan, the antichrist and many of his hellish minions. See how backwards man's thinking is? But not only do they worship devils, they worship idols made by their own hands, gods they created instead of the God that created them. They repent not of their false worship, their idolatry, their murdering, their stealing, their drug abuses, their sexual immoralities, their thieving, their sin. Despite the world falling apart, hope dwindling to nothing, men in their pride, iniquity and absolute hatred for God and the abhorrent idea of submission to Him, in their refusal to hear the truth, in their blinded and deafened state, they choose eternal death instead of eternal life, they repent not.

Romans 1:19-32

Ro 1:19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. 20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: 21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, 23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. 24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: 25 Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. 26 For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: 27 And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. 28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; 29 Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of eny, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, 30 Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, 31 Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: 32 Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

See why it is so important that we reach the lost now, before they absolutely refuse the Lord Jesus?

Chapter 17

REVELATION –CHAPTER 10

Over the past few chapters we have been looking at the sounding of the 7 trumpets and the judgments unleashed at each one, included in this are the 5th and 6th trumpets, two of the last three trumpets of woe, where we saw evil spirits released from their imprisonment to terrorize the world. With the 5th trumpet we saw a legion of demonic locusts released from the bottomless pit in order to torment man for 5 months. Then we saw with the 6th trumpet 4 demonic generals released from their imprisonment in the Euphrates River along with their army of 200 million devilish cavalry who were to slay a third of humankind. Combined these demons brought pain, fear, suffering and massive amounts of death. But even with such horrific judgment raining down upon him, man still refuses to repent. Men repented not. And so the 7th trumpet is now about to sound, but before that takes place the Apostle John interrupts this sequence of events once more with his second parenthetical passage; again this is like John has been going along writing and in order to give the reader a little more behind-the-scenes information he inserts a passage contained within parentheses before he continues. This second parenthetical passage goes from ch10:1 all the way to ch11:14, right up to when the 7th trumpet is sounded. So let's look and see what John, inspired by the Holy spirit, tells us here.

V1 *And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire:*

What a very descriptive verse, so descriptive we really can't deny that this is most likely the Lord Jesus once more. John describes him as a mighty angel, much like the angel that administered as the high-priest dealing with the prayers of the saints before the heavenly altar in ch8, who we concluded was also Jesus. In fact Jesus appeared many times in the Old Testament as the Angel of the Lord (Ex 3:2, Jud 2:4, 6:11-12, 21-22, II Sam 24:16). And now here in this vision John sees this mighty angel whom we believe is the Lord Jesus, clothed with a cloud; and God and divine manifestations are frequently identified with clouds. God led Israel by day with a cloud (Ex 13:21), there were dark clouds on Mt Sinai when God gave Israel the Law (Ex 19:9), the Tabernacle was covered by a cloud (Ex 40:34), God set his promise of the rainbow in a cloud (Gen 9:13-16), a cloud received Jesus when he ascended to heaven (Acts 1:8-11) and his return will be similar, with clouds (Rev 1:7). Clouds are called the dust of his feet (Nah 1:3) and are called his chariot in Ps 104:3. These clouds denote divine glory, so who else could this be but the Lord Jesus?

Not only is he clothed with a cloud he also has a rainbow upon his head, he is crowned with multicolored light, a glorious symbol of God's promise and God's mercy, and the Lord Jesus is the king of promise and mercy, for it is thru him we are granted the mercy of God and are partakers of His promises. We also remember the emerald rainbow around the throne earlier in Revelation, and so we know this angel has the divine authority of God Himself.

Next we see his face is as the sun which takes us back to John's description of Jesus in *ch1:16...and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength*. As well as the description of his feet in *1:15 And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace*, This angel is surrounded by the light and glory of God and comes to bring final divine judgment upon the earth. Here in John's vision once more the Lord Jesus is seen in his glorified state, and here in this vision he comes down to the earth which we

will see in a moment is him symbolically laying claim to the earth (we know this is symbolic for this is not Jesus' actual return, that is in ch19). But what does John see Christ bring with him?

V2 *And he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth,*
What book is this? None other than the now fully **opened** 7 sealed book that was in the right of God, the title deed to the earth, the book that the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, was worthy to take and prevailed to open. Christ Jesus was the only one found worthy to open such a book, so this is further evidence that this mighty angel is the Lord Jesus. And contained within this book are all the plagues and judgments of God to be poured out upon the earth, as well as the assurance of mankind's and the earth's redemption from the curse of sin. And since the Lord Jesus has possession of this book he now places one foot upon the earth and the other upon the sea as if to stand and claim what is rightfully his, to claim his right to rule and reign the world. He is ready to take what is his. God has put all things under the feet of Jesus, the world has now become his footstool. And as he stands and lays claim to the earth he cries with a loud voice...

V3 *And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices.*

The Lord Jesus, just as his title proclaims, roars as a lion. A long, loud resounding roar. A roar of triumph, a roar of victory, a roar of conquest. It is almost as if he cries "This is mine, I have paid the price, all things now formally belong to me." *1Co 10:26 For the earth is the Lord's,...* *De 10:14 Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the LORD'S thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is....* *Ps 24:1 The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein....* Here is the cry of a king ready to take full control. And after this roar from the Lord Jesus, it is echoed by seven thunders that utter their voices. But here, oddly enough in the book of Revelation, the book of unveiling, John is about to write down what these seven voices utter, but is told not to do so.

V4 *And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.*

Some things we as the church are just not supposed to know, it is a mystery what these voices said, some have speculated but that's all it is, speculation, but I think if God wanted us to know what was said He would have told us so its better to leave heaven's mysteries as they are, unknown. So John is told to seal those utterances up and so we skip over the seven thunders and John now sees Jesus take a vow.

V5-6 *5 And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, 6 And swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer:*

The Lord Jesus raises his hand and swears an oath. Now when Jesus was on earth he said in *Mt 5:34 But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: 35 Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool:* But here is one who is worthy to sit upon that throne and who has the right and authority to make the earth his footstool. Jesus here swears or vows that events will now be hastened to their full and final end, there will be time no longer, there will no longer be a delay, the Lord has postponed the last days long enough, the end is nigh. Remember God down thru time has delayed his judgments, has been longsuffering, so that lost sinners could repent, He gave them time and second chance after second chance, calling to them, convicting them, dealing with them to repent, but now that delay is at an end. Things are going to move very quickly from here on out. Also remember the martyred tribulation

saints cried unto God how long would it be for them to be avenged and God told them to be patient, they would have to wait (6:10-11), well that wait is now over.

V7 *But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.*

When the 7th angel sounds the 7th trumpet the end will be ushered in, the vial judgments will be poured out upon the earth, and the mystery of God, the age-old problem of sin and evil in the world will be finally dealt with. The time of allowing Satan to have his way is at an end, as Preacher Jerry Honeycutt writes “*its time for Satan to be ousted and Christ to be enthroned*”, just as God has told his servants and the prophets of old. That day once prophesied is about to come to fruition.

Then after seeing such a divine display John hears a voice once more, the same voice that told him not to write about the seven thunders. This voice gives another command, and I believe this voice is the Father speaking from his throne, and He tells John to go and take the book that the Lord Jesus holds, so John does as he is told and goes and asks Jesus to give him the little book, and Jesus tells him to take the book and eat it.

V8-10 *8 And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth.9 And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey.10 And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter.*

Here we see John not only sees the book, knows of the book and its contents, but now God asks him to consume the book, to make it part of himself, to receive it. The meaning behind this is John is take in, to read, to study, to mentally consume the contents of the book, to gain wisdom and knowledge. This is very similar to what was commanded of the prophet Ezekiel in Ezekiel ch3, he too was told to eat a book. *Eze 3:1Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel.2 So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that roll.3 And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness.10 Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, all my words that I shall speak unto thee receive in thine heart, and bear with thine ears.14 So the spirit lifted me up, and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the LORD was strong upon me.*

And what we learn from both these experiences is that only as we feed and digest on the Word of God, as we consume it and meditate upon it, we are nourished and built up in it. We study to show ourselves approved. We are built up in the faith, transformed to the right spiritual condition by reading and hearing the word of God and are now able to take what we have learned to go and help and instruct others. The prophet Jeremiah writes in *Jer 15:16 Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts.* We know the Word is likened as meat and milk, honey and bread in the Scriptures, all for spiritual nourishment. And here John takes the book, the word, and makes it his own, he takes it in. And what he learns of God in that little book is sweet to the taste, (taste and see that the Lord is good), *1Pe 2:3 If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.* It is sweet to John for he sees that the coming of the Lord is at hand, he tastes of the promises and assurances and goodness of God, the sweetness of salvation and everlasting life, of the coming reign of the King. Knowing more about Jesus is sweet to his soul!

But as always with the word of God, there is also a bitterness when one takes it in, for it shows one how and who they really are, an unworthy sinner; they are told of God's impending judgment and wrath upon such sin, one sees the warnings against sin and its consequences. Revealed is the battle of flesh and spirit, the struggle to be separate, the temptations that must be overcome, the adversary that

one must stand against. John sees what will still have to happen upon this world before the Lord Jesus sits upon his throne in victory. John sees that things are going to get much worse before they get much better. In the Word there is both life and death, good and evil, redemption and judgment, it is both sweet and bitter to man. And then Jesus gives John further instruction about what he has taken in, what he has learned.

V11 *And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.*

Jesus now tells John he must prophecy again, to prophecy even more, that he will speak more concerning what will befall the peoples and nations and tongues and kings in the last days. There is more to come.

Chapter 18

REVELATION –CHAPTER 11

Chapter 11 of Revelation continues our study of the second parenthetical passage of Revelation which began in ch10. After the 6th trumpet sounded and God's judgment was enacted in Rev ch9, John interrupts the telling of those events to give us a different scene in ch10, where he saw a mighty angel descend from heaven, and this angel was described with so many precise characteristics that he could be none other than the Lord Jesus, for that angel was clothed with a cloud, crowned with a rainbow, his face shone like the sun and his feet were as fire and he carried a little book, the 7 sealed book which is now fully opened, and this angel, the Lord Jesus, came and claimed the earth as his own, setting one foot on the earth and the other in the sea. He claimed the authority and right to rule the world as well as proclaiming that time would no longer be delayed, the time has come for his return and his reign.

Then the scene shifted to John himself in ch10:8 where he is told to go and take that little book and eat it. Where he was once terrified of Christ in his glorified state, he now boldly approaches and does as he is told, he takes the little book, he doesn't ask for it, he respectfully requests it, "Give me the little book" he says. What a picture of grace that was, for it was only by the grace of God that John could be able to do such a thing, to approach the one that he so feared, but for one who knows Christ there is no fear. And so, by such grace John ingested the Word of God, consumed it, in order to prophecy more of what was to come. It was sweet and bitter, for things were going to get much worse before they got a whole lot better. And now in ch11 as we continue looking at this parenthetical passage, John participates even more in his vision, for now he is told to take a measuring reed...

V1-2 *1 And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. 2 But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.*

John is told to go and measure the temple of God in the holy city of Jerusalem. Now to measure something in Scripture like this, means to claim it for one's self. Here, by God instructing John to measure this area, God is claiming the temple and the holy city for Himself, just as Christ laid claim to the earth in ch10. Such measuring is done when someone buys land, one will get a surveyor to come out and measure or survey the property lines so they will know what is theirs and what is not. I personally do this at the architectural firm I am employed at (as a bi-vocational preacher), when someone purchases a house and wants to renovate it I go out and measure the house to see what is there so the architect has an idea of what can be done with the owner's personal property. Of course I do not go to just any house, I would get kicked out, I only go to one that the owner has laid claim to and has given me permission to go and measure it, he can do that because it belongs to him. That's why God has John go and measure the temple, it is His, God is laying claim to it. Remember the antichrist is presently ruling the world, he came into the temple of Jerusalem and desecrated it and proclaimed himself as God, *2Th 2:3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; 4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.* The antichrist has committed the abomination of desolation as prophesied by Daniel, the antichrist claimed to be God when he broke

his truce with Israel, he took the temple for his own and most likely Jerusalem as well, but now God is taking it all back.

But there is a problem here. Currently there is no temple in Jerusalem in existence for John to measure. Right now an Islamic mosque, the mosque of Omar, a very holy site to those of the Muslim/Islamic religion, sits in the very place the temple is to be built. If one was to go in and try to demolish the mosque in order to construct a new temple the Middle-East would erupt in a holy war. So let me pose a question to you, if the temple needs to exist, if it needs to be built, needs to be present for the antichrist to waltz into and break his truce with Israel, and we also know that to correctly build this temple by God's instructions will take an immense act of construction, multiple millions of dollars, massive amounts of man power and work hours, what with no stone being cut on site and the sound of hammers being absent as stated in *1Ki 6:7 And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building*, if the temple has to exist and it is more than likely to take longer than 3 ½ years or even 7 years to build, does that alter the imminent return of Christ in the rapture? Does the temple have to be built before he returns if it takes longer than 7 years to build it? In other words, do we have to wait until the temple is built or near completion before the Lord comes so the antichrist will be able to desecrate it? But if that is so, if we have to depend on the temple being built before the rapture, then Jesus' return wouldn't be very imminent would it? So the answer is no, the rapture can take place at any time, but there must be time for the temple to be built, as well as for other prophecies to be fulfilled, and this falls into what Preacher Dewey Williams has preached in his prophecy conferences and what Dr. Winston Mazakis has written about, stating that after the rapture there seems to be a period of time, most likely 40 years, before the tribulation and Great Tribulation take place, what is known as the Day of the Lord which is not just a reference to the 7 years of the Tribulation, although they possibly overlap (based on as of yet unfulfilled prophecies in the book of Ezekiel and Isaiah). If that is so that would give plenty of time for the antichrist to rise to power after the rapture, 40 years of time for the year peace treaty between the antichrist and Israel to be established, time for Egypt and Damascus to be destroyed (ref Ezek 29, 38, Isaiah 19), time for the Gog and Magog war, and then for Israel and the Antichrist to team up and rebuild the temple, and then and only then will the antichrist be able to desecrate it when he fully reveals himself and betrays Israel. But the problem still comes in with the Muslim mosque currently on the temple mount. Not to spend too much time on this at the moment, I agree with Dr Mazakis and think God will take care of this problem on His own, most likely by an earthquake or an accidental act of war, where the mosque will be destroyed and thus pave the way for the temple to be constructed on the temple mount, the very temple rebuilt and completed that John now measures with a reed.

So that deals with the place mentioned here, but when will God take possession of the temple that John is now measuring, when will He claim it? We get that answer from v2, John says the outer court of the temple will be trod under by the Gentiles for 42 more months, exactly 3 ½ more years, which speaks of the time referred to as the second half of Daniel's 70th week (Dan 9:27), the last half of the tribulation, the time of the Great Tribulation (the time that takes place after the 40 years mentioned above). The time of the Gentiles began with Nebuchadnezzar and the captivity of Judah and has continued to this day and will not be over until the Beast, the antichrist, the last Gentile ruler on earth, is vanquished. Jesus himself said in *Lk 21:24 ...and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled*. So from what we can gather, the two witnesses (mentioned in the following verses of ch11) minister during the first half of the tribulation and then Jerusalem is overrun by the Gentiles and the antichrist for 42 months, the last half of the tribulation, and then their end will come when God claims what is His.

So now that we know the place and we know the time left for the Gentiles, we now see John take a step back in time in this parenthetical passage, he has just been talking about the last half of Daniel's 70th week, but now he goes back to the first half where we see two special servants of the Lord step onto the scene to cause the antichrist great trouble and annoyance during the first half of the tribulation.

V3 *And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.*

Here God says He will give power to His two witnesses who will prophecy for a period of 1,260 days, which equals 42 months, or 3 ½ years. Apparently, the two witnesses prophecy against the antichrist for the first half of the tribulation, and at their martyrdom during the second woe of the sixth trumpet, the Great Tribulation breaks out. The 3 ½ year time period, speaking of the Gentiles and the Beast, is the second half of the 7 year time span of the tribulation and will end with the return of Christ to set up his kingdom. So during this time, these two prophets prophecy while wearing sackcloth, which means humility and repentance, for they tell the world of the Lord Jesus and His rejection, they speak of sin and mankind's wickedness, they inform the world that the previous judgments were from God and they warn of more to come, they stand against the antichrist and speak of his lies and deception, they will testify against the depravity of Jerusalem, and will inform the Jewish people that it was they who killed their Messiah long ago but that he will yet be king over all. Such statements spoken with boldness, power and conviction will infuriate the antichrist and his allies and they will seek to kill and destroy these two witnesses.

But before we go too far into that just yet, the question arises, who are these witnesses. Much speculation has been given as to their identity, but nothing definite has ever been produced. Some believe, based on the powers and miracles these two have and can produce, that they are Moses and Elijah for both had similar powers and both were seen on the mount of transfiguration with the resurrected Christ, but one problem with this is that Moses is dead, is he going to be resurrected from a glorified body to come and die again? Some base their thinking of Elijah on the last verses of the Old Testament, *Mal 4:5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:6 And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.* But this argument is refuted by Jesus in *Mt 17:10 And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?11 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things.12 But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them.13 Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.* Then some even think one of them might be Enoch for he was and then was not, but I personally don't believe these two witnesses are any one from the Old Testament or the New.

And I'll tell you why I think that for I believe a key to who these two witnesses are is in v4.

V4 *These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.*

What an odd description given of these two. Olive trees, Candlesticks. And don't confuse these candlesticks with the ones that Christ walked in the midst of back in ch1 which were representative of the church, for we are very much in Jewish territory here (talking of the temple and Jerusalem), we are not talking about the church (which is in heaven at the moment), we are talking about Israel. Olive trees speak of Israel and its people. Candlesticks speak of light and ministry to a dark world, kind of what Israel was supposed to be being God's chosen people and all. And the thing is we see a similar description, as seen in v4, given in Zechariah ch4, where we are given the identities of two great leaders of Israel: Zerubbabel, the governor of Jerusalem, and Joshua, the High Priest of

that day. They are spoken of as olive trees and candlesticks, and I believe the understanding of what John references here is in that chapter, for those two men helped reestablish Israel and helped rebuild the temple after the Babylonian captivity (and we just talked about the temple being rebuilt once more). Those two leaders helped restore Israel, brought them together, taught them the right things. And now these two witnesses here in Revelation show us the final restoration of Israel is at hand, they prophecy in the streets of Jerusalem, trying to warn Israel, set them on the right path, so I think based on Zech ch4, these two witnesses will be a great national leader and a great religious leader of Israel (note: I am not saying these two will be Zerubbabel or Joshua, but men of like station). Could they be Moses or Elijah or Enoch, sure but I don't think that's likely. Why give names to these two when God doesn't identify them? Why say their powers identify them as a particular person when those very powers come from God, not themselves (v3), and those powers are not unique, for God gave many of his servants miraculous abilities. Even the apostles had powers from God (healing, exorcism), James and John even asked Jesus if they should call down fire on one town that rejected them. All we know is that these two prophets, these two witnesses of God show forth that they speak the truth by the miracles they produce in order to support what they say as they stand opposed to the antichrist.

And because they stand against the antichrist and all under his sway, many will seek to destroy these two witnesses, there will be assassination attempts, angry mobs crying out for their blood, even military endeavors will take place to eradicate these two, but look at what happens to those who try such a thing.

V5 *And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed.*

Whether these two men actually breath fire or by the words that come from their mouth they call down fire I do not know, maybe it's the words they speak themselves that consume their enemies in flames of righteous indignation. We do not know for sure but we can see these two witnesses are nigh indestructible to all attacks while they preach the Word of God. Nothing can touch them, nothing harms them. No one can hinder their message, no one can thwart them, destroy them or even kill them, and the judgment of God falls on those who try. They preach for a full 42 months untouched by the enemy. They are similar to the 144,000 in their invulnerability. But a difference is not only does God give these two divine protection, he also gives them the ability to go on the attack, to proclaim the word of God and back it up with signs and wonders.

V6 *These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.*

This is where many base their assumptions on that these two are Moses and Elijah. For Elijah shut up the heavens and caused it not to rain for the same amount of time (3 ½ years), and Moses is identified with the plagues upon Egypt, such as turning water to blood. But again these are abilities not traits, they are powers given by God and He can give these to whoever he wishes, and don't you think John would have recognized these two after seeing them on the mount of transfiguration? That's why I think these two are new Jewish individuals that will step up when they are called upon. They will stand bravely and preach truth, they will tell what will befall the antichrist and tell others of the true Christ. They will be hated, as they will point out sin and depravity, they will shine a light on man's wickedness, of the lies and deceptions of the rulers of that day, they will cause a great stir, people will wish they would just go away, would leave them alone, would just die so they will not feel the pangs of conviction of guilt and shame. This will be much like what the 144,000 will preach, but unlike those

many Jewish preachers, when these two witness's purpose is completed and their task finished, their preaching and their lives come to an end.

V7 *And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.*

After all the attacks these two survive, after all the hate they stand against, after every attempt to get rid of them failed, when their time and task is completed, when they have finished their testimony, their witnessing to this world, God allows the Beast that ascends from the bottomless pit, the antichrist, to make war against them one last time, and he will overcome them and he shall slay them. The antichrist which has revealed himself as his true self, the son of perdition, the deceiver, the truce breaker, the one who desires to be worshiped as a god, and is empowered by Satan himself, will think he has won a great victory. God's servants have been silenced. And such contempt the antichrist has for these two that he does not permit their bodies to be buried or burned, but instead they are put on display for the world to see.

V8-9 *8 And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. 9 And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves.*

Their bodies will lay there and begin to decay and rot and stink, flies will surround them, and no honor will be given to them for they stood against the antichrist, the false Messiah. The world will think antichrist has won, he has silenced the ones that stopped the rain, that brought curse upon curse, plague upon plague upon those that did not heed the truth. He has rid the world of their annoyance, so in the streets of Jerusalem their bodies will lay, in the city where our Lord was crucified, the holy city, the city God has claimed as His, but a city that has no association with God whatsoever for it is described as a spiritual Sodom and Egypt (both types of the world). The city has become polluted and worldly like Sodom, rebellious and proud like Egypt, but God judged Sodom and brought His people out of Egypt, just as He will bring out a remnant during this time of Jacob's troubles. For God even in allowing these two witnesses to be overcome works all things to good, *Ro 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.* He is not finished with these two witnesses yet. And He allows the world to see His power demonstrated, so to begin with God allows the entire world to see these two dead bodies laying there. God is allowing the world to be assured they are really dead so no one will doubt what happens next is by His power and His alone.

In the meantime, the antichrist will think himself truly great and mighty, thinking himself more powerful than God. He has won against these two, he has overcome those who spoke for God and were empowered by God and his followers will rejoice, they will have a grand celebration.

V10 *And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth.*

But when these two witnesses are done with their testimony, their witnessing in Jerusalem, God is then and only then going to allow the antichrist to overcome them and slay them. Remember God is always in control. In the story of Job God allowed Satan to do everything but kill him, but here God wouldn't let the antichrist do anything except kill these two witnesses. So here the antichrist and his followers are going to think they have won a great victory, they have prevailed over God's chosen. They are going to desecrate the bodies of these two witnesses by not even allowing them to have a decent burial, the antichrist is going to show the world his victory, those that have caused him and his allies so many problems with their plagues have been defeated. The Antichrist is going to think he is more powerful than the most high, that he has defeated God. And such a rejoicing there will be at the

killing of these two. There is going to be a worldwide pagan festival, a satanic celebration. Instead of commemorating the birth of Christ as some do at Christmas, there will now be a celebration of these two witness' deaths and the antichrist's "victory". And as we see in v9, the whole world, because of all our technological advances will be able to witness and participate in this celebration. Gifts and cards will be given, parties, parades and feasts and get togethers will be held. What a mockery of God this will be upon the earth. Here God is trying to reach mankind one more time, trying to save them from eternal damnation, yet man will have nothing of it, they repent not. They kill His messengers, leave them in the streets of Jerusalem and rejoice because of it, but God puts an abrupt end to this satanic celebration.

V11 *And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them.*

After 3 ½ days we see the Spirit of life, the Spirit from God, the Holy Spirit, enter into the bodies of these two witnesses. Bodies that are dead, that have become bloated, decay has set in and they stinketh. But just like the body of Lazarus at Jesus' command to come forth, life returns to them. Before the cameras of the world, the bodies' color returns, wounds are repaired and healed, what was once silent and still begins to stir, all signs of decay are erased, and these two witnesses begin to breathe deeply once more and then they stand to their feet. They have been resurrected by the Spirit of life (and who is the Life? John 14:6). They are ready to once more serve, ready to once more resist and war with the antichrist. God has fully restored them. What a sight this will be. All these heathen unbelievers who have gathered around taking pictures, filming with their i-phones and video cameras, news reporters all over the place, eyes from all over the world watching and celebrating at the death of these two but then the news flashes across the screens of the world, the two witnesses have returned to life, they are alive and well. And all the celebrations around the world become deathly still, quiet, as all look upon these two witnesses with great fear, with terror in their hearts. Afraid the plagues are about to return, afraid their beloved ruler the antichrist is going to be troubled once more. The world now knows there is something very special, very powerful about these two and their message. But what the world witnesses about these two is not over.

V12 *And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.*

Here these two witness now hear a great voice, and my guess it's the same voice that John heard in 4:1 *After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.* As the world looks on, these two witnesses are raised from the dead and then a cloud appears and takes them to heaven. What a marvelous thing to see, yet the world is unmoved, instead of joy they have fear. Instead of even investigating what these witnesses said and what they stood for, we still see that man repents not. This reminds us of when Jesus spoke of Lazarus and the rich man, where the rich man says in *Lm 16:27 Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house:28 For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.29 Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. 30 And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. 31 And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.* The world actually gets to see God in action, see life restored, see two raised from the dead, see the miraculous take place, and yet they still do not repent, do not believe. And then as if to put an exclamation point on all that has transpired we see another great earthquake strikes...

V13 *And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.*

In the same hour as the two witness' resurrection and ascension into heaven, a powerful earthquake strikes Jerusalem, destroying a tenth part of the city and killing 7000 men. And we see the remnant, those remaining in the city, gave glory to God, not necessarily out of respect or worship, but out of fear. I think some begrudgingly acknowledge these acts as acts of God. They do not repent, these are not saved tribulation saints, just those that were not killed in the quake in Jerusalem, but they do admit this is God's work, the darkness is slowly fading.

V14 *The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly.*

And that brings to an end the second woe and the second parenthetical passage. Remember the first woe had to do with the 5th and 6th trumpets and the demonic invasion of the world. And now the third woe, the worst to come, is coming quickly and it begins with the sounding of the 7th trumpet. Keep in mind now that all 7 of these trumpet judgments have happened under the breaking of the 7th seal, and now under the 7th trumpet we will come to the 7 vial judgments.

V15 *And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.*

Notice a great voice called up the two witnesses, and now as the 7th trumpet sounds, great voices (plural) begin to speak. These could be the angels, the saints or both. But they proclaim that the kingdoms of the world, the kingdom of the antichrist, the nations under the beast's rule are now under the sovereign authority of Christ. We know this world is Satan's at the moment for he tried to tempt Christ with the rule of it while he was here on earth, (if it was not Satan's to offer then there was no temptation) but Christ refused. Now Christ does not technically claim this kingdom until his physical return to earth, but the victory has already been won. He reigns now in heaven but one day he will also reign over the nations of the earth and rule with a rod of iron. This is wonderful news for those in heaven and his followers, but for the earth this is woeful news, for in order for Christ to reign here, there is a transition to take place, the world is to be judged, to experience true wrath, as the world needs to be righted before Christ takes his seat upon his earthly throne. And that's what we see outlined here in v15-18, we see what will transpire or come to pass in ch12-22 summed up in these verses, for here we see judgment and wrath finalized, the 7 vials, Armageddon, the appearing of the Lord and the establishment of his kingdom and the final judgments. Because notice how these verses are written like they have already taken place, that's the way prophecy is, it is as good as done if God says its going to happen.

And because of this truth, this victorious proclamation, because Christ is King, heaven rejoices.

V16-17 *16 And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, 17 Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.*

Here are the 24 elders once more, who represent the redeemed! (5:9) And we recall they had a wonderful worship service in heaven for the Creator back in ch4 and one of the most spectacular displays of worship in ch5 when they fell down before the Lamb who they proclaimed as worthy and worshipped the Redeemer. And here once more the redeemed elders fall on their faces before God, humbling themselves in respect and adoration and thanksgiving to the Lord God Almighty and they worship the Conqueror and King, which is eternal and forever more. And why do they worship Him?

Because Christ has taken his rightful place and authority, he has taken his throne. They praise Christ for he has reigned supremely, that he has judged righteously and that he has rewarded graciously. This looks forward to the time Christ sits upon the throne of David during the millennial reign. But notice all this praise and worship in heaven is contrasted with a different reaction on earth.

V18 *And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.*

The nations, the world, were angry at God, angry at His judgment, His plagues, His tribulation, His righteousness, His Son, His church, His 144,000, His two witnesses, His right to reign and rule. The world is angry at God, is at enmity with God, it hates God. And that's why His wrath came, the world chose sin and Satan over mercy and grace. And they are judged for such sin and rejection of Jesus. But those that chose to believe, chose to follow, chose to submit and were saved, that became Christ's servants and prophets and saints, both small and great, will be rewarded at the judgment seat of Christ, and they will with the returning King have the last say, for those that have destroyed the earth with sin, tainted it and mankind with wickedness and evil, shall be destroyed, *Ro 3:16 Destruction and misery are in their ways*: they shall be judged, shall feel the wrath of God. *Here in these verses we see a vast contrast, there is judgment of earth but jubilation in heaven, there is rage on earth but rejoicing in heaven, there is cursing on earth but a crowning of rewards in heaven*{paraphrase of John Phillips commentary}.

V19 *And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.*

Revelation is truly a book of revealing, for all thru this book we see things opened, there was a door opened in heaven in ch4, the seals of the book were then opened, the abyss has been opened, the temple is opened here, the Tabernacle of the testimonies is opened in ch19 and the books are opened in ch20. Notice this is the temple in heaven that is opened, not the one on earth, and we are allowed to peer into it. If you remember the tabernacle, when one looked into it, its contents were concealed by the veil; the Holy of Holies, the dwelling place of God, and the Ark of the Covenant were all hidden, but here in the heavenly temple there is no obstructed view. It is here that Christ serves as our High Priest. And our attention is now focused on the ark of his testament, the ark of God, the Ark of the Covenant. Such a sight in John's vision tells us that God is about to act on behalf of His chosen people, the chosen nation of Israel. John Phillips writes "*in the Old Testament the Ark was connected with Moses and the tabernacle, the land and Joshua, the kingdom and David, the Temple and Solomon. It thus stood connected with Israel's Law, Israel's land, Israel's Lord, and Israel's light.*" And with God beginning to act on behalf of Israel, we see the sights and sound of judgment coming with lightnings and thunders and earthquakes and great hail.

Chapter 19

REVELATION –CHAPTER 12

Beginning in Rev ch12 and continuing thru ch13 we are given somewhat of a summary of the history of the Jews, going from the enmity between the seed of the woman and the serpent established in the Garden of Eden, all the way into the Great Tribulation and the great anti-Semitism they will endure. What we should see is that all the way down thru history God's chosen people have had an adversary, one who was always trying to hurt, subdue and destroy them. And how such hate for Israel leads up to the atrocities of the tribulation, how this time of Jacob's troubles is brought about and the antichrist brought in, all of that is laid out in these two chapters. For in ch12 what we have given to us is a description of this war between Satan and God with Israel in the middle, we have war upon the earth in v1-6, war in heaven in v7-12 and then back to more war on earth in v13-17. And in these chapters we have 7 personages described to us that play critical parts in this war, all important characters, all essential to the story of truth given to us here. These 7 include the sun-clothed woman, the great red dragon, the man-child, Michael the archangel, the Jewish remnant, the beast out of the sea, and the beast out of the earth.

V1-2 *1 And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: 2 And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.*

The first person we are introduced to is the **Sun-Clothed Woman**. To begin with we see here that a wonder appeared in heaven. A wonder is a sign or symbol. There are two wonders given to us in this chapter, here in v1 and then in v3, so in both instances we are told that what we are presented with is symbolic of something else. The woman in v1 is symbolic of someone and the dragon in v3 is symbolic of someone. So first off, we have a symbolic sun clothed woman, with the moon under her feet and a crown with 12 stars on her head. So who is this woman representing? Getting this right or wrong will make all the difference in interpreting these chapters correctly. There are many in this world who interpret the identity of this woman incorrectly which then leaves them in some pretty tough predicaments to explain all that's going on; some claim this woman is the church, which from v5-6 one can easily figure out she is not as almost all agree the child is Jesus and the church did not give birth to Jesus, he birthed the church; Catholics believe this woman is the virgin Mary which is absurd, and even other cults or cult leaders have laid claim to themselves being the woman represented here. But if we would just let Scripture identify this woman for us we will not have any trouble putting the picture given to us here together.

So if we take a moment and think about where we read in the Bible concerning the sun, moon and stars and what they might be representative of, we should easily think about Joseph's dream in *Genesis 37:5 And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more. 6 And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed: 7 For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf. 8 And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words. 9 And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, **Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me.** 10 And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth? 11 And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying.* Joseph's dream here refers to the future nation of Israel

and the near future of the family of Jacob from which the nation springs forth. We can easily see that the 11 stars represent the 12 tribes of Israel, with Joseph being the 12th star in his dream; the sun and moon can be interpreted as his parents. For later on we see Joseph's brothers and family all come down into Egypt because of the great famine and Joseph, the second in command, helped them. Joseph was in charge, had power over them, held their lives and existence in his hands, but he did help his family, which grew and thrived in Egypt and became the enslaved nation of Israel. So we can see that this woman in v1-2 is clothed with the sun (the favor of Jehovah God who is the light and giver of life), with the moon under her feet (which is a reference to the Mosaic Law, a shadow of things to come) and a crown of 12 stars, the 12 tribes of Israel.

To further support this explanation of the woman representing Israel, in the Bible, Israel is often compared or referred to as a woman... *Isa 54:5 For thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall be called. 6 For the LORD hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God.*

As a *travailing woman*... *Mic 4:10 Be in pain, and labour to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in travail: for now shalt thou go forth out of the city, and thou shalt dwell in the field, and thou shalt go even to Babylon; there shalt thou be delivered; there the LORD shall redeem thee from the hand of thine enemies.*

Mic 5:2 But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. 3 Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth: then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel.

Isa 66:7 Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child.

As a *married woman*... *Jer 31:32 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD:*

As an *adulterous wife*... *Jer 3:6 The LORD said also unto me in the days of Josiah the king, Hast thou seen that which backsliding Israel hath done? she is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot. 7 And I said after she had done all these things, Turn thou unto me. But she returned not. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it. 8 And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also. 9 And it came to pass through the lightness of her whoredom, that she defiled the land, and committed adultery with stones and with stocks. 10 And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith the LORD.*

Israel is frequently referred to as the bride of God the Father, whereas the church is called the bride of Christ... *2Co 11:2 For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.* And then in contrast we have the apostate world system depicted as a harlot and the bride of the antichrist in Rev17

And it is thru Israel, from the seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, from the throne of David that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came into this world, the Messiah, Immanuel, the Promised One, the Savior, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, God manifested in the flesh, his lineage is of Israel, and it is this woman, Israel, that gave birth to Christ on earth, his earthly lineage being presented to us in the gospels. And it's for this very reason that Satan has always tried to destroy Israel down thru history and has such a hatred for the apple of God's eye. That is why this woman's birth is described as travail and the delivery painful, for we see in v3-4 her enemy depicted.

V3 *And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.*

Here is the second wonder, the second symbol, that of a **Great Red Dragon**. Powerful, mighty, destructive, cruel, deceptive, the dragon symbolizes all that because this dragon symbolizes Satan. We easily know this for we are told as much in *v9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world.* Remember Satan is not actually a dragon, he is not a big fire breathing winged lizard, and he doesn't actually have 7 heads, 10 horns or 7 crowns, all of this is

symbolic in meaning for Satan is an angel, an anointed cherub, not a dragon, he is beautiful and perfect in his ways as described in Isaiah ch14. But here he is depicted as red for he was a murderer from the very beginning, red is the color of war, of sin, of murder and blood (remember the red horse of war in the 2nd seal 6:4). His 7 heads with 7 crowns indicate a complete governmental rule, implying political rulership over the world, for as the Bible says Satan is the god of this world, the prince of this world and the power of the air, and the antichrist will be set up as his pawn in the end times as THE political worldwide ruler. He will have complete control over this earth (in a worldly sense). The 10 horns are instruments of destruction and symbolize his complete world power and his authority as the god of this age along with his ability to control the militaries and destructive forces of the world to further his violent wicked plans. And we'll see these descriptions later in ch13:1 and 17 and we'll get into more depth about what these symbolize then. But suffice to say this dragon, Satan, is a very powerful being, a terrifying adversary, especially to the woman, Israel, who brings forth the man-child. All should be terrified of the dragon, for look at what he does in v4.

V4 *And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.*

Here we see Satan's powerful influence, for these stars as we have discussed before, are symbolic of angels, and Lucifer in his subtle deceptive ways has persuaded and fooled and coerced a third of the angels of heaven to follow him, pledge allegiance to him and turn on God. And I think we can take something from this about why mankind is so blind and refuses to see the truth and does not repent. For here are angelic beings, who serve in the presence of God, know the reality of God, His existence, His sovereignty, they see first hand His holiness, power, love, and all His other characteristics, and yet these angels are pulled away, they choose to follow a created being with delusions of grandeur instead of following the Creator of all things. With all their great wisdom and power and understanding the devil deceives these angels and causes their fall. So if angels, who know better than any man can be deceived by Satan, is it any wonder man in his ignorance and his blindness refuses to turn to God? That's why it takes a divine call, a divine conviction upon one's heart by the Holy Spirit to truly see the truth of Christ for one to have faith. For without God we are nothing, without God we cannot see, we cannot understand, we cannot have faith. Our salvation in its totality depends upon God, without Him we are without hope.

And so what happens to these angels that rebel against God? They and the devil are cast down to the earth, remember we have studied that some of these fallen angels were bound in chains, some were imprisoned in the bottomless pit, *2Pe 2:4 For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;* *Jude 1:6 And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day;* some are bound to specific areas, like the demons of the Euphrates River, and then some I believe, like Lucifer himself, are allowed to freely roam the earth, walking about seeking whom they may devour, who they may influence and corrupt and even possess.

We know Satan stalks the earth as a lion and we see in v4 his main prey is the sun-clothed woman, the woman with child, the nation of Israel that would bring forth the Messiah. *and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.* Satan hates God, hates Israel, hates the Jews, and hates the child that came from them, and he has tried his very best since the fall in the Garden of Eden to eradicate any chance of the Messiah coming, to try and prevent the coming of the Redeemer, for it was there that the promise came that the seed of the woman would one day crush the head of the serpent (dragon) and that seed we know would come thru Israel. Down thru history there has always been a dragon influenced by Satan trying to destroy

Israel and the royal lineage of Christ. Adam and Eve brought sin into the world. Cain killed Abel. The human race was utterly corrupted in the days of Noah. Hagar and Abraham produced a people that have always warred with the Jews. Pharaoh tried to destroy Israel in Moses' day, Haman tried the same thing in the book of Esther, Nebuchadnezzar played his part in taking them into slavery once more. Herod tried to kill Jesus at his birth. Satan thought he won with Judas' betrayal and the death of Christ. But even after that moment when Christ won the ultimate victory by dying on the cross and returning to life Satan still tries to annihilate the Jews. He is behind all hatred of the Jews, all anti-Semitism, all atrocities that have been visited upon God's chosen people. He was behind Hitler and Stalin, behind the death camps and persecution. Even nations you would not expect have played their part in trying to harm the Jews; England and Spain once banished all the Jews from their countries. France and Germany blamed the black plague on them and persecuted them severely. Russia has played its part in hating the Jews and not to mention all the Arab nations that want to see Israel wiped off the map. The Inquisition wreaked havoc upon them in the name of Christ. Even America is starting to have a very anti-Semitic attitude. Israelites have suffered like no other people in history and yet they have survived where many other peoples are extinct; they have flourished and prospered where others have withered away and disappeared. Satan has tried and tried and tried to destroy these people for centuries, yet with God on their side, Satan has utterly failed, for if God is with you who can be against you? Yet in the last days as we shall see, Satan is going to give it one last go, he is going to give it his all, the world has not yet seen the terrible persecution the Jews will face during the Great Tribulation. Why do you think the antichrist rejoices so much and the world with him when the two witnesses, whom I believe will both be Jews, are killed? That's one reason I believe God had to seal the 144,000, for if he didn't I don't think many Jews, if any, would survive. Satan hates the Jews for they will and did produce the promised Messiah that would have victory over him. And we see that very Messiah arrive in v5.

V5 *And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.*

Who else could this **Man Child** be other than Jesus Christ? Jesus was a Jew, we see his lineage given to us in the gospels, traced to King David and thus having the right to the throne of David, as well as being traced all the way back to Adam where the seed was promised. Scripture describes him as the son of Abraham, of the tribe of Judah, the root of David. *Mt 1:1 The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.* He was born/manifested in the flesh, *Mt 1:23 Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.* Who else in the Bible is said to have the right and authority to rule the world with a rod of iron? *Ps 2:7 I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. 8 Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heatben for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. 9 Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.* Speaking of Christ we read in *Re 2:27 And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.*

Isa 9:6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

At his return we read *Re 19:15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.*

Christ ascended into heaven *Ac 1:9 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.*

Lu 24:51 And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.

Re 3:21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

This man child is none other than Jesus Christ our Lord, come forth from Israel, whom Satan has tried to stop, to destroy, to hurt and harm, to cause suffering, to do anything and everything in his power to obliterate and he has ultimately failed.

Israel has been at odds with the dragon from the very beginning. It started in Eden and went to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and Moses, to their families, their descendants, all the way down through the history of Israel, the enmity between the woman and the dragon has continued, Satan has tried over and over to destroy the Jewish bloodline and the nation. For it was to be from that bloodline and from this people that the prophesied Messiah would come forth. That's why we see the woman being with child and suffering greatly to bring this child forth, as Jesus was to have a Jewish lineage and Satan greatly persecuted Israel trying to ruin God's plan.

And Satan did not do all this by himself, he was not alone in warring against Israel and trying to prevent the birth of Jesus, for in his power and deception he caused a third of the heavenly angels to side with and follow him, and now they are his operatives, his minions here upon earth. Satan and his army of demons have waged a great warfare against God and His chosen. But the truth of the matter is that war was won when Jesus Christ was born of a virgin in Bethlehem, grew into maturity, began his ministry by revealing himself to the world, and when the world rejected him, partly due to Satan's influence, he willingly died upon the cross, and then Christ snatched victory from defeat when he arose from the grave, he triumphed over Satan that day, bruised the head of the serpent, conquered all, overcame sin, Satan, death and hell. He then ascended to his Father in heaven to sit at the right hand of God until the time arrives that he returns to sit upon the throne of David and rule the world. So is it any wonder Satan hates Israel and hates God, as they supplied the means of his downfall, and that's why as time remains until Christ's return, Satan is going to make Israel pay dearly, as Satan can't harm nor fight God, but he sure can cause problems for the Jews.

And now between v5 and v6 we have the church age, all that is contained within chapters 2 & 3 and the beginning of ch4 of the book of Revelation, are contained right here, the whole dispensation of the age of grace is contained between these two verses, for John is dealing specifically with Israel and her conflict with Satan here in ch12, not the church, so he is picking right back up with Daniel's 70th week, the 69th ended with Israel rejection of Christ and the formation of the church, but with the church now gone and the tribulation begun we are right in the middle of that 70th week as we start v6.

V6 *And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.*

Here we see the woman, Israel, fleeing the dragon, Satan and his antichrist, for that is who is in power during the tribulation, the one who pretended to make peace with Israel and then betrayed her. Satan after failing to destroy the man-child, to prevent the coming Messiah, now turns his attention to Israel to vent his fury. *Re 12:13 And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child. 14 And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.* But the thing is God is going to protect His people during this time, He is going to prepare a place for Israel to flee to in order to protect them, or at least a remnant of them. *Isa 26:20 Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. 21 For, behold, the LORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.*

Mt 24:15 When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) 16 Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: 17 Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: 18 Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. 19 And woe unto them that are with child,

and to them that give suck in those days! 20 But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: 21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

Eze 20:35 And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face.

V6 says God has a place prepared for Israel as apparently the Jews will have to flee their homeland for a time, for 1260 days to be precise, 3 1/2" years, the last half of the tribulation. But where is this place they flee to? Where do they go? We'll deal with that question later in v13-14, but the place I believe they flee to is called Petra, which is a very interesting study in and of itself.

But notice that while these events are happening on earth, John now shifts the scene to heaven. We have looked at the war on earth between Satan and Israel in v1-6, now we turn to the war in heaven between the heavenly hosts and Satan and his angels.

V7 *And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,*

Here we are introduced to the 4th personality in ch12 &13, **Michael the archangel**. Michael is mentioned 5 times in Scripture. Here in Rev 12, in Daniel ch10 (mentioned twice) he is called one of the chief princes and a prince and comes to the aid of Daniel's prayer, in Jude v9 where he alone is referred to as the archangel and contends with Satan over the body of Moses. And in *Da 12:1 And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.* His name means "who is like God" and he lives up to the name, for like God, Michael acts as the protector, the guardian angel of the nation of Israel, for in all those verses he is mentioned in he is acting on behalf of a Jew. This is why he is typically the warrior angel, most likely the highest ranking angel in the heavenly army, but one who battles, who stands for God's people. And here we see he and his angels battle Satan and his army. The archangel fights the dragon and his demons. Now be aware this is not a recount of some historical event, this is not speaking of Satan's fall in Isaiah, this is still yet to happen. And the reason I say that is made clear in v8-9.

V8-9 *8 And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. 9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.*

This battle is yet future because we know that as of right now Satan still has access to heaven, he still has a place there, for it is in heaven that Satan accuses and points the finger at believers. Did not he do such to Job, *Job 1:6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them. 7 And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.*

Did he not do the same to Joshua the high priest? (remember the comparison with the two witnesses?). *Zec 3:1 And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him.*

And in v10 here he is referred to as the accuser of the brethren *which accused them before our God day and night*. But isn't it wonderful that we believers have an advocate that stands up to all these accusations? *1Jo 2:1 My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.* In order to accuse us before God Satan has to have access to heaven, so even in his fall from power and authority he still could come and go freely between earth and heaven.

But now with this war in heaven, Satan loses all rights to confront the saints before the throne of God, for in truth their judgment is now over, the Judgment seat of Christ has most likely already happened, and the devil, the prosecuting attorney has rested his case but God the eternal judge has found all innocent and deserving of a reward because He has seen the blood of the Lord Jesus

upon all the saints. So now Satan and his minions are cast out forever, no more accusations, no more snide remarks about us, no more pointing out our failures, our sins, our disobedience, our carnality. Satan's place is found no more in heaven, he is now confined to the earth. And just think about this, Satan due to his pride fell hard, for he fell from his position of authority in heaven, here he has been cast down out of heaven, soon he will be cast down into the bottomless pit and finally he will be cast down into the lake of fire. His pride is leading him to great destruction. The destroyer has destroyed himself.

Also notice there in v9 we are given the five main titles for Satan, 1. the dragon signifying his fierceness and cruelty, 2. the serpent signifying his deceptive nature, 3. the devil meaning accuser and slanderer, 4. Satan meaning adversary and 5. deceiver as he is the father of lies, the deceiver of the whole world. But now he and his angels are cast out, cast down, heaven will be defiled by his presence no longer. And now due to this victory John hears a loud voice, a voice compelling those in heaven to rejoice.

V10-12a. *10 And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. 11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. 12 Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them...*

Given here by this commanding voice are multiple reasons for the heavens to rejoice. First they rejoice for salvation is come, the saints have been wholly delivered from the presence of the devil, they have been saved from the penalty of their sins, saved from Satan's accusations, delivered from Satan's power, and now they are delivered from his presence. With Satan cast out and eternally barred from heaven the saints praise God for his absolute overcoming of the great dragon. Secondly heaven rejoices because strength has come, for God has once again demonstrated himself as a strong and mighty God in casting out the one who would be like the most high yet he fell far short. God in his might has subdued the enemy of the church and of the saints of old. God has gotten rid of the great adversary. God has shown his great authority, his majestic sovereignty, his omnipotence and rule over all things and has cast Satan, that old serpent, to the earth; cast him out, exorcised the deceiver from the heavenly realm. Heaven rejoices because the enemy is defeated, because the devil can not defeat God, which is a constant reminder to the saints that if God is with them who can be, who can stand, against them?, not even the devil himself; and if we as believers who are still here upon the earth would remember that, we could have more victory and rejoicing in our lives in the here and now.

Thirdly there is rejoicing in heaven for the time for the kingdom of God has come, the time for Christ's return to the earth and his time to rule is very near at hand, things are coming to their climax and heaven echoes with the excitement and anticipation of such a day. This leads right into the fourth reason they rejoice, for the power of his Christ is come. For not only has God shown his might, his kingdom ready to be established, but Christ has shown his ability to overcome Satan and sin and give victory to those that place faith in him. For here we see after Satan is cast out of heaven, after the accuser is banished, those same brethren that had to deal with the venomous accusations of the dragon for who knows how long, overcame Satan despite those accusations. For when each saint placed their faith in Christ, when they became partakers of the promise of grace here upon earth, their sin was forgiven, its penalty over them removed, sin no longer had power or reign over them, and now Christ has totally removed sin and its memory from their presence. With Satan cast out, the memory of their failings, the memories of their sins, the reality of those hateful accusations made against them by the devil, such harsh allegations no longer assault them, all that is gone, the devil has lost his place in heaven, lost all power and influence over the saints, and so they rejoice. They rejoice and give

thanks and praise because Satan has been overcome, they have won, they are the overcomers. But they have overcome only because of the blood of the Lamb, the blood of the one slain upon Calvary for the sin of all mankind, the blood of the one who was worthy to take the book, the blood of the one who was led as a lamb to the slaughter, it was Christ's blood that allowed the faithful to overcome. *1Jo 4:4 Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.* They rejoice because of the blood.

But it is not just the blood that gives them reason to rejoice. Sure the blood is the way of salvation, the blood covers sin, the blood washes one clean, but others need to hear of this blood and be reminded of the power of the blood. The Word needs to be told so others can hear and be saved, others must hear of the power of the blood of Jesus. The testimony of the saints encouraged others to overcome as well. Their witnessing, their praise, their worship, their trust and faith and confidence in Christ, their proclaiming of the power of the blood was a picture to others of what God meant to believers, and what God done for and could do in sinners. So now the heavens rejoice, the saints rejoice, the redeemed rejoice for the testimony they have in knowing Christ and what Christ has done for them and their brethren by his blood.

And then we see the ultimate testimony of those that overcome, their ultimate witnessing, their ultimate confidence in the blood is they loved not their lives unto the death. Many gave their lives for their faith, many lived their lives wholly dedicated to their faith. They were a martyr or a living sacrifice, either way it was Christ that was manifested in their lives, not themselves. To live was Christ and to die was gain, either way was good for them, for Christ had given them the victory. He shed his blood for them so they were willing to shed their blood for him. It was all because of the blood of the Lamb that allowed them to overcome, therefore the voice in heaven says to rejoice, rejoice ye heavens and ye that dwell in them.

And again, once more we see there is vocalized excitement and expression in worship. No one here is sitting quietly, none of the 24 elders stay seated on their throne, all the heavens are celebrating. We read earlier where the world and antichrist celebrated at the death of the two witnesses but that celebration was cut short when the witness arose from the dead and ascended into heaven. But this celebration in heaven is just getting started, it is not going to be cut short, in fact it is going to spread to the earth when the King of Kings returns. And that excites them, and that should excite us, any time we study or read about our Lord, our Savior, His blood, the victory he gave us we should be able to rejoice and praise Him, to vocalize and express our worship, for he is worthy of such praise!

But sadly in the second part of v12, we see the celebration in heaven contrasted with tragedy on earth.

V12b *Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.*

Remember we are in the time of the 7th trumpet, the third woe, and here we see why, woe is pronounced upon those on the earth, for Satan has been cast out of heaven and down to the earth. Where once he was allowed to go back and forth, he is now confined to earth, and he is not a happy camper. He has been defeated, he has been embarrassed (what a blow for such a prideful one), he has been stripped of power and authority, he has been bettered by others, he is an outcast, so we see that Satan, the dragon, the destroyer is furious, he is not just angry, he has great wrath. His plans have been interrupted, his conquest stalled, his war is lost. So he is going to strike out at the only ones he can: mankind, what few believers there are, but most specifically Israel, the sun-clothed woman. Satan can't reach God, can't reach the church, can't even reach the heavenly angels now, so he lashes out in hatred and fury at the only ones he can get his hands on, the Jews. He is going to make all the atrocities

against the Jews in past history look like child's play. Its going to be fast and intense for even Satan now knows his time is very limited, what he has to do, like Jesus spoke to Judas, he must do it quickly, because Jesus is coming.

The time of the third woe is upon the inhabitants of earth for as we see in v12 the devil is now come down to them and great is his wrath, he is furious, for he has been scorned, he has been humiliated, he has been defeated, and he knows great will be his fall. But before his fall is completed, before he is cast into the Abyss, before he is cast into the lake of fire, he is going to use what time he has, short though it may be, to persecute Israel to the furthest of his ability, he is going to do as much damage as he possibly can while he can. Zechariah ch13 refers to this time, *Zec 13:8 And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the LORD, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein. 9 And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will bear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God.* Here we see that most likely two-thirds of Israel, 2/3 of the entire Jewish population, will perish during this short time when Satan strikes out in great wrath, horrible will be the persecution and destruction as we read in *Mt 24:22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.* So we see that the very beginning of the world is much like the end, for in the Garden of Eden the Woman and her seed warred with the Serpent, and in the end times, here again is the woman and her seed (Israel and Christ) warring with the serpent (Satan).

V13 *13 And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.*

The word persecuted in v13 means not only to persecute but to pursue, follow, like a predator hunting its prey. The dragon when he is cast down to the earth hunts down, seeks out the Jewish people to torture, imprison, cause torment and suffering, pain and hurt, he hunts them in order to persecute & kill. *Mt 24:9 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.* But notice what happens when Satan and the antichrist, the beast turn on Israel.

Re 12:6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.

As well as in v14...

V14 *14 And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.*

But the woman quickly flees to escape the dragon pursuing her. It says she is given wings of a great eagle to swiftly escape those that would do her harm. These eagle wings speak of a rapid and safe flight to a place prepared by God where she will be protected, sustained and nourished for a time, or more specifically *a time, and times and half a time*, here the word "time" refers to a year's time span, which equals 3 1/2 years, just as v6 points out the woman is protected for 1260 days, again referring to the last half of the Great Tribulation.

Now this giving of eagle's wings is similar to what is said of Israel's escape from Egypt and the Pharaoh (a type of the antichrist), God says to Israel in *Ex 19:4 Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.* Then speaking of Jacob, the father of the twelve tribes of Israel, *De 32:11 As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings:12 So the LORD alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him.* And then we read that Jesus even warns that this time of Israel's fleeing needs to be fast, hence their need of eagle's wings, *Mt 24:16 Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: 17 Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house:18 Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.19 And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!*

20 But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: 21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

So God allows the woman to escape the dragon's clutches but now where does the woman flee? *v6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God,...* *v14 And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place.* Now the word wilderness is the key here, because as of right now nobody knows for sure where the woman flees, there is much speculation about the location(s) she could go; the Jews could be scattered all over the world, they could go in large groups to a few key places, or some believe they will mostly flee to one place and many think that place is called Petra, an area in southern Palestine, in the southern part of what is now the country of Jordan. One reason I agree with this thought is that Petra is located in the mountains, which as we just read from Mat 24 is where Israel will flee. Second Petra is located in what used to be called Edom and look at what Daniel says about this place when he speaks of the antichrist, *Da 11:41 He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon.* Edom will somehow not fall to the antichrist, at least during the time Daniel refers to, it will somehow stand or be protected. And then we also know Petra is in the wilderness area that the Israelites wandered around in for 40 years. Therefore Petra is located in a protected mountainous wilderness in the end times. So possibly one place Israel flees to is this area of Petra, and to go a little further let me read to you a description by Clarence Larkin of this place...

"It is located in the mountains like as in the crater of a volcano. It has but one entrance, and that is through a narrow winding defile or canyon from 12 to 40 feet wide, the sides of which are precipitous and at times so close together as to almost shut out the blue sky above and make you think you are passing through a subterranean passageway. The height of the sides varies from 200 to 1000 feet, and the length of the canyon is about two miles. No other city in the world has such a wonderful gateway. The sides of the canyon are lined with wonderful monuments and temples carved out of the rocky sandstone of the sides. Once inside the rocky enclosure of the city we find the ruins of magnificent buildings, tombs and monuments. The cliffs that surround the city are carved and honeycombed with excavations cut as they are out of different colored strata of the rock, such as red, purple, blue, black, white and yellow, lend a beauty to their appearance that is indescribable and overpowering to the beholder."

Petra is a highly defensible area and not easily besieged. It has great water reserves from the cisterns and dams created to control flooding. Many people could survive and be nourished here for an extended amount of time. And just a bit more information for you, some Christians have actually taken Bibles wrapped in protective cellophane and thrown them into some of the caves and tombs in this area because they so strongly believe Israel will flee here and will need the word of God to believe upon the Lord Jesus during the tribulation. But wherever Israel flees to it will be a place of refuge, of safety, a place she will be nourished, a place where she can survive. *Ps 9:9 The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. Ps 46:1 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Ps 62:7 In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God. Ps 32:7 Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.*

Something also to consider is that this place the woman flees to is very similar to the cities of refuge designated for Israel in the book of Numbers. The cities of refuge were specific selected cities where one accused of murder could flee to for safety to escape any one trying to avenge the slain. The accused murderer was allowed to stay in the city of refuge until they were found innocent or guilty. If they were guilty they were turned over to the one seeking to avenge the death of their kin, if they were innocent they were spared but they had to remain in the city of refuge until the death of the high priest. Ref: Nu 35:6, 10-12, 15, 19-28

Now if we compare the manslayer and the revenger of blood of those referenced chapters to the woman and the dragon, we see that even though the woman birthed the man-child Christ into the world, she was also guilty of his death upon the cross. Obviously we know all mankind's sin put Christ there as he died for all of us, not just Israel, but did not the Jews cry that the blame for Jesus' death be put on them? Before Pilate they cried in *Mt 27:25 Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our*

children. So we see there is some guilt there, but the thing is, we see the manslayer, the Jews that crucified Christ, done so in ignorance; they may have intended to kill Christ, but not for the right reasons or right intentions, they thought they were doing God a favor, they done so “unawares” (v11), for Jesus himself cried to the Father, *Forgive them for they know not what they do* (Luke 23:34). And Paul says in *1Co 2:8 Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.* So Israel is charged with death by ignorance or unintentionally killing their Messiah, she is the unaware manslayer so she is the one that now flees to a place prepared by God, a place of refuge, of safety, to escape the revenger of blood.

So now the revenger, Satan, pursues the woman, seeking vengeance, (he’s the accuser, the adversary) for it is by Christ’s death that the dragon was defeated, Christ’s death is actually what Satan wanted but it did not turn out like he had planned, so in great wrath Satan persecutes the woman, would destroy her, will have his vengeance, but God protects the woman, sustains her in a place of refuge, and she will remain in this place until the high priest that gave his life for all men’s salvation, the Lord Jesus, returns to her. She doesn’t have to wait for him to die to leave Petra, as Christ has already died, yet he lives and will come and rescue the woman in the end times.

But let’s look at what the dragon tries to do in order to destroy the woman and root her out of her place of refuge.

V15-16 *15 And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. 16 And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.*

Here we see Satan unleashes a flood upon the woman and her place of refuge. Now notice this water is “as a flood” so it is most likely symbolic, in all likelihood the dragon doesn’t actually spew forth water from his mouth to wash Israel away, but we are left wondering what exactly is meant here. Does Satan somehow by the power of his words bring forth great amounts of water to try and flood Petra out? Possibly, as Petra is very susceptible to flash flooding, so much so that the ancient inhabitants controlled such flooding with dams, cisterns and water conduits to either store or channel the waters away. This could also possibly be referring to an invading army under the commanding voice of the dragon that tries to destroy Israel, sometimes a great army is described as a flood covering the land, like the flooding that happens during a vast storm, such as the invading armies of Ezekiel 38(v9). Another explanation could be that the waters from the serpent’s mouth are actually erroneous teachings, lies spewed forth, anti-Semitic speech that causes hatred against the Jews to an unprecedented level. But whatever shape or form these Satanic waters take, we do know it is wasted effort, for God the Creator of all things, and the Lord Jesus who has laid claim to the earth by placing one foot upon the land and the other upon the sea (10:2) has the earth itself (whether nature or the people of the earth or both again we do not know) help Israel. The earth opens its mouth and swallows up the flood. Either the earth literally opens up and absorbs the literal flood waters, or the earth quakes and splits and destroys the invading army, or the people of the earth (which I find the least likely) disprove the false teachings and protect the displaced Jews. However this happens, God protects and preserves His own.

V17 *17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

Here we are shown exactly those Jews that have believed the Word and warning of God, they are the **Remnant**, those who have believed the message of the two witnesses and the preaching of the 144,000. These are the ones who have fled and have been protected and nourished, most likely

miraculously such as when God fed Israel with manna. This remnant is the small portion of Israel that accepts the Lord Jesus as Savior and Messiah and King. This remnant is the fifth personality shown to us in ch12 & 13, the Jewish remnant, the believing remnant. *Isa 26:20 Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.21 For, behold, the LORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.*

Satan after he has tried to do everything he can to destroy the Jews, those that God has protected, now makes one last move, he goes to war with the woman, to invade and destroy, and I believe this verse refers to the coming war of Ezekiel ch38 & 39 (not Armageddon), which is Satan's last effort to destroy Israel, by bringing a massive army bent on destruction to her land. But despite all his trying, all his anger, all his hatred, all his persecution towards the Jews, all this does is drive them towards the Lord Jesus, for this remnant has the testimony of the Jesus Christ, for God defeats this army, the battle is His, and He gives Israel the victory.

Chapter 20

REVELATION –CHAPTER 13

This chapter continues our study of the historical summary of the persecution of Israel started in Rev ch12, a summary that leads us all the way into the end times. For as we have seen in ch12 the Jews have been attacked and harassed by Satan before they were even a nation, from the garden of Eden, to the times of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, he tried to destroy this people and the child they would bring forth, which he failed to do, but that didn't stop him from tormenting the Jews. As we see in the last half of the tribulation when Satan is cast out of heaven to the earth, with his time running out, he wages all out war against God's chosen people. So from beginning to end Satan has been a thorn in the side of the Jewish people. And in ch13 we see the two main personalities that Satan uses in those final days to wreak havoc upon the Jews. Now remember, we are given seven personalities in these two chapters that each play a role in this account of Israel's ongoing persecution.

First we had the sun clothed woman who was pregnant, which is representative of Israel. Next we had the great red dragon which we are plainly told is Satan. Then we have the man-child that is brought forth by the sun-clothed woman who we all recognize is Jesus Christ. When Satan fails to hinder the Lord's birth and destroy the child he then turns his attentions back to the woman, who flees to a place prepared of by God, which is most likely Petra, and this occurs at the halfway point of the tribulation. But at this same time Satan also has another fight on a different front, he wages a war in heaven where he struggles against the armies of heaven, led by Michael the archangel (the 4th personality). And you would think Satan would know better than try to fight a war on two fronts, for your forces are split and you weaken your own capabilities, because as we have seen, Satan loses the war in heaven and he is cast out to the earth where in his wrath he continues his war against the Jewish remnant, the saved Jews who follow the Lord Jesus, who are the 5th personality.

And now we come to ch13 where we see two more personalities who aid Satan in this earthly war, and with these two, together with Satan the dragon, we have what we call the satanic trinity. Remember, Satan is a copy cat, he mimics God, and God is a trinity: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, so Satan who thinks he is god has a trinity as well. This trinity consists of Himself (the dragon) plus the person know as the Beast out of the sea, who is also known as the Antichrist, and later on we will look at the third person of this satanic trinity, the beast out of the earth, who we call the False Prophet. All three play a part in the end times, in warring against the remnant, against the Jews and against God, but we know all are ultimately defeated, good overcomes evil. And with that lets begin looking at the second person of the Satanic trinity, by reading a few select scriptures that refer to the Beast out of the sea.

The Antichrist, The Beast

II Thessalonians 2:1 Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, 2 That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. 3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; 4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. 5 Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? 6 And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. 7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. 8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: 9 Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, 10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 11 And for

this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: 12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

Daniel 7:1 In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed: then he wrote the dream, and told the sum of the matters. 2 Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea. 3 And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another. 4 The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings: I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it. 5 And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh. 6 After this I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it. 7 After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns. 8 I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things. 9 I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire.... Daniel 7:15 I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me. 16 I came near unto one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things. 17 These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth. 18 But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever. 19 Then I would know the truth of the fourth beast, which was diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful, whose teeth were of iron, and his nails of brass; which devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet; 20 And of the ten horns that were in his head, and of the other which came up, and before whom three fell; even of that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows. 21 I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; 22 Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom. 23 Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. 24 And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. 25 And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time. 26 But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end. 27 And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him. 28 Hitherto is the end of the matter. As for me Daniel, my cogitations much troubled me, and my countenance changed in me: but I kept the matter in my heart.

Now this beast out of the sea, the antichrist, here in ch13 is also the Apostle Paul's man of sin and son of perdition, the Wicked, that he describes in II Thessalonians, as well as being the same as the little horn and the fourth wild beast of Daniel's vision of Daniel ch7. All those selections of Scripture are talking about the same person and the same system which he oversees during the Great Tribulation. And that's something we must keep in mind in this study, the Beast here not only represents a literal man, a personality, a dictator, an emperor, a king, but this title also depicts his empire or kingdom, the world system or worldwide government that he rules. So the antichrist and the system he is the head of are one and the same, they are the Beast. This is just like when we think of the Babylonian empire we also think of Nebuchadnezzar, or the Medo-Persian empire we think of Cyrus, or the Grecian empire, we think of Alexander the Great, or to bring it more up to date, when we think of Hitler, we think of Germany and the Nazis, fascism and the Third Reich. Hitler and the system he set up were one and the same. So when we speak of the Beast we speak of the emperor and his empire as they are one and the same, the antichrist and the world government he is the head of.

V1 *And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.*

This description in v1 is very similar to the description of the dragon back in Re 12:3 *And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.* These two are very similar, that's because one is empowered by the other, the antichrist is a man, empowered by Satan, a pawn of Satan, he is Satan manifested in the flesh (just as Jesus was God manifested in the flesh, told you Satan was a copycat), so what we see in a description of Satan is also a description of

the antichrist. They are very much alike. In Rev 17:3 we even see this beast is scarlet just as the dragon is red. So what we have here in the beast is a devil empowered, Satan infused, wicked and an anti-God human being as well as a devilish empowered governmental system.

Now as we study this, we also need to keep in mind that this is a vision of John's, and in this vision we are seeing a lot of symbolism, a woman for Israel, a dragon for Satan, and so on. And with v1 we jump right into the deep end of the pool with such symbolism. But to help us understand this chapter the Lord actually breaks this down and explains some of the symbolism for us, for again what is the best commentary on the Bible? The Bible right? So let us reference Revelation ch17 to help us understand ch13.

Re 17:7 And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns. 8 The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is. 9 And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. 10 And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space. 11 And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition. 12 And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. 13 These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. 14 These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful. 15 And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues. 16 And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. 17 For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled. 18 And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.

In those verses we are given a lot of the answers to the questions that come up when we read ch13v1. So let's take this one piece at a time.

First in 13:1, we see that John here is standing on the sand watching as a beast rises out of the sea. Now we already know what the beast represents, the Antichrist and his empire, but what is this sea that he rises from? We are given that answer that in *Re 17:15 And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.* So the sea, the waters, that the beast rises from, are the nations of the world, the masses of people, the multitudes and races and cultures of the earth. So the antichrist rises up from the governments of the world as an empire, but also as a man from among the people who will head such an empire.

Next in v1 we see this beast has 7 heads. And we are given two references of what these 7 heads are in *Re 17:9 And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. 10 And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space. 11 And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.* First we see the seven heads represent seven mountains, and these mountains speak of the 7 literal hills that the city of Rome is built upon, and what this is alluding to is a revived Roman Empire, the empire the antichrist will be the head of. But in v10&11 we also see these 7 heads represent 7 kings, a line of rulership and distinct forms of government, 5 which have already past, one that presently reigns in John's day (Domitian and Imperialism), and one king with a restored imperialistic kingdom to come, which is the antichrist, who is also the eighth king mentioned in 17:11.

Now how is the antichrist described as the beast that was and is not and yet is in 17:8? I think the answer to that will help explain how he is also both the 7th and 8th king of v11. To explain that lets jump ahead just a moment in ch13, look at v3, *Re 13:3 And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.* And in v12 speaking of the false prophet we read *Re 13:12 And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.* And in *Re 13:14 And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by*

a sword, and did live. Here is a description of the antichrist who receives a fatal wound, he is killed, most likely from an assassin, but others believe it may be caused by one of the two witnesses who strike him down with their miraculous powers, but whatever happens the man, the antichrist, dies. But even though he is dead, somehow he is miraculously revived, he is raised from the dead, resurrected, this again is Satan's mimicry, his imitation of the resurrection of Christ.

Now this most likely occurs at or just prior to the midpoint of the tribulation for it is at the 3½ year mark that the antichrist truly changes in his outward personality. Where the antichrist had before come in peace, as a great orator and peace maker (ref Rev 6:2), he now is fully possessed by the power of Satan, and seeks all out war. To help us understand this change of character, we read concerning the two witnesses and the antichrist in *Re 11:7 And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.* A mere man does not come forth from the abyss, the bottomless pit, but we know from our previous studies, that very vile and powerful demonic spirits do, and I think what this verse refers to is even though the antichrist dies, his soul and something else entirely is brought back from the pit, his soul ascends out of it and most likely is demonically possessed, either by Satan himself or one of his many demons. Rev. 17:11 says he goes into perdition when he is changed from the 7th to the 8th king, and now as he comes out, ascends out of perdition, he is raised as the son of perdition, the offspring of such, (which is the same title given to Judas when the devil entered into him). And now the antichrist's demeanor changes, his peacemaking is now warlike, he is demonic, devilish, out for blood, he is evil, wicked, wrathful, Satan infused and ready to kill. And that explains 17:8 of how he was, and is not, and yet is, for the antichrist lived, then he died, was killed, but now he lives again, raised from the dead and returned to life, and this is why many wonder at his power (13:3), for he will claim to be the Messiah, the resurrected Christ, God; this is how he gains worship from those who have not their name written in the book of life, as they will believe such a lie, and this may play a part in the great delusion God sends as well, *2Th 2:11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: 12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*

Next in v1, we see the beast has ten horns and ten crowns, which are described to us in *Re 17:12 And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast.* So the horns represent kings and the 10 crowns of the beast represent the 10 kingdoms that these 10 kings (horns) will at some point rule, this description corresponds with the ten toes of the large golden headed image of Daniel's vision in Daniel ch2. What this is referring to is an alliance of 10 kingdoms/nations from which the antichrist comes forth, he will be one of the kings and one of the kingdoms of this alliance which will be the revived Roman Empire. It is from these ten kingdoms that the little horn rises from, and in Daniel we are told he destroys 3 horns or 3 of these kingdoms in order to establish his power and dominion. *Re 17:16 And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. 17 For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.*

Da 7:8 I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things.

And then we see in 13:1 that upon these heads is the name of blasphemy. Antichrist and his allies and underlings, his leaders and generals who are all waging war upon the remnant, upon the Jews, upon God, now speak blasphemies against God. Daniel says the antichrist speaks great things (7:20), powerful things, *Da 7:25 And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, ...* Paul says the antichrist speaks lying wonders (II Thes 2:9), so we see that he blasphemes with lies, mocking, vile speech, profane speech, irreverent words, falseness, every kind of horrible thing man can conjure up in his wicked heart will be spoken about God and against God. Satan, in his suffering loss

after loss, seems to strike out like a child, for since he can not defeat God he has resorted to name calling against God. *Re 13:5 And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.* But the sad thing is he will lead many to do the same.

So here we have a king and his kingdom, the beast, the antichrist, rising forth from the peoples of the earth, coming to power from the revived Roman Empire who is given rulership over the other allied kingdoms or nations. First he was peaceful but after his death and resurrection, he is wholly in the power of Satan and is given power by Satan to rule over the world, he then breaks the peace treaty he had made with Israel, he commits the abomination of desolation demanding worship as a god, he kills the two witnesses (who possibly killed him first) and he now wages all out war against Israel, the faithful remnant, as a ferocious powerful beast that blasphemes God all the way.

Before we continue any further I wanted to jump back to Revelation ch12 for just a moment to where we talked about the place God had prepared for the sun-clothed woman (Israel) to flee to when Satan was cast out of heaven to the earth and began to truly persecute Israel; we spoke of the woman fleeing into the wilderness, and this wilderness being in the southern portion of the country of Jordan, spoken of in Scripture as Edom and Moab and we pointed out that the rose colored city of Petra (being a likely place for Israel to flee to when the antichrist breaks his treaty with them) was located in this area. And it was here we believe that the Jews, mostly the believing remnant, would stay for the last half of the great tribulation in order to be safe and secure from the antichrist, for somehow Edom and Moab (both in modern day Jordan) would not be overtaken by the antichrist, our proof text being in Daniel 11:41 which says of the antichrist... *He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon.* To add to this we find further support in Isaiah 63, where we are shown that in the second coming of Christ, we see he will approach from the direction of Edom in great fury... *Isa 63:1 Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? {Bozrah is the capital city of Edom, here Christ is pictured coming with his garments red with blood - Re 19:13 And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.} this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. 2 Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? {Re 19:15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.} 3 I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. 4 For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come.* Now why would the returning Lord Jesus come from Edom? Well, if he is going to get his faithful and his chosen people when he returns that is where they will be, safe and sound in the last days, in the wilderness, in Edom, in Jordan, most likely in Petra under God's protection.

V13:1-2 *1 And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. 2 And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.*

Please reference Daniel 7 so we can compare Daniel's fourth beast with John's beast, which speaks of the same person. Ref Daniel 7:1-8; 15-28.

In Daniel ch7 we are told these four beasts represent 4 kings and their kingdoms (v17), and that the 4th beast is different (diverse) from the other three, for as we see in Revelation, this 4th beast of Daniel's (which speaks of the antichrist) is a combination of the most powerful traits of these others

kingdoms. The beast out of the sea is a mishmash, a chimera, an amalgamation of these other beasts, these other kingdoms. So let's look at each of these and see what we can learn about this 4th beast.

LION: The first beast we come to in Daniel (7:4) is a winged lion, a symbol used of the Babylonian empire under the rule of Nebuchadnezzar. In mythology this beast is referred to as a griffon and symbolizes power, strength, great authority, with a voracious appetite for conquest, just as Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar had, who conquered Assyria, Israel and Judah, and most of the known world; they were destructive, they were cruel. They were a powerful, pagan kingdom. And like this beast, John's beast in Revelation has a mouth as a lion, one that hungers for power, for blood, for conquest, it has a great appetite to rule and will do anything to gain such authority, and does not Rev 6:2 state of the antichrist *and he went forth conquering, and to conquer*. He hungers as a lion, he also roars as a lion, quelling his prey into submission by fear and intimidation, and he bites as a lion, killing all who oppose him, hunting down God's chosen. And did we not see that the antichrist spoke great things, lying wonders, great blasphemies against God? *Re 13:5 And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.*

Da 7:25 And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws; and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.

This antichrist takes the power of the spoken word and uses it to deceive and to destroy and to devour and to damn. He corrupts the truth into lies in order to fool many into worshipping and following him. This lion's mouth is dangerous in many ways, it is savage and destructive, deceitful, vile and vulgar, it is fearful and consuming, for does not the Bible say that the *devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour* (I Peter 5:8).

BEAR: The second beast we come to is the bear (7:5). The bear is representative of the Medo-Persian Empire. The bear depicts that kingdom's use of brute force for a bear is very strong, very destructive, very dangerous. And we then see the description of John's beast which has the feet of a bear. Now you would think the leader of the known world would be able to afford shoes instead of having bare feet wouldn't you? (get it bare feet vs bear feet, bad joke I know). This refers to the sheer brute force the antichrist will wield against his enemies. The terrors that he lays upon the Jews and believers will be horrifying. For a bear has great large claws with mounds of muscle behind them when it strikes, rending and tearing with its claws and breaking bones with the sheer impact of its swing, the Bible actually has a few verses speaking of the brutality of a bear who has been robbed of her whelps, this is not an animal any one wants to face in its unbridled viciousness. A bear will also relentlessly go after its prey, think of a bee's nest rich with honey, the bear will get its prize despite the stings and harm to itself, it ignores its own pain, for it is tenacious, stubborn, persistent, in getting what it wants, just as the Persians were in their will to conquer the known world, as well as the antichrist who will not care for the lives he throws away to further his plans and to wage war against the sun-clothed woman, to gain his prize of world dominion and conquering all who stand in his way. *Pr 28:15 As a roaring lion, and a ranging bear; so is a wicked ruler over the poor people.*

LEOPARD: And with that we come to Daniel's third beast, the winged leopard (7:6). This beast represents the Grecian empire established by Alexander the Great. A leopard symbolizes ferociousness, swiftness (especially with wings), cunning as it waits in hiding to pounce on its prey which it does very well due to its natural camouflage, its spots. This hunter is on its prey before it realizes it. And with Alexander leading his armies, they were precise and cunning, swift in their maneuvering and engagement, as he was a brilliant tactician. So if we compare this to John's beast, we see that his beast out of the sea is primarily made up of the leopard, it *was like unto a leopard*, with only the feet of a bear and the mouth of a lion. Here we see the antichrist when he strikes, it will be swift

and decisive, it will be ferocious, he will pounce when it is unexpected, he will hide or camouflage himself with words of peace and diplomacy until the time to strike his enemies is prime, and then he will go for the immediate kill. His armies will sweep the world, his hunger for power driving them, his lies filling their ears, they will be brutal and unmerciful, swift and strategic, the world will truly see shock and awe. So here we have the antichrist's empire, the revived Roman Empire, being a combination of all three of these mighty previous empires. He has the hunger and power of Babylon with a mighty voice given by the mouth of the lion, he will be strong and stubborn, brutally devastating to the enemies, as the Medes and Persians were, represented by the feet of the bear, and then he will be swift and cunning, strategic yet ferocious in his attack like the armies of Alexander. *Da 7:7 After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns.*

But not only do these beasts describe the antichrist's kingdom, they also describe the antichrist himself. He has a powerful mouth, a voice of strength with power to back it up, a mouth that speaks lies and great blasphemies. He is also stubborn and persistent in his conquest like the bear, he kills and destroys all who stand in his way and who speak against him. Great will be his persecution against the Jews and remaining believers. And he is ferocious and cunning like the leopard, he is even swift in his rise to power, and since he is the man of sin, he is spotted with sin, blemished, like a leopard covered with spots. He truly is a beast.

Now if we compare this man to the Lord Jesus we see very contrasting images. The antichrist has a mouth as a lion, while Jesus is called the Lamb of God, the one that taketh away the sins of the world, and this Lamb has a different kind of mouth, in one instance it is meek, *Isa 53:7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.* But in another instance Jesus' mouth is mighty and victorious *Re 19:15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: This Lamb is the Word, the Word of God, that has the power to speak creation into existence, the power to judge men's souls, the power to cure, to heal, to call and to save. His mouth is much more pleasant, much more powerful than the antichrist's.*

Then we look at the antichrist's feet, feet like a bear. But John the Baptist says of the Lamb, *Lm 3:16 John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire:* It is at those feet that many fell to the ground to worship this Lamb when he walked upon this earth, and it was those feet that bear the scars from the cross, where he suffered for our sins and died for us. His feet brought him to us, to walk among us, and it is those feet we must follow to our heavenly home. His feet are not scary, not ferocious, but they came in compassion and love.

And finally, the antichrist is as a spotted leopard, but Christ is spotless, sinless. *1Pe 1:19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:*

1Jo 3:5 And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.

Heb 9:14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

So is there any wonder the antichrist is called such, for he is nothing like the true Christ?

Something else to think about: the line of David will defeat the lion and the bear and the man. (Goliath blasphemed, was sinful, was a mutant of sorts since he was a giant, not just a normal man)

1Sa 17:34 And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: 35 And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. 36 Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God. 37 David said moreover, The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the LORD be with thee.

Christ is of the line of David, having the right to sit upon the throne of David, and just as David defeated all these beasts and blasphemers, so too will Christ defeat the antichrist, proving who the true God is.

So thus far in ch13 we have been looking at the beast out of the sea, the antichrist and his empire that rises forth from the peoples and the nations of the earth. The antichrist will be the ruler of this revived Roman Empire, the head power over the other kingdoms that have allied with him. And we have seen that this empire, as well as the man, would be like the empires and emperors of old, sharing some of their most powerful and outstanding characteristics, like Babylon, with the mouth of a lion that hungered for conquest, how it devoured its enemies, and spoke with power and blasphemy; like the Persian empire that was strong and brutal like the bear; and like the Grecian empire, swift, deadly, cunning, lying in wait to pounce on its prey from hiding like the leopard, as well as being spotted with sin and corruption. This beast, this man, and his system of world wide rule is to be a mixture of the most powerful and terrible traits of all the previous world empires put together. But there is one last thing that makes this empire and this antichrist stick out from all the other world conquerors, something that makes him more powerful, more influential for we see in the ending of v2... *and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.*

We've had the leopard, the bear and the lion, but now we come to one that is mightier and more feared than all, more destructive, more sinister, the great red dragon, that old serpent, Satan himself. And here we see the connection of this portion of the Satanic trinity; for Satan, the dragon, gives to the antichrist, the beast, his power, his strength and influence, this will be unhindered power for the very ones who hindered such power before (the Holy Spirit and the church) have been removed and/or their operation changed. And with such unhindered power the dragon also gives the beast his seat/throne and the authority he wields from such a throne, for remember Satan is the prince of this world, the prince and power of the air, he is a ruler of the darkness of this world, a spiritual wickedness in a high place, the leader of the fallen angels, and the devil here invests his power and influence into this one man, to rule and be worshipped as a god. This man becomes the devil's puppet and Satan is the puppet master, pulling all the strings. The beast is given military power, political power, religious power and economic power, his control will grip the entire world (except for a few select areas). Remember the antichrist ascends out of the pit, *Re 11:7 And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.* and this is most likely after he suffers his deadly wound, v3, for it is from this moment that the antichrist's personality changes from a political diplomat to a bloodthirsty killer, for now he is a son, the offspring, of perdition, of damnation, just as Judas was when he betrayed the Lord Jesus, and so he is now consumed by the power and person Satan.

V3 *And I saw one of his beads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.*

I have already mentioned that this fatal wound the antichrist recovers from is most likely how he will claim to be the Messiah, the one that is raised from the dead, that has defeated death and the grave, trying to rob Christ of the glory of his resurrection. Now whether he actually dies or if it is some deceptive trick, is not important, but what is important is what the people of the world believe. If they believe he has power over death, power to bring himself back to life, does it really matter if he did or didn't die?, as its what the people think is important. But I do believe he actually dies, as the Greek word for wounded here in this verse is the same word that is translated in Rev 5:6 as "slain" speaking of the death of Christ, who we know died. So again, because Satan is a copycat of God, he will try to

mimic the resurrection with the beast in order for him to be adored and worshipped. And as we see in v3, many do believe he is the prophesied messiah, the one that conquers death and the grave, all the world wonders, is in awe, of this man. They can not believe it, yet they do. They will ask themselves questions like “How did he do that? What power does he have? If he can do that what can’t he do? If he is that mighty just think what he can do for us and this world. Who is like this man? Who could stand against him?” and so on and so on, and the world will become enamored with this man, with this leader. The nations and politicians will follow him, the people will love him, the masses will wonder at him, the media will heap adoration upon him, and the religious will worship him. How deluded this world will be. *2Th 2:11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.* What a sad state this world is in, they reject the true Savior, yet receive the very opposite of him to their own destruction.

And this lie/delusion will cause all to worship this beast, and not only the beast but the one from which he draws his power from as well, the dragon. Satanism in a very twisted form will be the world wide religion, most likely promoted thru the then fully corrupted Roman Catholic Church, which we’ll look at later on in our studies.

V4 *And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?*

One thing I want you to notice is that this is split worship, for the satanic trinity is not a true trinity, they are three separate distinct beings, unlike the true Holy Trinity, which are three persons but one being (Father, Son, and Spirit), and so what is presented to us here in v4 is a split worship, the dragon is worshipped, and so too is the antichrist, and the Bible clearly states one can not serve two masters, lest you love one and hate the other (Mat 6:24), and that a house divided against itself can not stand (Mark 3:25), and so even as the beast comes to power we already see cracks starting to form in the foundation, this reign will not last, it will fall like all the other past empires, but it will be replaced by one that will never fall, never fail, with the Lord Jesus at its head and as its cornerstone.

But in the mean time, as the beast reigns over the world, he is given a place and a position to speak and influence the world with his lies during the 3 ½ years of his demonic rule, the last half of the tribulation.

V5-6 *5 And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.*

6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.

We read in Daniel... *Da 7:8 I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things.*

Da 7:25 And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.

This man truly shows that he is anti-Christ, anti-God, anti-salvation, anti-redemption, anti-Christian, as he speaks horrible things against the God of heaven, His tabernacle, His throne, His heavenly abode and the saints and angels that are with Him. The beast is attempting to rob Jehovah of His glory, of His honor, of His holiness and heap it upon himself. He will curse those that believe, he will condemn the 144,000, he will execute the two witnesses, he will try to eradicate all opposition and many will fall before him or fall in line behind him. You may think nobody in their right mind would follow such a man or believe such lies, but just think of the atrocities against the Jews committed by

the Germans, or the horrible things world dictators and dominating leaders (Russia, China, Korea, Africa, and many others) have had their people do against their fellow citizens, neighbors, friends, and families who disagreed with them, think of how the liberal left demands rights for all things abominable to God yet robs the very right to exist from unborn children in the womb. They are tolerant of everything except righteousness. Logic and common sense are lost and twisted by the lies of many great thinkers and influential leaders which cause the masses to commit horrible barbaric acts against their fellow man.

V7 *And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.*

The antichrist will attack heaven with words but he will war against those he can still reach. He will persecute believers greatly, hunting them down, imprisoning them, publically executing them, beheading them. He will attempt to show the world that the real God does not exist, that he is a fairy tale, for if He did exist He would not allow such atrocities to happen to those He supposedly loves. The antichrist will be on an unholy crusade to rid the world of such "lies". *Da 7:21 I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; And thru such threats and violence he will be given power and authority to rule the world.*

But one thing we should notice here is, in v7 it clearly states *And it was given unto him*, meaning not that Satan gave the beast power to do all this even though he does empower him, but it means that the antichrist is allowed to do this, for God is the one who is truly in charge, yet he allows antichrist to have his run, allows him to spout his lies, to wage war, to destroy and deceive, just as God allowed Satan to have his go at Job, and Satan made it very rough on that man, just as the antichrist will make it rough for believers and the Jews, yet he will only be allowed to go so far, God will still have the last word, God will have the victory as well as all those who have sided with Him and trusted in Him. But do not be fooled, it will not be easy for any true believer during this time, conversion will mean a death sentence, preaching, testifying, reading the Bible, possession of a Bible, witnessing, attempting to convert some one, just the mention of the name Jesus or Christ will most likely sentence one to death. The voice we have now, the freedom to speak boldly and loudly will be changed to a whisper among most, the spread of the gospel will most likely slow to a crawl, hope will almost altogether disappear, and if not for the preaching of the 144,000 who will do so without fear, public preaching would most likely disappear. But that's why in this time of the age of grace that it is so important to follow Christ's command to go forth and preach to all nations the gospel, he urges us to do it while we still can and while people can respond to it without intimidation and fear of immediate death. Some will ask why does God allow this? But remember the world is being judged for sin and rejection of Christ. God is showing them what that sin and rejection results in if not checked by the grace of God.

Because the sad fact is, that even though God is in control, it will not appear to be that way as He gives the antichrist time to do his thing unhindered, and so the antichrist will fool many, and he will be so adored that he will become as a god to the people, he will be worshipped. People will bow at his feet, they will kiss his hand and his ring, either out of fear or love.

V8 *And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*

What a pitiful picture given to us here, the world will bow to the one who threatens them with violence, who mouths curses and blasphemes, who throws tantrums against those that oppose him, they follow and worship a lie, but they turn their back on the one who is truth. They reject Christ, they oppose him, the one who asks them to trust him, the one who gave his life for them upon the cross of

Calvary, that sacrificed himself as a servant, who was an example to be followed, not one that demanded it. They follow a terrible beast and not the Lamb, the Lamb who gave it all, the Lamb whose death was foreordained before creation ever was. They follow a hateful dictator instead of a loving compassionate King. They follow a selfish greedy prideful ruler instead of one who humbly gave it all and offers even more. Man in his ignorance, in his willing blindness, worships the wrong person, he worships a man empowered by Satan instead of the God that became man for us. And so John gives us all a warning...

V9 *If any man have an ear, let him hear.*

Pay attention, hear me out, listen to my warning, and what warning is that?

V10 *He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.*

The one that leads man into captivity, into bondage will himself be led into captivity. *Re 19:20 And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. The one who kills with the sword will die by the sword. At Christ's return at Armageddon Re 19:15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. ... Re 19:21 And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.*

The patience and the faith of the saints are shown by trusting God and waiting on God to do what's right, that judgment will fall and right will be sorted out from wrong, evil doers will get their due reward and the righteous will be rewarded for their faith. Some times it may seem like God is distant or he doesn't care, but in truth He may just want us to trust Him. Remember the martyred saints under the altar that wanted vengeance upon those that killed them were told to be patient and wait, and if they are told such in heaven, we shouldn't expect any different here on earth, for what happens in this short time here will be straightened out in eternity. So we should learn to trust God with what He does and allows to happen, be patient with Him for all will be judged, punishment will be meted out, and the one who is truly worthy of worship will be worshiped by those who truly believe and he will reign from his rightful throne while all those who have opposed him will get what they deserve, what we all deserved if not for God's mercy and grace.

The False Prophet

Worship of the beast is urged and focused by the third person of the satanic trinity, the beast out of the earth, the false prophet, who corresponds with the Holy Spirit. For just as the Holy Spirit points one to the Lord Jesus to worship, the false prophet is going to point the world to the antichrist (v12). We read of the Holy Spirit doing such in *Job 16:13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. 14 He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. 15 All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.*

Job 15:26 But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.

The false prophet is the counterfeit Holy Spirit, but he is no spirit, he is a man, under the influence of the devil, he is a religious leader, spouting lies and deception as he directs the one world church and points others to exalt the antichrist. And even though his title of false prophet is not given here in ch13, it is later on, in relation to the other two persons of this demonic trinity.

Re 16:13 *And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.*

Re 19:20 *And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.*

Re 20:10 *And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.*

We are even warned of this man by Jesus, for just as there is one antichrist with many others before him who are typical of him as we read in 1Jo 2:18 *Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.*, so too is there one false prophet with others coming before him who are typical of him as well.

Mt 24:11 *And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.*

Mt 7:15 *Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.*

Mt 24:24 *For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.*

So lets look at this great deceiver, this man of signs and wonders, this wolf in sheep's clothing, the False Prophet that will lead the world astray by causing them to worship the false Christ.

V11 *And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.*

Here we see another beast, the seventh personality of ch12&13 as a major player in the end times, but instead of coming up out of the sea, from the people of the world, like the first beast we see this second beast comes forth from the earth, which is symbolic of and refers to religious lifestyle on the earth, more specifically that of the Latin religious world, which of course directs our attention to the Roman Catholic Church. So this beast, this man, comes from a religious background, and we seem to be pointed towards the religion of Catholicism. For this coming forth from the earth can also refer to this beast's humble, impoverished beginnings, that he starts off as a nobody, with nothing all that special about him yet he rises thru the hierarchy of a religious system to a position of great power. And as he ascends in this religious system, especially thinking of how Catholic monks and priests live their celibate and secluded lives, this man, this second beast, will be insulated from the people of the world, thus we see him emerge from a religious realm instead of from the sea of the public masses. So this beast is a religious leader, a man of great religious influence. He is most likely the pope of the Catholic Church, now I'm not saying the one who occupies that office when the antichrist is revealed is the false prophet, but I'm not not saying that either.

But remember Jesus' warnings to the church of Pergamos, a church where the priests and clergy become separated and elevated in power, and were corrupted with false doctrines, where Jesus said to Pergamos that Satan's seat, Satan's throne, his place of authority, was found there, found in the very place this church was located was also the focal point of Satan's influence at that time. Also if you recall, that church had become receptive to the doctrines of Balaam (the church uniting with the world and the state/political power) and the Nicolaitanes (the acceptance of a priestly caste system or hierarchy) (ref Rev 2:12-16). Now what world religion has a seat of power, has a priestly system of varying degrees of authority and teaches the doctrines of men as the doctrines of God?

And then to add to that, think about Jesus' warnings to the church of Thyatira (ref Rev. 2:18-24). That church had been corrupted by the teachings of a Jezebel, a woman, and the idea of a continual sacrifice, speaking of the Mass of the Catholic Church where Christ's one time atonement is denied by him having to be offered time and time again every time they participate in the Mass. And thus, when you take the head ship of Christ out and put a man or a woman in charge of the church, when you reduce Jesus to an insufficient sacrifice for sin, what do you expect but error, lies, deceit and

corruption? We see such errors escalate and snowball to become what we know as the Catholic Church of today, for we see such false doctrine taught and practiced: the Pope as the vicar (agent or representative) of Christ, the veneration of Mary, worship of images and relics, invention of holy water, canonization of the saints, celibacy of priests, prayer beads, selling of indulgences, confessionals, removal of the communion cup from the laity, doctrine of Purgatory, tradition put on equal standing as the Bible, acceptance of the Apocryphal books as canon, the immaculate conception of Mary, infallibility of the Pope, and many, many more. And what does Jesus tell the church of Thyatira in *Re 2:22* *Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into **great tribulation**, except they repent of their deeds.*

And so it is from both time periods that these churches represent that we have the beginnings of the Catholic Church, with a corrupted seat of power, false doctrine, religious corruption, veneration of Mary, a priestly hierarchy, a uniting with the world and political power, the church having its own great world power and influence. The Vatican is a nation unto itself, its one of the richest places on the planet, they even have a seat at the UN, what other religion has that kind of tie with political power and international diplomacy that says they stand for God but teach erroneous doctrines and practices, that have absorbed paganism into its practices just to please the people?

So we see this second beast is from a corrupted religious background, and then we see this beast has two horns, like the first beast which had 10, which we saw spoke of kingdoms, and so too do these two horns speak of realms of authority, but note there are no crowns upon these horns, meaning there are no kings or true political authority. So what do these two horns speak of? Well if this beast, this man, rises up in the power of Catholicism, these two horns could easily represent the papacy and the clergy of the Roman church, the spiritual and ecclesiastical branches, the separation of believers and those of religious authority, this man has control over both, those with religious power and those of the masses of followers.

And as we continue in v11, we notice that not only does this beast come forth from the earth but it has two horns which cause this beast to have the look and the similarities of a lamb, for two horns on a beast is not unnatural, its quite common. But notice John does not say the beast is a lamb, for we have seen the true Lamb, the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus, and he is perfect in power and depicted with perfection with the perfect number of seven horns (*Re 5:6* *And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.*) But this beast out of the earth only has the appearance or the characteristics of a lamb, he seems to be like a lamb, like THE Lamb, pure, chaste, innocent, harmless, meek, pious, holy and loving, he seems to be that way, seeming almost as an angel of light, yet he is anything but, for what is inside of this beast comes out, he speaks as a dragon, as Satan himself, he speaks with lies and deception, with seducing words, corrupting words, false doctrines and teachings and promises. This beast is a world wide religious leader, most likely a pope, that leads the world astray with the voice of Satan. This man will pretend to speak for God, will appear godly and what the world expects as religious but he causes the world to worship the antichrist.

V12 *And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.*

Notice first this second beast exercises the same power as the first beast, the false prophet wields the same or equal power as the antichrist in his realm of influence. The antichrist has political sway, military might, the international powers behind him, but the false prophet has power and influence over the religious of the world. Both of these men will be great speakers, great leaders, powerful men, but they will be rotten to the core. For this false prophet will cause the world to worship not God, not Christ, but to worship the false Christ, the antichrist who has been raised from

the dead, whose fatal wound was overcome by the power of Satan. Sermons will be preached, books will be written, commandments will be handed down saying that this antichrist is the one true God, the true Messiah, the promised One, the leader that all religions have been looking for and prophesied of. The false prophet will proclaim this man of sin to be the world's hope, so he is to be worshipped. The false prophet as the leader of the apostate church will exalt and glorify the first beast. What he will say will sway many, his cunning and subtlety will convince the skeptical, what he says will sound so right and sensible. It will satisfy the intellects, persuade the atheists, convert the religious. This lamb that seems so meek and holy will destroy the world thru his religious speech by claiming the first beast as God.

And to back up such a claim, to back up his words and directions, this false prophet will be able to provide signs and wonders to convince the world that he speaks the truth, for mankind always looks for a sign, for proof, for tangible undeniable proof, because the simplicity of faith is too much to comprehend for most, so man has to have a sign. The Jews asked it of Jesus, yet when he performed miracles and was even raised from the dead, many still chose not to believe. Yet here the false prophet will perform signs and miracles and the people will easily accept his lies.

V13-14a *13 And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, 14 And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast;*

Notice once again Satan is a copy cat, he has no original thoughts, for the false prophet copies the miracles of others in biblical history. He has the ability to call down fire, like Satan did in *Job 1:16 While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee;* also like Elijah, like the apostles, like the two witnesses who are killed by the antichrist, so if he can do that and he has defeated the two witnesses he must be greater than they, or at least that's what many will think. Sometimes I don't think we give Satan and his minions enough credit, for he is a very powerful adversary, he has the power to do many things, things beyond our own power and comprehension, I remind you of Moses' confrontation with the Pharaoh, Moses was given the ability to do wonders, but the sorcerers of Egypt's court was able to do many as well; there are forces out there that are darker and much more powerful than we realize, forces who give men their powers in order to corrupt and destroy mankind. And here we have the pinnacle of such, the false prophet empowered by Satan, the dragon, wielding supernatural powers to point the world to the antichrist. And some of this power is used to bring an image made of the antichrist to life in order for the world to worship it as well.

V14b-15 *14 ...saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. 15 And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed*

Recall when we were talking about the two witnesses and we showed some similarities of Scripture in the books of Revelation and Zechariah, comparing the olive trees and candlesticks. And in the book of Zechariah we saw two persons that I think may be representative of the two witnesses. Do you remember who they were? Zerubbabel, the governor of Jerusalem and Joshua the High Priest. And I said there existed the possibility of one of the two witnesses being a Jewish political leader and the other being a Jewish religious leader. Well, think about this, I have been showing you how Satan tries to mimic and counterfeit God, to copy cat Him, here he has copied the Holy Trinity with the dragon, the beast and the false prophet, he has copied the resurrection in the raising of the antichrist from the dead, the false prophet copies the actions of the Holy Spirit, so why not copy the two

witnesses, the two that stand for God and against the antichrist in Jerusalem, for if the two witnesses are a political and a religious leader, what do we have with the Antichrist and the False Prophet? A satanic political leader and a satanic religious leader. Coincidence? I think not. Satan copies the witnesses who spoke for God, testified of the truth, but he kills them and has his own counterfeits to take their place, who then speak of Satan as God. The two witnesses after their death are resurrected and ascend to heaven but the antichrist is slain, given a fatal wound, and is resurrected but he stays on the earth to conquer, to take power and be worshipped, all supported by the False Prophet, who supports the antichrist's claims as God.

So here we have political, military, economical, and religious authority united in single purpose, so is there any wonder the world bows to this man? Many will think what choice do they have?, especially when the False Prophet demands that an image be made of the antichrist and for the world to worship it lest they die. Here we have the false prophet commanding men to make an image, an icon, a representation, either like a portrait or a statue of the antichrist for the world to worship. Here we have the pinnacle of idol worship introduced. So now we have worship of the dragon, worship of the antichrist, and now idol worship of the image of the antichrist, the one that was raised from the dead, that has power over death. How ignorant man is, for how many times throughout the Bible does God chide idolaters for worshipping something they created instead of worshipping the one who created them? But notice there is something different about this image, the false prophet is able to give life to this image, it moves, it speaks, it might possibly even be able to kill for those who do not worship this image are sentenced to death. (I wonder if this is in mockery of Christ who the apostle Peter refers to as the Living Stone in I Peter ch2?).

The False Prophet commands that those that dwell on the earth make an image, the Greek word for image is "eikon", meaning a statue or a representation, of the antichrist. This is idolatry at its pinnacle, the very thing that God severely punished His chosen people for doing. This image will be made by the hands of man and yet man will bow down and worship something he has made. This is in direct defiance to God, *Ex 20:4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth:*

In Isaiah 44:9-19 we see how absurd God thinks idol worship is. *Isa 44:9 They that make a graven image are all of them vanity; and their delectable things shall not profit; and they are their own witnesses; they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed. 10 Who hath formed a god, or molten a graven image that is profitable for nothing? 11 Behold, all his fellows shall be ashamed: and the workmen, they are of men: let them all be gathered together, let them stand up; yet they shall fear, and they shall be ashamed together. 12 The smith with the tongs both worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with the strength of his arms: yea, he is hungry, and his strength faileth: he drinketh no water, and is faint. 13 The carpenter stretcheth out his rule; he marketh it out with a line; he fitteth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compass, and maketh it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man; that it may remain in the house. 14 He beweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest: he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish it. 15 Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himself; yea, he kindleth it, and baketh bread; yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth it; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto. 16 He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warmeth himself, and saith, Aba, I am warm, I have seen the fire: 17 And the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my god. 18 They have not known nor understood: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand. 19 And none considereth in his heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten it: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree?*

There may be two meanings behind this command to make an image. First I think that there will be built one main statue, one image of the beast and we'll talk about that one image in a moment. But I also think, due to the wording of "*saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image*" that this seems to indicate everyone on the planet, that this command is to all men everywhere to make an image, so I wonder if not only will there be one main image, but also many personal images that

everyone will make or buy in order to have their own smaller image of the antichrist for personal worship or devotion or to place in a household, a church or even village shrines. This would be a smaller version of the main image that men may have a personal attachment to if they can't make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to worship this one main image. And just think about this, Catholics have shrines to saints and such all over the world. Now I admit this may be me being picky with the wording here, but it is a thought, for how can all men bow to one image?

But speaking of that one main statue, the image, it seems to be an actual constructed object and not a computer or television program or cel phone app or anything where people can see a moving and talking picture, although those may be used to view and worship the actual idol. Because from what I can gather, this image of the beast is an actual statue, now could it be robotic or mechanical or computerized? possibly, your imagination can run wild here trying to figure this out. But let's not speculate too much, instead lets look at what we are told. We are told that the False Prophet, who is endowed by Satan to perform great wonders, to do supernatural acts, to do things that defy logic and science, also causes this image that he commissions man to make to come to life.

V5 *And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.*

The False Prophet has power to give this image of the beast life, he causes it to speak, to move, causes it to possibly kill those who will not worship it. Sounds kind of like a satanic version of the Terminator. The reason I say this idol, this image, can move, talk, interact with humanity, is that some way, some how, the false prophet brings life to this idol, this representation of the antichrist, and it can verify if one is worshipping it or not, and if not it has the ability to kill or more likely to sentence one to be executed, and with today's technology of communication and surveillance, this seems more probable. Maybe this is some form of highly advanced artificial intelligence which can be interacted with across the internet. But the point I'm trying to make is the Greek word John uses for the word "life" is "*pnuema*", meaning spirit, which indicates that just as the false Prophet can do great wonders by the power of Satan, he also can give "life", a spirit, to this object by the power of Satan. This object, this statue, this robot, whatever it is will have a spirit, a life, a personality.

Now many will say that's outlandish, that's science fiction, that's a fairy tale, but where do you think fairy tales and myth and legend have their roots? In the black arts, in demonic and satanic influences, in possession and empowerment of mankind, in the truth that has tried to remain hidden in the shadows of the fantastical. Remember in the Bible we see things that would bewilder us if they happened in front us, a serpent that talks, a man able to call down plagues upon a nation and others able to mimic some of those, fire being called from heaven, demon possessions, an entire sea parted, people raised from the dead, flaming chariots, supernatural healing, power over the natural elements, and I could go on. Some of those are done with the power of God, but others are not. Like I have stated before there are dark and dangerous powers out there that we underestimate and are not even aware of. So if Satan can revive a man from the dead (the beast) can he not let one of his demonic spirits possess an idol and give it life, what do you think the idol gods the pagans worshipped in the ancient days were, just a mere rock or something more? But at any rate, this image that has "life" of some sort is most definitely a force, an entity, to be reckoned with, for look at how this image is mentioned throughout Revelation...

*Re 14:9 And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship **the beast and his image**, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand,¹⁰ The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: ¹¹*

*And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship **the beast and his image**, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.*

*Re 15:2 And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, **and over his image**, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.*

*Re 16:2 And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and **upon them which worshipped his image**.*

*Re 19:20 And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that **worshipped his image**. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.*

*Re 20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, **neither his image**, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.*

So here we see the world's religious leader, the false prophet, says to the people of the earth to make an image of the beast, when it is finished he gives life to that image, and now he commands all to worship that image less they die. Here the false prophet reinstitutes idol worship on a mass scale. Here's idolatry at its worst. For now the world worships the dragon, the beast and now the image of the beast on threat of death. And does not this remind you of something similar that happened in the book of Daniel? Where the most powerful world leader created an image and demanded all to bow down and worship it less they die? Reference Daniel ch3.

Do you see the similarities in Daniel ch3? Nebuchadnezzar is a type of the antichrist, the golden image a type of the antichrist's image, the herald in v4 a type of the false prophet, Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom, a type of the world wide government, the revived Roman Empire, and the three Hebrew children a type of the Jewish remnant in the end times whom God stands by and protects from the ravings of a tyrant king and the wiles of a mad prophet.

Now in addition to all this, many believe that the setting up of this image to be worshipped coincides with the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel and Christ. For this image is most likely going to be placed in the temple of Jerusalem. So from my understanding of the chronological order here, we have the antichrist ascending to power among the nations of the world thru deception, as he does this the two witnesses preach against him and attempt to unveil his true identity, so the antichrist wars against them to no avail, he can't overcome them, everyone he sends against them dies (Rev 11:5), maybe the antichrist confronts the witnesses himself but he is stricken down with a fatal blow, most likely by one of the two witnesses. The antichrist is dead! But behold, the beast arises from the dead, infused with demonic power as the son of perdition and strikes down both the two witnesses *Re 11:7 And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.* He leaves their bodies in the streets for all to see and institutes a world wide celebration of his victory. And because of such the False Prophet who has spoken well of this man convinces the world to submit to him, speaking lies and blasphemies about his true identity, claiming him to be the Messiah raised from the dead, that in him hope will be had. And to commemorate the victory this man has had over death and the two so-called false prophets (the two witnesses), THE False Prophet orders the construction of an image of this great and wonderful man. When the image is finished, the tide turns, the antichrist reveals his true self, he breaks the peace treaty with Israel, marches his forces into Jerusalem, takes control of the temple and places this image of himself in the holy place to be worshipped. The antichrist stakes his claim as God, as Messiah and demands the world worship him and his master (the dragon) as well as the image of the beast which is now given life by the supernatural powers of the false prophet and will either itself kill or report to the authorities thru world wide surveillance those that refuse to worship it.

So we see that since Satan could not be worshipped in heaven due to him being cast out and barred from there, he now goes to the temple in Jerusalem and sets up an idol that points to him and

has the world worship him and his counterfeit Messiah, worship that is supported by his false prophet and the false church. And with such control, such authority and influence over the world, mankind will not have much of an option but to comply to the Satanic trinity's demands. And those that comply with the beast's wishes and worship him will receive a mark.

We have spent time talking about the supernatural powers of the False Prophet, the miracles he performed by the empowerment of Satan, signs and wonders by which he deceives and convinces mankind to worship the antichrist. And v14 states that the False Prophet done those miracles in the sight of the beast. I believe this references that the False Prophet can only do these things when he is in proximity to the Antichrist, who is empowered by Satan. He has to be near Satan to draw power from Satan, and since Satan is most likely sticking with his chosen man, and since he is an angel, he is not omnipresent, so that means he can not be in multiple places at the same time, so the false prophet must be close to his source of power, in sight of the beast, in order to tap into and use that power to perform signs and wonders. And we have seen that one of those wonders that he performs was giving life to an image, a statue, a manmade representation of the antichrist. The false prophet gave life to this image. And I mentioned the Greek word John used for the word "life" that the prophet gave this image in v15, the Greek word *pnuema* and that it meant spirit, that this image became an actual living, speaking, moving being of sorts. To add to this, the Latin meaning of *pnuema* (Latin is similar to the Greek language) means "breath", which is also an additional meaning of the Greek word. So what we see here is that the False Prophet gave life, gave breath, gave a spirit to this image. And have we not been pointing out the counterfeiting, the mimicking that Satan has been doing of God in this study? Well what does breathing life into a form made out of the materials of the earth sound like? Did not God breathe into the nostrils of man and give him life? *Ge 2:7 And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.* What an imitation! The False Prophet mimics God by breathing life into the image. But there is one difference here. When the False Prophet breathes life into the image, man was ordered to worship it on penalty of death, but when God breathed life into man He gave man a choice of whether or not to worship Him, God gave man free will, but the image of the antichrist takes away man's free will to choose by the threat of death. Satan may be a copy cat, but he is a poor imitator. But it is amazing how this image plays a major role in the end times religious world, the one world church, the apostate idolatrous church, for there is worship of three things, the worship of the dragon, Satan himself, of the antichrist, the beast out of the sea, and the idol worship of the image of the antichrist. And all those that bow down to this image, that chose to worship this living idol, this man, this devil, receive a mark in their hand or in their forehead.

V16 *And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads:*

Notice that worship of the beast does not discriminate, much like the love and mercy of God where whosoever can place their faith in Christ, here whosoever wishes to survive must receive a mark. The powerful, the weak, kings, diplomats, politicians, advisors, the leaders, the followers, the rich and famous, the religious, the atheist, the criminal, the soldier, young and old, the poor, the somebody, the nobody, free man, servant, slave, all who bow to worship the beast or his image will receive a mark, a brand of some sort, an image in their right hand or their forehead, for otherwise they will be dead.

And here again is Satan copying God, for did not God mark his chosen, the 144,000 that are currently preaching His Word in their forehead back in ch7? *Re 13:7 And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. 8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.* Satan just can't come

up with an original idea here. The only ones that do not bend the knee to the antichrist and receive his mark are any surviving true believers, those that have not yet been martyred, those of the Israel remnant that have fled and are under God's protection, and the 144,000. Only those that have believed the lie, that do not have their names written in the book of life, submit to the beast in worship and receive this mark. And I agree with John Phillips who writes that some will receive this mark because they are convinced that what the false prophet proclaims is true, that the antichrist is the Messiah or that he has all the answers to all the world's woes and can unite all mankind. Some may even believe this mark will protect them from harm, from all the natural disasters of God's judgment, much like the marks of the 144,000 protect them from the antichrist.

Then there will be those that accept the mark because they are careless, they don't care who this guy is, they just want to live their life, they want to survive, they want to be safe and feel secure, and if this guy can do it, fine. They will take the mark without thinking, without researching it, with carelessness.

And then there will be those that receive the mark not because they really want to but because they are craven, they are scared of the threats, of being on the wrong side, they don't want to die, they don't want to have to scavenge and steal and dig thru the trash to survive. They don't want to be tortured or tormented. They fear for themselves, their families, their livelihood and so they submit, maybe not willingly but they still receive the mark of the beast out of fear.

And for anyone who does not do this, that is worship the antichrist and receive his mark, will be executed. You say how can that be? *"Remember this is a revived Roman empire, and if we look back to the old Roman empire, did you know that at one time every citizen of the empire had to offer a pinch of incense on a pagan altar when the Caesar began being claimed and worshipped as a god, this was to be done as a token of one's loyalty or allegiance to the Caesar cult, that was all one had to do, just offer a pinch of what was basically salt to an idol on an altar. Simple, cheap, mundane salt. Yet Christians refused to do this and died by the thousands for their loyalty to Christ, for refusing to do what some may think is small and meaningless"* (John Phillips paraphrased). They gave up everything for something that seems so small, yet the antichrist is asking for far more than that, he wants worship, he wants total submission, he wants power over all, and the world gives it to him either because they are convinced he is the "one", or because they could care less about the whole situation and just want to get on with their lives or they are craven, they are scared of what will happen if they don't, they are scared to die like those who refuse this mark. And the False Prophet makes sure the beast keeps this worship and power, for now with this mark he has control over these people.

V17 *And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.*

Here the religious leader of the world has now branded mankind and with it he is going to bind mankind, make them a slave. For if one does not receive the mark of the beast, one can not buy or sell. Without the mark one can not buy food, clothing, shelter, can not pay for gas or electricity, can not buy any essentials to survive, can not pay one's taxes or debt therefore rendering all property forfeit, can not access any savings or credit or loans, can not have access to health care, can not give or receive from charity, can not make a living, can not receive a pay check, can not care for or raise a family, and I can keep going. This mark will dominate the world economy, from the billionaire to the pauper, nothing in the form of commerce or finances can be done without the mark. Most likely because this mark is tied to the person's finances, accounts, personal information and such, much like a microchip or implant could do. So how bad do you think it will be for those that refuse this mark and try to survive during this time? Many will die of starvation, others by execution, and others in ways we just don't want to contemplate.

But notice what v17 says about this mark, it seems to come in three distinct forms. *Re 13:17 And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had **the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.*** Here we see there is a mark, a name, and a number. Now whether these are all the same, or there are three separate variations of the mark, a logo, a word and a number, I do not know, and again I'm not going to speculate what form this mark will take, if its microchips, implants, a tattoo of some sort – thinking of the Jews in the German concentration camps, we don't know exactly what it is or what form it will take, but those who are around when this happens will easily recognize this mark, this name, this number, as the mark of the beast. They will easily recognize who is of the antichrist and who is not.

But I don't think its coincidence that we have the Satanic trinity, the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet, and then here we have a mark, a name, a number, and as we all know as v18 tells us this number is 666, three 6's.

V18 *Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.*

This mark is the number of the beast, the number of a man, the antichrist. And the thing about numbers in Scripture is that the higher the value of the number symbolizes a greater intensity of the meaning of that number, and since 666 is greater than 66 or just 6 that means that 666 represents a greater intensity of evil and sin, a greater magnitude of incompleteness and imperfection. For no matter how many 6's we string in a line, they never get to 7. Now in the Bible the number 6 is the number of man, as well as the number of sin, the number of falling short, the number of imperfection and incompleteness. For example, man was created on the 6th day, 6 days a week is the number of man's labor, Goliath a type of antichrist, was 6 cubits tall, wore 6 pieces of armor, his spear weighed 600 shekels. And speaking of the golden image of Nebuchadnezzar it was 60 cubits high, 6 cubits wide, and 6 instruments were played when the call to worship came. And so here in the beast, with his mark, his number, we have the epitome of imperfectness, the pinnacle of the falling short of man even when empowered by Satan, for his number is 666. A 6 for each of the satanic trinity, for they each fall far short of God's glory, they fall short of his power, they are imperfect in intellect and wisdom and authority. They have incomplete victory, for two are mere men, and one has already been defeated on the cross and also cast out of heaven. No matter how powerful they are they still do not compare to the perfectness, holiness, and power of God. For the number 7 is God's number, the number of perfection. 6 is Satan's number, man's number, and the number of a man – the antichrist, and none of them are up to snuff when compared to God.

And beyond that I'm not going to delve into what this 666 is, because again we don't know. Buckets of ink have been used in trying to decipher the meaning of this number, but other than it points to the antichrist, that it is a mark (icon or image), a name and a number that one must have to show allegiance to the beast in order to survive, I do not know its meaning beyond that. Yes it could be an implant, a microchip but it could also be something technology has not invented yet.

But there is one thing of interest here that perplexes me. Why does the False Prophet have authority over the mark and therefore power over the world's economy? Why doesn't the first beast have control of this? What religious man could have control over the empire's finances instead of the political leaders and governments having this control? I don't know if I really have an answer for that, but when I was thinking about this, I thought to myself what one religious figure has control over a large portion of wealth right now, and I couldn't help but think of the Vatican and the Pope, and then I ran upon a rather interesting quote...

Pope Francis Quote: *Growth in justice requires more than economic growth, while presupposing such growth: it requires decisions, programs, mechanisms and processes specifically geared to a better distribution of income, the creation of sources of employment and an integral promotion of the poor which goes beyond a simple welfare mentality.*

Here the Pope, and leader of one of the wealthiest places and religions on the planet, has spoken out seemingly against capitalism, and appears to be open to a more equal distribution of wealth to the world's population, a middle path of capitalism and socialism. And if such a religious leader can convince his followers that such a system is a good thing, it may not be that the false prophet is in charge of the economy but thru his influence of the people he can make them more accepting to a system that seems to be fair to all, treats all equally, grants certain rights such as healthcare to all, brings unity and economic corruption to an end, and all one has to do is become part of that system to make it work, and to do that all they must do is receive a mark that has all their information, their life's history in order to participate and connects them to the world wide system. And as a liberal religious leader if you tried to convince the uninformed about this and painted a pretty picture of it, you would have thousands signing up and standing in line to receive such a mark right now.

So if the Pope is going to begin inserting himself in more political, national and economic situations, can we not see that this is paving the way for the False Prophet to institute and possibly oversee the mark of the beast which controls the world's economy?

Chapter 21

REVELATION –CHAPTER 14

In Revelation ch13 we took a look at the Antichrist and the False Prophet, at their coming to power and aiding each other as they overtook the world and forced mankind to bow to their will. Now the world is in ruins and in complete chaos due to this, because man has turned away from God and unto Satan. So far in this time of tribulation we have seen the seven seals broken and God's restraint upon evil removed with devastating results. The seven trumpets have blown and the world was overtaken by the power of Satan and his minions, his power was unleashed and his diabolical plans are now in full swing for worldwide domination and damnation. The Father of Lies has fooled the human race who now worship at the feet of the false Messiah, praise is given to the beast, to the dragon and to the living idol, all led by the apostate church with the false prophet at its head. But now we come to ch14, which is the third parenthetical passage we come to. Remember, we are still in the time period between the sounding of the 7th trumpet and the pouring out of the first vial judgment. But here in this vision John is given a glimpse of several future events, either during the tribulation or at its ending. There are several snapshots given to us in this parenthetical chapter of what is to come, but one important element we should notice is, after the doom and gloom of ch13, ch14 shows us that God is going to change things, He will have His victory. So with that lets begin looking at the first snapshot, a glimpse of the future with the 144,000 standing in triumph.

V1 *And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.*

Here John says he looks and sees in his vision a Lamb, this figure is very familiar to John, he recognizes who this is instantly, for it is none other than the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus. This is the same Lamb of ch5 who was found worthy to take the book, the title deed of the earth, the one who opened the seals, the one who was slain and by whose blood redeemed many from every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, John here sees the Son of God, the Messiah, the Christ.

And where does John see him? He sees Jesus standing on the Mount Sion. Which is equivalent to Jerusalem, for Jerusalem the holy city was built on Mount Zion, on the Mountains of Moriah. Now we must take note that Zion can also refer to the heavenly Jerusalem as seen in Heb 12:22, so there are some different interpretations of these verses, the main difference being whether what John sees here is a heavenly vision or an earthly vision. But to keep the confusion down I'm going to give you my understanding of these verses and give you reasons why I believe what I believe, but if you disagree I won't argue with you on this as you might be right, but whatever way you interpret this vision it still glorifies God and His victory.

So here John sees Jesus, the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and I believe this snapshot that John sees is an earthly vision, a vision of the aftermath of the Great Tribulation and Armageddon, a time when the Lord Jesus has returned and has been victorious of Satan and his forces. For who is seen standing with the Lord Jesus? 144,000 Jews, the very same 144,000 Jews who were sealed back in ch7, sealed in their foreheads to protect them from all the plagues and divine judgments poured out upon the earth, from the powers of the beast, the false prophet and the dragon. They were not going to be touched during any of the tribulation period, for they were to preach the gospel to man so man

would have a last chance to make a choice of whether to receive or reject Christ. And that's one reason why I believe this vision is on earth, for if the 144,000 were to be protected during the tribulation, and preach during this time, wouldn't they yet be alive when Jesus returns, for nothing could kill them, they were invulnerable to the enemy's attacks, so I think they have survived, all 144,000 unscathed thru the tribulation.

And if they survived all the way to Armageddon when the Lord returns why would they be in heaven? unless for some unknown reason God has called them home or let them be defeated(which is possible), but this seems to contradict the point of them being sealed and protected in the first place. For in v1 we see they are still sealed with God's name on their forehead, they are still protected, still covered, so why would this protection be removed or be temporary?

Think about this, I think maybe the ministry of these 144,000 is only beginning, as they are now experienced preachers, immersed in the word of truth, they have seen the vilest assaults of the devil, they have lived thru the toughest of times, they have seen the results of sin and the wrath of God, they have seen many perish, so they will be able to tell those who are born during the Millennial Reign of the results of sin and the destructive power of Satan and how God saved those who would believe. And I think the last part of v4 supports this view it says of the 144,000, *These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.* These 144,000 are most likely the longest living believers upon the earth, for most all other believers have been martyred during this time, especially those who had believed in the earlier part of the tribulation. So these 144,000 are the firstfruits of a great harvest of believers upon the earth who survived the tribulation, these 144,000 are most likely the first ones in line, they made it thru it all. Sure there will be other believers who survive but they most likely came to faith after the 144,000, possibly even being converted by these Jewish preachers. That's why I think this is an earthly vision, the tribulation is over, Christ has returned, and he stands upon Mount Zion victorious, with these preachers who have survived the worst events this world has ever seen all because of God's seal upon them, and they are the firstfruits of a great harvest of souls. Another reason I think this is an earthly vision is in v2.

V2-3 *2 And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: 3 And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.*

Where does John hear a voice come from? "From heaven". If he is upon earth in his vision and he now hears such a sound from heaven, that makes me think heaven is above for John's attention is now directed towards the point this voice emanates from. But what is this voice from heaven? John says its as a voice of many waters and of great thunder. This voice is a roaring booming earth shaking voice. It is thousands of Niagara Falls all at once. This is most likely the voice of God whose words are not recorded for us here for His voice is described as such throughout the Bible. But this voice is then followed (notice the colon separating the voices) by the voice of a multitude of harpers singing and playing their harps before the throne of God, before the four beasts, before the 24 elders (who also have harps 5:8). Now the question is who are these harpers, who are those singing such a powerful new song?

Some believe they are the 144,000 themselves, but I don't think that's quite right, for v3 tells us the 144,000 learn this song, which means they understand/comprehend/identify with the meaning of this song like no other. They learn this new song that John hears. So who is singing this song to begin with that only the 144,000 can truly deeply understand and learn to sing? I think it is those who were martyred during the tribulation, those mentioned in ch6:9-11, those who had prayed to God how

long would it be until they were avenged? The very ones martyred during the tribulation who had most likely heard the preaching of the 144,000, especially if they were of Jewish descent, and had died horrible deaths, had suffered, and the 144,000 had been witness to it all. These Jewish preachers had seen their loved ones, their friends, their people, their brothers and sisters of faith die tormented and tortured deaths, their heart had went out to them, they had felt for them, had compassion upon them but could not save those martyred saints from their deaths. So if it is these martyred saints singing this new song around the throne of God with their own harps, it is the 144,000 who truly understand the meaning of their hymn, for no mere man will have suffered for their faith like those martyred saints yet the 144,000 saw it all for they were right there in the midst of it, possibly even right beside some of them when they left this world, but the 144,000 had remained untouched for they were redeemed, saved and sealed, from the earth, from its sin, its destruction, its demonic rulers, all by the blood of the Lamb who they now stand with upon Mount Zion in triumph. The martyred stand in victory around the throne of God and sing a new song, and the 144,000 stand on Mount Zion around the Lamb and empathize with that song, they understand the depths of its meaning, they learn it, they know it and I believe they then join their brothers and sisters of the tribulation in singing that new hymn of redemption only they could truly understand.

Then in the next two verses John tells us how the 144,000 obtained their victory and was allowed to stand on Mount Zion, in Jerusalem the holy city, with the Lamb. For just as God expects us to serve and live and grow and mature as followers of Christ, He expects the same of all His servants; He did not just hand the victory to these 144,000 Jews, they had responsibilities to fulfill. They had to live a pure life before men, for they wore the name of God upon their forehead. They had to truly live their faith for it was literally written on them (on their forehead), they were unmistakably identified with God and thus did not wish to bring one morsel of reproach upon Him. Their testimony had to be of supreme blamelessness, complete holiness, absolutely pure. So John gives us some characteristics or virtues of these 144,000 preachers, virtues they clung to in order to remain blameless, unblemished and uncontaminated by the corruption of the beast, to stand out from among the masses, so others could see they spoke the truth.

V4-5 *4 These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. 5 And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.*

First John says they are undefiled with women, meaning they have not committed the sins of fornication or adultery. It is not saying here that any association with women corrupts men, but that the temptation and the lure of fleshly desires can taint one's standing if acted on in an impure way. We can think of many examples where the lure of the opposite sex has led to one's downfall, Adam and Eve, David and Bathsheba, Samson and Delilah. But these men have resisted such temptation and have remained pure, unspotted from sexual sin. And that's what I believe John is getting across with his added statement that these 144,000 are virgins. They have had purity and holiness in all their relationships. Now this does not necessarily mean, like some believe, that these men are unmarried and chaste and have abstained from marriage. For marriage by God's dictate is pure, and intimacy between a husband and his wife is pure, *Heb 13:4 Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled:* That actually states that those involved in intimacy within a marriage are undefiled, just as these 144,000 are undefiled in their relationships. So it is possible some of these preachers are or were married, but all their relationships have been pure in the sight of God. They have lived separated lives, clean lives, faithful lives. The emphasis here is not on their moral sexual activity but on their relational purity. Just as we are to have a pure relation with our bridegroom, as Paul writes in *2Co 11:2 For I am jealous over you with godly*

jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.³ But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

The reason I say that its possible some of these preachers were married and had families is because the False Prophet and the Antichrist will be in charge of a worldwide religion, which I believe comes forth out of Catholicism, and what do the Catholics believe about priests and marriage? They are not allowed, they are to be celibate, no marriage. Yet in the Bible, the Jewish priests were allowed to marry and have children, some of the apostles were married (Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law), preachers and elders and deacons are allowed to have wives, and even Jesus the Bridegroom is coming to get his bride, the church. So I don't see the need of these 144,000 necessarily being virgins in a sexual sense, even though they very well could be, but again the emphasis is on their relationships with God and man which has been completely and utterly pure. They are an example of purity to be followed by those who are saved during the tribulation.

And they are an example to be followed because look who they follow after. *These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.* They lived a life dedicated to Christ. Their people had rejected Jesus, falsely accused Jesus, tortured Jesus, crucified Jesus, yet they had received and now followed Jesus, they have God's name written upon them, they served Christ, preached Christ and now they stand with Christ in victory on Mt Zion. God sealed them, Christ saved them, they lived their life for Him, experiencing the worst of holocausts this world has ever seen, they walked thru the deepest darkest valleys of the shadows of death, they walked into the teeth of the dragon, into the most dangerous situations imaginable, yet the Lord led them thru by His marvelous light unscathed all the way to victory. I even suspect these 144,000 lived a life more dedicated than most of those who live during the church age, possibly equaling or even excelling Paul's devotion to the Lord, who himself wrote in *1Co 11:1 Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.* This should challenge us Christians, for during the age of grace we too are sealed, sealed by the Spirit, we too are followers of Christ and are encouraged to walk as children of light, and we don't face half of the despair and devastation these Jewish preachers will face, or the unbridled unrestrained fury of the dragon. We should take courage to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, wherever he leads/guides/directs, for we too will stand in victory with the Lamb one day.

Next John says these 144,000 were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits to God and the Lamb. Now I've touched on this a little, but to complete my thought, we know in the Bible Israel kept a feast of firstfruits, every year the Jewish farmers would go and bring as an offering the first portion of the harvest and dedicate it to God. And that's what the 144,000 are, the first offerings of a great harvest, of an Israel rededicated to God. *Ro 11:26 And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:*

Then John says there was no guile, no lying found in their mouth. They spoke the truth. Their speech was pure. They speak the truth about sin and Satan, about the antichrist and the false prophet, about the world church, the world system, about judgment, God, hell, salvation and Christ. They do not have the luxury of time to beat around the bush, they are direct, honest and clear in their preaching and conduct.

And all these virtues of purity in their conduct and their relationship with Christ, in their calling, in their conversation and in their character makes them faultless, spotless, blameless before the throne of God, *for they are without fault before the throne of God.* So is it any wonder they stand with the Lamb in Jerusalem victorious over all those that opposed them, all those that railed against them, all those that cursed them and threatened them. They now stand with the King in the holy city utterly triumphant.

What a different picture given to us here than what we saw in ch13 where the antichrist had risen to power and the false prophet had deceived mankind to worship the false Messiah and image. In the last chapter it looked like Satan had won, all his pieces and pawns were in place, but here in ch14 we get a glimpse of the victory that those who stand firm and cling to the Lord will experience over Satan. For in this picture we see Christ has returned, has defeated his enemies, and now stands in the holy city of Jerusalem with the faithful 144,000 who have made it thru it all because of the special sealing of God upon their foreheads. And with that we now come to the next three snapshots that John sees, each introduced by an angelic messenger. And the first angel we see has a message.

V6-7 *6 And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, 7 Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.*

Here this angel is seen flying in the midst of heaven, in the sky or atmosphere of the earth, as it is preaching and proclaiming a message to the world. And what is that message? The everlasting gospel. This is the first instance in the Bible that an angel has ever preached the gospel, and it is eager to do so, for it flies in the midst of the heavens, in the skies above the earth, to excitedly give this message; it speeds around the world to give the good news to those who are about to face the worst of God's wrath upon this earth. The 144,000 have done their job, but they could only be in so many places at once, so here again we see the mercy of God in the proclaiming of the gospel, for now all those upon the earth are given one last chance, every nation and kindred and tongue and people are given the message of the everlasting gospel by this angel before the second coming of Christ, they are given an informed choice, one last choice, to choose the beast, the antichrist, the one who proclaims himself as god, or to choose the true and living God, Jehovah God, the Creator of all things. This is the last call to respond to the news of the gospel for the end is drawing near.

Notice that for two thousand years the world has had the church bringing it the gospel thru the great commission, then the rapture occurred removing the church and the 144,000 Jewish preachers are then sent out to preach the gospel, then the two witnesses appear in the streets of Jerusalem to stand against the beast and preach, and now we are down to one angel, yet the same message is preached throughout. So we can see time is running out for mankind, for it is not the day of judgment that is at hand, but the very hour of judgment that is come and the chance to respond to God's call is almost passed.

But notice John's choice of words here, he does not simply call what the angel preaches "the gospel", but he calls it the everlasting gospel in v6. Here we see a distinct and different aspect of the gospel than the portion of the gospel that is emphasized to us in the church age, yet the portion of the gospel that is proclaimed by this angel is still part of the whole gospel, part of the same gospel message that has been preached since the very beginning, and let me try to explain that. We all know that the word "gospel" means good news, well there are different aspects of that good news that applies to specific ages such as our age of grace or the time before Christ or even the time of the Great Tribulation, and notice I said aspects of one gospel, not different gospels, there is only one true gospel message but that one message does have several parts that make up the whole. Let me give you some examples...

During the church age we have the **gospel of the grace of God** so titled in *Ac 20:24* *But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify **the gospel of the grace of God**.* What Paul refers to here is the aspect of the gospel we are most familiar with, the good news (gospel) that Jesus Christ died on the cross for the sins of the

world and was resurrected from the dead for our justification, and that thru faith in him we are saved by being partakers of the grace of God, in which we shall not perish but have everlasting life. This aspect of the gospel, the gospel of grace, is referred to in Romans 1:1 as the “gospel of God” for it originates from His love, in II Cor 10:14 as the “gospel of Christ” because it comes forth from Jesus’ sacrifice, and we also see it referred to in multiple other verses which pertain to the events that surround Christ’s death, burial and resurrection. This aspect of the gospel is what we think of when we refer to saving grace, hence the title the gospel of the grace of God.

Now before Christ’s atoning death there was another aspect of the gospel that was focused on and preached from the very beginning, this is known as the **gospel of the kingdom**. This aspect of the gospel was preached in the past unto Abraham, as mentioned in *Ga 3:8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.*

Ro 4:3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

This gospel of the kingdom refers to the good news that God would set up a kingdom on the earth, in fulfillment to the Abrahamic and Davidic covenant; a kingdom in which the Son of God, David’s heir, would rule sitting as King upon its throne for 1000 years. Thus this kingdom gospel looks forward to the millennial reign of Christ. This was extremely good news to the Jews and those who followed Jehovah God, as it would be the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham. But the thing about this gospel is it is preached in two parts or two dispensations, the first part was preached in the past, beginning with the time of the patriarchs and possibly before that and then continued on up to and even includes the gospel that John the Baptist preached, the gospel which was also preached by the Lord Jesus and his disciples but ended with the Jewish rejection of Christ. This gospel of the kingdom is evidenced by the words “Repent for the kingdom is at hand!” the king is almost here, he is coming to rule and to reign! Israel was looking for that Messiah, but after they rejected Christ, this portion of the gospel was interrupted with the gospel of grace and the church age. But later on the second part of the preaching of this gospel of the kingdom reoccurs during the tribulation period, it is preached by the two witnesses and the 144,000, repent for the kingdom is at hand!

And then a third aspect of the gospel is what we see here in v6-7, the **everlasting gospel** that this angel preaches. This is the gospel that will be preached immediately preceding the end of the great tribulation, right before it is all over. For it’s the last chance that mankind has to enter into everlasting life, for this gospel speaks of judgment to come. The angel calls out for mankind to fear God, to worship God, to glorify God before its too late for the hour of judgment is near. The heavenly message here is to fear God, where the beast is saying fear me, worship me, glorify me, this angel proclaims the true gospel, the truth, that man should fear God, not this mere corrupted man. *Lk 12:5 But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.*
Pr 9:10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.

This angel proclaims that the Creator God is the one who is truly in control, so fear Him, reverence Him, accept Him, and then one can worship and glorify Him. In order to do what the angel says one will have to accept Christ as part of the triune God, as the Son of God, who gave himself for mankind. So fear God, reverence Christ, the judge, is the message. This is man’s last chance to receive Christ before the judgment of God falls, before they face His full wrath. So we see in just these three aspects of the gospel they still all focus upon the good news of Christ, Christ the King, Christ the Savior, Christ the judge. And the core challenge of each aspect and the gospel as a whole is belief. Believe the truth, believe God, believe the good news, believe the word, *Ac 16:31 ...Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,* So that’s the message of the first angel, the only good news this world will see from here on out.

We then see the second angelic messenger in v8, and this angel brings not a message, but an announcement.

V8 *And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.*

The announcement in this verse foreshadows the events of ch17 & 18, where we will study Babylon and its fall in depth. But needless to say this announcement refers to the future destruction of the one world system of the beast and the one world religion led by the false prophet, it speaks of the total collapse of the ecclesiastical and political realms. What the angel announces to the world is that what many have placed their faith in (the antichrist, the false prophet, the dragon, the living idol, the one world system) has failed, they are all fallen, defeated. Like so many empires and corrupt rulers of old, they are defeated and are going to fade and disappear into history. This great fall is connected with the 7th vial judgment that is soon to be poured out. But what John sees here is that God will have victory. This is why the first angel proclaimed that men should fear God and not the beast for God will stand and the beast and his power will fall. God will have the victory. God's judgment will reign down and destroy Babylon for it has corrupted the world, it has caused many to sin, and now they all will suffer the wrath of God for their spiritual (and physical) fornication, for their sin, for their idolatry, for their worshipping of a false god: the poor imitation, the false Christ. Babylon has mocked and spurned God, blasphemed, committed untold heresies, has caused man to sin and has tried to pollute and corrupt the name of Christ, but no more. Babylon will fall! Babylon is as good as fallen, in the eyes of God Babylon has already fallen, has already been destroyed, we are just waiting for the clock to catch up to God.

And then we come to the third angel of John's vision, and where the first angel had a message and the second had an announcement, this third angel has a warning to all upon the earth.

V9-11 *9 And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, 10 The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: 11 And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.*

This angel warns all the worshippers of the beast and the living idol, those who have received the mark of the beast, as well as any who may have not yet received it and are still deciding whether or not to do so. Where the antichrist has threatened mankind to worship him or be doomed, this angel warns that mankind should turn and worship God or be damned. For this angel warns those upon the earth that since they have rejected the cup of salvation offered by the Lord Jesus and have received the false Christ, they will now instead be given the cup of wrath, which refers to God's judgment. They will bear the full force of God's anger and hatred upon sin, idolatry and spiritual fornication brought about by Babylon, which will also face God's wrath as the 2nd angel proclaimed in v8. The third angel goes on to say that God's wrath will not be watered down or diluted, it will be without mixture, as it is poured out upon the world, God's anger will not be held back, mercy will not exist in the pouring out of the cup of wrath upon the earth. God's righteous indignation will rain down upon these worshippers of the beast and rejecters of God with full brutal force. We will see much of this judgment in the pouring out of the 7 vials in ch16.

Now V10 says that those who ignore this angel's warning will be tormented with fire and brimstone, much like Sodom and Gomorrah, when those cities were judged for their sin. Now I don't

think this is referring just to the excruciating torment and pain that will be suffered upon the earth, as I believe what God is saying here is that these beast worshippers & rejecters of Christ will suffer greatly during the tribulation, but that they will then die in their sin, their unbelief, their rejection of God, during such judgment, and then be cast into hell and later into the lake of fire where they will face fire and brimstone in the presence of or before the angels and the Lamb, the judge of all the earth. The reason I say that is given in v11. Here it says the smoke of their torment, the residue of the suffering of those who are engulfed by the wrath of God, will ascend up for ever and ever. This will be constant, continual smoke from the fiery undying torment these unforgiven sinners suffer, which will rise into the air forevermore. And we know there are only two places of eternal existence, heaven or hell, that's why I think we see more than just the suffering of the tribulation here. These people were given chance after chance to make the right choice, to choose God or choose the beast, mercy was bestowed but it was rejected, these people rejected the truth, rejected all the evidence, rejected the demonstrated power of God, rejected the miraculous preaching of so many, even rejected the preaching of an angelic being, and so God's patience has ran out, He has reached out to each of them with a loving hand yet they have snubbed his mercy and love, and so mankind must now face their sin head-on forever and ever. They will perish in the pressing out of the wine and the reaping of the harvest, and then lift up their eyes in hell and then be cast into the lake of fire after the great white throne judgment, where there is no rest day or night, no peace, no hope, only shame, guilt, and horrible pain and suffering, with an absolute absence of God which will mean their cries for help and mercy will fall on deaf ears. They have had their chance. So this is the warning to those who have chosen the beast, chosen to worship him, his image, and to receive his mark, a warning to those who have chosen to be visibly identified with the antichrist. The warning is damnation awaits.

But the marvelous thing is, this final warning here makes me think there is still hope for those who hear this angel, since they have heard the first angel preach the gospel of the kingdom, calling them to worship God, and the second has told them that who and what they have placed their faith in will fail and fall and now this third angel warns them of their eternal future, that gives me some hope that maybe, just maybe, some may change their minds and believe and be saved. That instead of reacting with anger and outrage their hard hearts will instead be melted and they will realize the folly of their ways and turn to God. Maybe that's possible or maybe they have gone too far beyond the point of no return. But I think if any do repent it will be very few, but I hope it is possible. And if so, all we can say is thank God for Him being a merciful God all the way to the point His mercy is exhausted.

Now in v12-13 this angel changes his message, he goes from a warning to exhortation, for he now speaks to those who have chosen God instead of the beast.

V12-13 *12 Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. 13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.*

The angel encourages these last tribulation saints to endure (the meaning of patience), they must endure pain and suffering for only a little while longer, they must keep the faith, keep the commandments, fight the good fight, for its almost over, keep keeping on, refuse the mark of the beast, do not bow to his image, even if one faces death, for when one of these saints are martyred they will immediately step into glory, while the worshippers of the beast, who may seem to be prospering at the moment, will have to endure torment forevermore when death takes them. The angel says the saints must endure the tribulation as they follow God's guidance and keep the faith, the must put up with the beast and his minions for a short while, before Babylon falls they must suffer temporarily, they may face the grave, may even be casualties of war in God's battle with the world, but they will

have glory to look forward to. These saints must take consolation and encouragement in the fact that there will come a time when all of mankind upon the earth will enter into their eternal reward: everlasting life for the saints, eternal hell for the beast worshippers. So endure for the moment, stick with God, stand with Christ, it will be worth it all.

Then in v13, a voice from heaven reinforces what this angel is trying to get across, a voice which speaks directly to John of what to write down about this. I believe it is God who speaks here to further encourage those who are attempting to endure in those last days and hours of the great tribulation. God says blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth, that die for Him, that die for their faith from this moment on. This will be Satan's last stand, and he will bring all his horrors to bear upon any believers he finds, he will hunt you down, you will suffer, he will kill you, but blessed are you that die in the Lord, that die for Him, for your faith in Him. For such believers will be blessed by God Himself for their stand and will be given an eternal rest from their labors. Where the worshippers of the beast will receive no rest day or night, these last tribulation saints will receive rest, meaning an eternal refreshing and rejuvenating. Their efforts here on earth will be over, but they will get to enter into the arms of Christ who they will then serve and labor for and with forevermore; but that service will not be burdensome or wearisome, but instead it will bring joy and accomplishment, fulfillment, such labor will not be like work or a great effort at all but instead will cause one to praise the Lord even more, for the believer has now entered into his eternal reward.

But until the final judgment when rewards are finally given, what earthly work these saints have done for God will continue to add to their reward, their works will follow them to heaven even after their death *that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them*. This is much like any saint of God who is alive today and yet may die tomorrow, as what that saint has done for God in this lifetime will continue to live on and work in people's lives and possibly bring others to Christ, even though that saint may be dead, his work lives on and so his rewards for those works will follow him into heaven. Ex. Think of preachers that have passed on that have written about their faith or have had their sermons or lessons recorded but are still played for others to hear, the work of that departed saint is still going on, and so they are still receiving rewards for their efforts. So what these tribulation saints do to endure til the end, they will be rewarded for, even after their martyrdom, for their stand will encourage others not to give in or give up.

Now in v14-20 we jump to another snapshot, a snapshot of judgment, a vision of the Lord Jesus acting as the reaper of the harvest of the earth (a reaping not of the saints/heavenly, but of the unsaved sinners/the worldly). We also see him as the trodder of the winepress, because the grapes of the vine of the earth (speaking not of Israel or of believers but of the wicked of the world) are ripe for judgment and ready to be trod underfoot by the Master. We read in the book of Colossians... *Col 1:16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. 19 For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;* Jesus has been given the authority to judge the world, for he is to have the preeminence, in him does all the power of God dwell. For Christ created the world, by him the world persists, and he now holds the title deed to the earth, the little book, so here he begins his rightful judgment of the earth as the reaper of the harvest and the trodder of the winepress, *2Ti 4:1 I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;* but please note this is not speaking of the judgment seat of Christ nor of the great white throne judgment, instead it is the judgment of the earth for sin, as judgment is poured out upon the earth during the final days/hours of the Great Tribulation.

V14-20 14 And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. 15 And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. 16 And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped. 17 And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. 18 And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. 19 And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. 20 And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

First I want you to notice that since we moved on from the snapshot of Jesus standing with the 144,000 in victory on Mt Zion at the beginning of the chapter we have been reading more and more about judgment, the first angel said the hour of judgment was at hand (v7), the second angel said judgment had fallen on Babylon (v8), and the third angel warned of eternal judgment upon the worshippers of the beast (v10-11) and now in this last portion of John's parenthetical vision, the final judgment upon earth has arrived. As in this vision we are given two scenarios of such judgment, both with Christ pictured as the judge of the earth.

First we are given a picture of the harvest of the earth and secondly we are given a picture of the vintage, the gathering in of the vine and grapes of the earth for the making of wine in the winepress, for now the worldly grapes are full and ready to be pressed or squished or trodden under foot to remove the juices. Now in the Old Testament the harvest and vintage times preceded the Feast of Tabernacles, which was a feast of joy and jubilation, and we see the same thing happening here. For the harvest of the wheat and the tares is almost over, the trodding out of the grapes in the winepress of the wrath of God is almost over, and then the Lord Jesus will return to set up his kingdom which will be a time of great rejoicing, but first the judgment pictured in this harvest and the gathering of the vine must come. So do not be confused here, the harvest spoken of here in ch14 is not speaking of believers, but of nonbelievers, those upon the earth to be judged, to go thru and experience the wrath of God upon the earth.

The first scenario of such judgment is the harvest given to us in v14-16. What John describes here seems to be connected to Jesus' parable in...

*Mt 13:24 Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: 25 But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. 26 But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. 27 So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? 28 He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? 29 But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. 30 **Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.**...*

*Mt 13:36 Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. 37 He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; 38 The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; 39 The enemy that sowed them is the devil; **the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.** 40 As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire: so shall it be in the end of this world. 41 The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; 42 And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. 43 Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

At first we see in that parable that the wheat and the tares grew together, but as time passes and the harvest time arrives, the difference between the two becomes very apparent, the type of seed and its fruit, for good or for bad, can be easily determined, which means the wheat and the tares can

now be separated with no trouble at all. The wheat (believers) is to be gathered into the Lord's barn but the tares (nonbelievers) are to be bundled together for the fire. And that's exactly what is about to happen upon the earth. For in this vision in Rev ch14 John sees the Son of Man, the Lord Jesus himself, sitting upon a cloud, surrounded by the glory and majesty of God, with a golden crown (signifying his authority and royalty – King of Kings) with a sharp sickle, a tool used for cutting/separating and gathering the harvest v14. Jesus was the Sower in Matthew 13 but now He is the reaper, not the grim reaper but the glorious reaper, the godly reaper, the grand reaper.

And we see that He is ready and prepared and waiting to do the Father's bidding. And permission is delivered by an angelic messenger from the temple of heaven and the Lord Jesus does not tarry but reaps the earth. Ref v15-16. The harvest of the earth, the harvest of the wicked commences, the worshippers of the beast are cut down, separated and gathered together to be later cast into the fire, in one quick motion it is all over. *Jer 51:33 For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; The daughter of Babylon is like a threshingfloor, it is time to thresh her: yet a little while, and the time of her harvest shall come.*

How does this happen? Well lets look at the second scenario for more explanation...

The second scenario is given in v17-20. v17 I believe describes again the Lord Jesus, the one with the sickle, ready to gather in the grapes of the vine of the earth, gathering them to be trodden underfoot. Now to be clear here we must understand the meaning of the vine used in these verses. To paraphrase Warren Wiersbe "*in Scripture we are given three different types of vines. **First**, Israel is God's vine, planted in the land to bear fruit for God's glory, but unfortunately the nation failed and had to be cut down (for a time). **Second**, Christ is the true vine and saved believers are branches in Him. And **thirdly**, the world system is also a vine, the vine of the earth which we see in these verses, which has ripened for judgment, again tying into v8 and v10 of this same chapter.*" So the vine mentioned here is the third type of vine, the world system.

Let me give you a few Old Testament Scriptures that seem to point to this time...

Joel 3:11 Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about: thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O LORD. 12 Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about. 13 Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great. 14 Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision.

Speaking of Jesus in his return... *Isa 63:1 Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. 2 Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? 3 I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment.*

Where the harvest in v14-16 depicted more of the separation of the false from the true (wheat from the tares), the vintage describes God's wrath and vengeance upon the false, we even get a glimpse of the final battle of Armageddon here, where Christ the judge tramples down the beast and his armies in the final conflict of this age in v20. For when Christ returns to the earth in victory, with one blow, with the sword of his mouth, he defeats the armies gathered against him and his followers. His enemies, the wicked of the earth, the grapes of the earth, are gathered in the valley of Megiddo for the final battle, which forms the great winepress of God's wrath, Christ the King of Kings and Lord of Lords crushes those grapes, he consumes them in victory at his triumphant return. *Re 19:11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness **he doth judge** and make war. 12 His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. 13 And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. 14 And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. 15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and **he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.** 16 And he bath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.*

These followers of the beast are truly the grapes of wrath, the grapes that suffer God's wrath. For in v20 we see they are trodden down outside the city, what city? the city we had a picture of at the

first part of the chapter, the holy city of Jerusalem, where Jesus will soon stand in victory with the 144,000. For in the lands surrounding Jerusalem, a city where world events have always revolved, is where the Lord will have absolute victory, and the world reign of Satan will end. And it will not be wine that is trod out from those vile and wicked grapes, but blood, blood of the enemies of Christ will be pressed out as they are trod underfoot and will stain his vesture. Christ shed his blood for the sinner, yet those here have rejected him and have received the false Christ, and so they pay with their own blood, and so great a slaughter will this be that the trail of blood will be long and deep, for 1600 furlongs or 200 miles it will flow at a depth up to a horses' bridal, a gory picture of utter defeat for the enemies of the Lord. *Re 19:17 And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; 18 That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. 19 And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. 20 And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. 21 And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.*

*Mt 25:31 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: 32 And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall **separate them** one from another, as a shepherd **divideth his sheep from the goats: 33 And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.** 34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: 36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. 37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? 38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? 39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? 40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. **41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:** 42 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: 43 I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. 44 Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? 45 Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. **46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.***

Chapter 22

REVELATION –CHAPTER 15

With the conclusion of the last chapter we finished up Revelation ch14, a parenthetical chapter, that foreshadowed coming events in the tribulation and spoke primarily of God's wrath or judgment upon the inhabitants of the earth. We first saw the Lord Jesus standing on Mt Zion with the 144,000 in victory in the first few verses of ch14, then we saw an angel proclaim the everlasting gospel to the world and stating that the hour of judgment was at hand, then a second angel spoke of judgment that had befallen Babylon, the world systems of the antichrist are fallen, and a third angel then declared a warning to those who had received the mark of the beast, that worldly and eternal judgment would be upon them. And finally we saw the Lord Jesus with a sharp sickle, ready for the harvest of the earth and the gathering of the vine and grapes of the earth which were to go into the winepress of the wrath of God, again speaking of divine judgment upon the inhabitants of the earth. And so with that parenthetical passage ended, with the idea of judgment in our minds, we are almost at the point of unleashing the last seven plagues, for with ch15 what was spoken of in ch14 now begins to come to pass at the hands of seven angels, for these angels bring forth and pour out upon earth God's judgment from seven vials or bowls. Also keep in mind all this takes place under the sounding of the 7th trumpet (7 seals, 7 trumpets, 7 vials). We can see that in the ending of ch11 for as the 7th trumpet is blown it seems to tie in quite nicely with ch15. **Read ch11:15-19, ch15, ch16:1, 17-18**

V1 *And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God.*

John sees the heavenly temple, and from here seven angels solemnly and without emotion come forth bearing the seven plagues of God's wrath which are to be unleashed upon the earth, the world is about to drink of the wine of the wrath of God which is poured out without mixture (14:10). That word "filled" in this verse means completed or accomplished, meaning that with these plagues, God's wrath upon the world and sin will be completed. And John says this sight is a great and marvelous sight, for the end is almost near, God's power and dominion and wrath upon sin are about to be globally demonstrated. The events to come are to be worldwide and awesomely devastating and awe inspiring. This is truly God's shock and awe campaign. But before such destruction begins, John sees and hears another sight that most likely thrills his heart.

V2 *And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.*

Now first of all, John has previously seen this sea of glass before the throne of God, back in *Re 4:6* *And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.* And if you remember this sea of glass reminds us of the sea of brass, the brazen sea, in Solomon's temple (I Chron 18:8) and the brazen laver in the court of the tabernacle. Those seas symbolized the Word of God, which is needed for cleansing {*Ro 10:17* *So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*} but in heaven we see this sea is crystallized, the Word of God is now no longer needed for cleansing because judgment is upon the world, so the Word is now represented here in a solidified state, forever fixed, in the eternal throne room of God, its purpose fulfilled but what it stands for to never be forgotten for Christ himself said his words shall not pass away. And it is here

upon that sea of glass that the martyred tribulation saints now stand, they stand on the word of God, on the sea of glass which John points out is mingled with fire, which speaks of the fiery trials these saints have endured and are now blessed (4:13). These are the saints that have withstood all the attacks and pressures and persecutions of the beast and remained faithful to the Lord during such trying times. They gained victory thru the word, the gospel, and the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ. They have victory over the beast (antichrist), and his image, his mark and number, and now John sees them standing in victory on the everlasting word in the throne room of heaven. These martyred saints stand in victory in the heavenly throne room, while the 144,000 stand in victory on Mt Zion with the Lamb. And like many of the saints in heaven these saints hold in their hands the harps of God, ready to produce a divine music, to sing praise. It seems like a lot of believers are going to have harps and sing praises to the Lord doesn't it?

V3 *And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.*

Here these triumphant tribulation saints sing a twofold song. They sing the song of Moses, a song of victory, and the song of the Lamb, a song of redemption. Now the song of Moses was sung by Israel by the Red Sea after their victory over the pursuing Egyptian army. Reference Exodus 15:1-19.

Like I said *the song of Moses was sung at the Red Sea, and the song of the Lamb these martyrs sing is sung at the sea of glass. The song of Moses was a song of victory over Egypt, the song of the Lamb is a song of victory over Babylon and the antichrist. The song of Moses told of how God brought His people out, the song of the Lamb tells how God brought His people in. The song of Moses was the first song in Scripture, the song of the Lamb is the last. Both are sung by a redeemed people {John Phillips}*. And what do these saints have to say about the one who saved them? “**Great and marvelous** are thy works”, the exact same words John used to describe this vision in v1. God is great, mighty, strong, all powerful, as well as marvelous, wonderful, lovely, divine, holy, righteous, and so are all the works of His hands. What God has done to allow man into the kingdom of heaven is great and marvelous, for only a God of infinite wisdom and love could devise such a plan to offer the most sacred and precious gift in all creation for something of no value, he offered the death of His Son for the lost sinner. God gave the best of the best for the most undeserving, most unworthy, least valuable thing. Its like giving the largest most precious diamond on the planet for a filthy dirty used handkerchief. But that is why God is proclaimed to be Lord God Almighty. For His work, His plan of salvation is great and marvelous! For as the saints sing, just and true are His ways, God judged sin, sin that His Son became so He would not have to judge us, for if we by faith apply the blood that was sacrificed on Calvary we can be saved. Sin had to be dealt with, it was dealt with in mercy toward us on the cross, but now what sin remains upon earth will be dealt with in wrath. So is there any wonder God, and more specifically Christ, is called the King of saints. For He is our king, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He is our Master, Ruler, Redeemer. And these tribulation saints recognize that with a song that echoes throughout the heavens. And this song is continued in v4...

V4 *Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.*

After what God has done for these saints and compared to what He is going to do to the world in just a few moments, is there any person who has been made aware of the truth who would not fear the Lord? To not only quake in fear of what He can do, {create, redeem, judge, damn} but who also glorify His name? Now those who believe and worship Him have a reverential fear of God and what He is capable of doing, yet they glorify His name at the same time because they do not have

to face the terribleness of God but instead are recipients of His marvelous mercy and grace. But for those who do not believe, a horrid fear is upon them for what God will have to do because of their unforgiven sin. They weep and wail and beg for mercy which is no longer available, their time is up, yet even in their horror, in their judgment, they will recognize the sovereignty and holiness of God and glorify Him for His justice. All will bow the knee, all will confess with the tongue, for God is the only one that is truly holy, truly right, truly good and righteous, *for thou only art holy.*

Ro 14:11 For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.

Php 2:10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; 11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

When final judgment falls, when God's wrath is made manifest, the nations of the world will recognize there is a God in heaven above, a God whose hatred for sin is only outdistanced by His love of mankind, they will see that God gave them the opportunity to be reconciled with Him thru the blood of His Son, the Lord Jesus, but they refused, and so now they must answer to God on their own, with no Intercessor, no Mediator, no Redeemer. But these martyred saints do not have to fear that, they have the victory, so they sing, they sing of redemption, of victory, of justice and judgment. They sing because the time the martyred saints cried for, How long oh Lord until thou judge (6:10) is now upon their enemies, vengeance will now be the Lord's.

Now when the martyred saint's song is over, John looks once more to the temple in heaven and its doors are opened and from out of it proceed the seven angels bearing the seven plagues of God's wrath.

V5-6 *5 And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened: 6 And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles.*

Here we see the angels coming forth from the presence of God. They are clothed in pure white linen which symbolizes the divine righteousness and holiness that is needed and demanded by sin, sin demands an answer, just as redemption from sin demanded a Savior, justice must now be done. But now the time of redemption is over, the time of wrath, of judgment is at hand, and these angels are the very servants who are appointed to carry such judgment out.

The angels also have about them golden girdles, signifying the majestic strength and power of God, His sovereignty over the earth and man, and His right to judge it, it is His, He created it, He paid for it, and Christ holds the title deed to it. So now He is going to cleanse it of its corruption, He will trod it under his feet in the winepress of His wrath.

The way these angels are dressed remind us of priestly garments, *Ex 28:4 And these are the garments which they shall make; a breastplate, and an ephod, and a robe, and a brodered coat, a mitre, and a girdle: and they shall make holy garments for Aaron thy brother, and his sons, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office.*⁵ *And they shall take gold, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen.*⁶ *And they shall make the ephod of gold, of blue, and of purple, of scarlet, and fine twined linen, with cunning work.* ⁷ *It shall have the two shoulderpieces thereof joined at the two edges thereof; and so it shall be joined together.*⁸ *And the curious girdle of the ephod, which is upon it, shall be of the same, according to the work thereof; even of gold, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen.* The angel's ministry is a holy ministry as they bear the plagues to earth so they are dressed for the occasion. Their dress also reminds us of the vision of Christ John saw earlier in this book, so we know these angels are acting in full compliance to the Lord, *Re 1:13 And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.* And so they proceed out of the temple, in no hurry, in order, focused on the task at hand. And now we see one of the four beasts that are around the throne of God approach these seven angels.

V7 *And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever.*

We saw these beasts back in Re 4:6 *And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind. 7 And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle.* Notice these 4 beasts are around the throne and the sea of glass that the martyrs are standing on singing. And one of these beasts, which one we do not know, brings to each of the seven angels seven golden vials, or large bowls, or large shallow cups. And it is from these vials that God's wrath, in the form of the last seven plagues, is to be poured from, one at a time, by each of these angels. And as soon as the beast hands the vials over, the temple the angels just exited from, is filled with the glory of God.

V8 *And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.*

Remember the glory of God that was on Mt Sinai, that dwelled in the holy of holies in the tabernacle, the pillar of fire by night and the pillar of cloud by day that guided Israel? The Shekinah glory? That is the same glory that now fills the temple of heaven. God's glory, God's power, something more magnificent and awesome than any being can stand, great and marvelous it is, for no man can enter into this awesome presence of sheer divine holy power until the seven angels have fulfilled their duties. God's wrath is now going forth, the angels are sent out, to pour out the wrath of God. The world that once rejected and crucified Christ, and has instead crowned the false Christ, is now going to suffer some of the very horrors that the Father poured out upon Jesus as he hung upon the cross. Re 16:1 *And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.*

Chapter 23

REVELATION –CHAPTER 16

In Revelation ch15 we saw seven angels come forth from the temple in heaven bearing the seven last plagues that are to be poured out upon the earth, the very plagues in which God's wrath will take shape. As the angels proceed, one of the four beasts around the throne gives them each a vial in order to store the plagues so they will be able to carry them to earth and unleash them where God directs. From these vials the earth will drink of the wine of the wrath of God as He treads the world's corruption under His feet. But as we looked upon these global events preparing to begin, we were also given a picture of the mercy and grace of God, as we saw those who had gotten the victory over the beast, the martyred saints, the blessed ones that died during the tribulation, and we see them standing before the throne of God, on the sea of glass, a symbol of God's everlasting word, and they sing a song of victory, the song of Moses, and a song of redemption, the song of the Lamb, as they stand firm upon the gospel of Christ. They glorify and honor God for what He has done for them, the plagues He has saved them from, they play their harps for Him, they worship Him, but as they end their songs of praise, everything goes quiet, for the seven angels now prepare to travel to the earth to carry out their duties, and then the temple of God is suddenly filled with the glory of God, His light, like a heavenly atomic bomb, God fills the temple with His presence and smoke issues forth, and no man is able to approach that temple until the plagues have finished wreaking havoc upon the earth. The God of Israel is going to be very present as the world suffers His wrath. And so we come to ch16...

V1 *And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.*

John hears a great voice coming from the temple, which he can not see in nor approach, but my guess is this voice is the voice of God, for it is His presence that fills the temple, it is His wrath and judgment that is issuing forth. And notice here, that where we previously studied the seven seals and the seven trumpets, those judgments went in chronological order, one after the other, but here with the vial judgments, the seven angels are commanded to go all at once (*Go your ways...*), therefore these plagues, God's wrath, are being poured out simultaneously or very close to it, which makes sense when you compare the 6th plague with the 3rd plague.

So if these plagues are virtually simultaneous, then that means there is extreme calamity and disaster all at once, the seven years of the Great Tribulation are almost over, the end is very near, so the world suffers its greatest tragedy ever, God's undiluted wrath. Something else we should take note of as we go thru these plagues is that many of these plagues are similar to those that rained down upon Egypt that helped deliver Israel from slavery, just as God is now about to deliver Israel once more by the use of plagues from the grasp of the beast. Also some of these plagues affect the same spheres of influence that some of the seven trumpet judgments affected, but these last plagues are of a much greater intensity and magnitude than the previous, and I'll try to point out the similarities to each as we go along. It all begins with the first angel.

V2 *And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image.*

With this first vial, noisome (meaning terribly destructive, evil and harmful) and grievous (meaning malignant) sores (meaning boils or ulcers) fall upon men that follow the beast, that worship the antichrist and his image and have received his mark & number. This does not affect anyone that has not done this, so any believers left upon the earth are safe or immune to this plague. And that makes me wonder if this plague is spread thru the mark of the beast (toxic) or thru some worship ritual that all these followers must participate in (virus, bacteria). Where believers refused the mark, these beast worshippers gladly received it, almost as if they signed their own death warrant for now they severely suffer for it. But however this plague is contracted it is horrible as it wracks the body with extreme pain, with blisters, and boils and seeping sores that do not heal. Apparently this plague does not disappear, the beast can not cure it, man's medical knowledge is useless to do anything to alleviate the pain and suffering, for when the 5th plague falls, when darkness engulfs the beast's empire, mankind blasphemes God because of such immense torment and pain from these continuous sores (v11).

These sores easily remind us of the 6th plague that fell upon Egypt, *Ex 9:8 And the LORD said unto Moses and unto Aaron, Take to you handfuls of ashes of the furnace, and let Moses sprinkle it toward the heaven in the sight of Pharaoh. 9 And it shall become small dust in all the land of Egypt, and shall be a boil breaking forth with blains upon man, and upon beast, throughout all the land of Egypt.10 And they took ashes of the furnace, and stood before Pharaoh; and Moses sprinkled it up toward heaven; and it became a boil breaking forth with blains upon man, and upon beast.11 And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils; for the boil was upon the magicians, and upon all the Egyptians. (THE RESULTS)12 And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had spoken unto Moses.* The Pharaoh is much like those upon the earth during the last days of the tribulation who will not be brought to repentance, but their heart will be further hardened to where they curse and blaspheme God. The plague upon Egypt affected man and beast, but this plague of the first vial affects only the followers of the antichrist. And something Preacher Honeycutt points out is that the cause of boils is commonly thought of as being caused by bad blood and reveals corruption in the physical system, so this judgment of grievous sores will reveal corruption not only in the body of these wicked men but will reveal corruption in their hearts which have been tainted and hardened by sin and Satan.

V3 *And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea.*

The 2nd plague is poured out upon the sea, much like the 2nd trumpet judgment affected the sea, *Re 8:8 And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood; 9 And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed.* But where the trumpet judgment affected only a third of the sea, this 2nd vial judgment affects the entire sea. And notice the sea here does not become actual blood, but it becomes *as the blood*, or like or similar to, *the blood of a dead man*. Now that begs the question, what is the blood of a dead man like? I guess it depends on how long he's been dead right, a few minutes or 1000 years? Well, since we don't have that information to clearly understand John's comparison here, we have to do some educated guessing. The waters of the sea, if they become like a dead man's blood, could mean they become thick, sludge like, almost like mud, and begin to harden and dry out, just as blood that is dead begins to coagulate. Think of a scab, that's dried dead blood. Such blood is also deprived of any oxygen content, and along with such thickness and the solidifying of the sea this could be why every living soul died in the sea. The term soul there is speaking of conscious life, so all the sea life dies. The stink and rot will be horrible. Even more disease will run rampant. This plague will effect global shipping and transportation (what's left of it), weather conditions, plant life, the atmosphere, and the world's major

food supply. The seas dry up, harden and solidify, becoming lifeless, almost mimicking the state of the heart of mankind towards God.

V4 *And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood.*

Now where the sea became like blood, with the 3rd plague, the rivers and fountains of water, the wells and water basins, all fresh water sources literally become actual blood, for if we believe Jesus can turn water into wine to drink, why can he not turn water into blood for man to drink? This is similar to the first plague upon Egypt. *Ex 7:17 Thus saith the LORD, In this thou shalt know that I am the LORD: behold, I will smite with the rod that is in mine hand upon the waters which are in the river, and they shall be turned to blood. 18 And the fish that is in the river shall die, and the river shall stink; and the Egyptians shall lothe to drink of the water of the river. 19 And the LORD spake unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and stretch out thine hand upon the waters of Egypt, upon their streams, upon their rivers, and upon their ponds, and upon all their pools of water, that they may become blood; and that there may be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood, and in vessels of stone. 20 And Moses and Aaron did so, as the LORD commanded; and he lifted up the rod, and smote the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh, and in the sight of his servants; and all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood. 21 And the fish that was in the river died; and the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink of the water of the river; and there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt.*

Where once these nonbelievers rejected the freely offered blood of Christ for the remission of their sins and everlasting life, where they refused the cup of communion with Christ, they will now have to drink actual blood just to survive, to keep their own life. A sickening thought. No water to drink, no water for vegetation, no water to cleanse their sores. The world will become a stinking nasty maddened mess, for most of the world's population is located near fresh water sources, many cities are built on such sites, so think of the panic and mass hysteria, and what man will do to one another as they are agitated by their sores, with the earth's living conditions degenerating, and now they are desperate just to survive and they MUST have fresh water to do so.

Now unlike the first two angels, this angel makes an announcement after pouring out his vial, saying that God is just in doing this for mankind is worthy of and deserves this judgment because they shed the blood of God's saints and prophets (and Christ's as well).

V5-6 *5 And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus. 6 For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy.*

These sinful corrupt wicked men shed innocent blood, the blood of God's people, of God's children, of God's servants, so since they are so bloodthirsty God gives them what they want, more than enough blood to quench their thirst. Vengeance truly is the Lord's isn't it? And speaking of vengeance, look at v7 where we hear another voice coming from the altar of God.

V7 *And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.*

I think this is most likely the voice of the saints under the altar that we saw in ch6, *Re 6:9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: 10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? 11 And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.* If this voice is from these saints, then their wish for vengeance is now being fulfilled, as well as vengeance for the saints who we previously saw singing upon the sea of glass. God is dealing justly with the world's sinfulness, for true and righteous are His ways.

V8 *And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire.*

Here the 4th plague is poured out upon the sun, much like what happened in *Re 8:12* *And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise.* But again, that only affected a third part, but this vial judgment affects the whole sun, the source of life and light upon the earth, and instead of being conducive to life, the sun begins to harm life, sunburn becomes the least of people's problems, for the sun begins to intensify so much that men are literally scorched with its fire and great heat. Remember the sea is dried up, the atmosphere most likely thinned from lack of all the gases that protect the earth from the sun's more harmful rays, so now those rays and radiation brutally bear down upon the surface of the earth and its inhabitants. So hot that flammable objects burst into flame, what moisture is left evaporates; the world becomes a dust bowl, a desert of ash and ruin. Animal life becomes increasingly rare; birds disappear, no longer flying thru the air, vegetation is browned and withered to the point of crumbling to dust, wild fires run rampant thru this dried husk of a wasteland the world has become, and thirst becomes unbearable. The prophet Malachi prophesied of this time...

Mal 4:1 *For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. 2 But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. 3 And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the LORD of hosts.*

In another of Moses' songs we read something that seems to prophesy of this time as well...

De 32:21 *They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation. 22 For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains. 23 I will heap mischiefs upon them; I will spend mine arrows upon them. 24 They shall be burnt with hunger, and devoured with burning heat, and with bitter destruction: I will also send the teeth of beasts upon them, with the poison of serpents of the dust. 25 The sword without, and terror within, shall destroy both the young man and the virgin, the suckling also with the man of gray hairs.*

Isa 24:6 *Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left.* And notice how men react to this.

V9 *And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory.*

They blasphemed all the more and repented not. Their hearts become as stone.

V10 *And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain,*

Notice here that the 5th plague is poured out very specifically, it falls upon the seat or throne of the beast, this judgment directly affects the antichrist, his central seat of power. The beast has been helpless to do anything against the other judgments and now God shows the world just how powerless the beast is compared to Jehovah God, for this darkness does not seem to affect the whole world but just the areas of the antichrist's influence and control. The beast's followers have loved darkness rather than light for their deeds are evil and so God gives them all the darkness they can stand. Now I do not believe this is just like the darkness of night, nor just darkness produced by all the smoke and ash from the fires and scorching and natural disasters, but this is more of a supernatural darkness that no light can penetrate. Lamps and fire and electrical lighting will fail to illuminate this divine darkness, this is darkness that almost has substance, much like the darkness that fell upon Egypt (9th plague). *Ex 10:21* *And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness which may be felt. 22 And Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven; and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days: 23 They saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days: but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.* This darkness will show the helplessness of man before God, the powerlessness of Satan and the beast before God, and combined with the sun's heat, give them a foretaste of their eternal hell to come, for even the

empowered sun's light cannot penetrate this darkness, yet the heat still radiates down and most likely drives men underground to seek shelter.

This event was prophesied of by Isaiah *Isa 60:2 For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.*

As well as the prophet Joel, *Joe 2:1 Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand; 2 A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations.* But despite such a display of power by God, notice how man reacts...

V10b-11 *10...and they gnawed their tongues for pain, 11 And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.*

Instead of trembling in fear, in recognition of an omnipotent God, man in his pain and suffering still does not cry out for mercy, but continues to curse and blaspheme God. They are in excruciating pain; they gnaw their tongues to shift the focus from the suffering of their aching sores (contracted from the first plague), much like what those in hell do, who are cast into outer darkness and fire and gnash their teeth, for here we have an actual hell on earth. These men raise a clenched fist toward heaven instead of falling to their knees. They shout blasphemies toward heaven and repent not of their deeds, of their sins, for as the Bible shows us, the judgment of God does not bring repentance, only the goodness of God does that (Rom 2:4), but these men have turned their back on God's goodness, its too late for them. Such a depraved society, with death staring them in the face, they still reject God.

Think of the magnitude of death and destruction just these 5 plagues have caused. Disease, physical punishment, the seas destroyed, isolation and hunger, waters to blood, thirst, scorching heat, burning torment, and thick darkness, everlasting blackness, the very picture of hell on earth. And we are not finished yet...

V12 *And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared.*

When the 6th trumpet blew we saw four fallen angels bound in the Euphrates River loosed, freed from their chains of darkness, who then led an army of demonic horsemen to go and slay a third of mankind. So the Euphrates River has been affected already by the hand of God as well as suffering thru the current judgments, for we have already had a plague upon the rivers and upon the sun. So now the Euphrates' waters are most likely dwindling by evaporation due to the strengthened sun, as well as being turned to blood, which has become thickened, dried and hardened under the immense heat. This hardened blood now remains to either be blown away as dust or to fill in the river basin causing the river to basically disappear, leveling it off, which makes sense as with the removal of the Euphrates River, this natural boundary, the king's of the east passage to Israel is made possible. Also as we see this 6th plague specifically poured out upon the river, the plague most likely affects the source of the Euphrates' waters, causing it to run dry, the water/blood supply exhausted, thus affecting the lands this river flows thru, and all those that live upon it and in it.

The prophet Isaiah may have prophesied of this plague *Isa 11:15 And the LORD shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams, and make men go over dryshod. 16 And there shall be an highway for the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt.* This 6th plague officially ends the existence of one of the world's oldest rivers and barriers in the Middle East (it existed in the Garden of Eden) and the way is now laid

open making the gathering of the world's armies for the last battle possible, the enemies of God may now freely march across the Euphrates to the area Napoleon called the world's most natural battlefield, the Valley of Megiddo. The kings of the east are now free to march in, invade, and converge upon Israel, merging with the forces of a revived Babylon. And here we see history somewhat repeating itself, for was not the Euphrates river "dried up" in a sense when the Medes and Persians invaded Babylon, during the reign of Belshazzar, who saw the handwriting on the wall in the book of Daniel, when the invaders diverted the waters of the river and marched under the great defensive walls thru that dry riverbed? Babylon fell then and Babylon is getting ready to fall now due to a dry Euphrates River bed.

Now who are these kings of the east spoken of here? I believe this refers to the nations of Asia. China will be one of the main components as well as many of the eastern cultures, such as Indonesia, maybe even India, Pakistan and Afghanistan, possibly some of the Muslim nations, even though Islam will most likely have fallen by the wayside at this time, any nation or country east of Israel could technically be included. But whoever these kings are, they come to fight, they come to wage war. Why? Why are they so thirsty for more bloodshed? We are given the reason why in the fourth parenthetical passage we come to in the book of Revelation, which begins with v13...

V13-14 *13 And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. 14 For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.*

Here we see a trinity of demonic spirits issue forth from the mouths of the Satanic trinity, the dragon (Satan), the beast (antichrist), and the false prophet. These are unclean spirits, powerful spirits, devilish spirits, with the ability to perform miracles and they are vomited forth from the devil himself. These spirits/demons are described to be like frogs. Whether John means they actually appear like frogs or have characteristics similar to frogs we are not sure. But if we just think about frogs for a moment, they are ugly little creatures, slimy, with bulgy eyes, and that eat lots of nasty little bugs and critters. Frogs are amphibians, creatures of two worlds, both of water and land; some are poisonous; some can alter their appearance and color; some burrow in the muck and mire; and many have swift powerful tongues. That kind of describes these unclean spirits for they are beings of two worlds (spiritual and physical), with poisonous powerful tongues speaking lies and deception which bring forth death and destruction, with promises of riches and power and victory, these cold blooded (uncaring) beings go forth working miracles (astonishing, corrupting, threatening, frightening) to deceive the kings of the nations to draw them to Israel, to come with their military might, to wage war against God and His chosen, they seduce and convince or even threaten mighty men to come to the final battle, the battle of Armageddon, for look at v16.

V16 *And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.*

Thru the seduction of these demonic unclean spirits, the military might of the world is drawn to a place called in the Hebrew tongue, Armageddon, which means Place of Troops or Mount of Slaughter. It is referred to in the Bible as the Valley of Megiddo, the Valley of Jezreel, or the Plains of Esdraelon. This area is some 14 miles wide and 20 miles long and in the present day is one of the most productive areas of Israel, being referred to as the breadbasket of Israel. In such a vast level area it would be easy to amass the armies of the world, the millions of men and hardware that will be gathered for that final battle that is commenced in Rev ch19. These armies and their kings and leaders gather to eradicate the Jews, God's chosen people, believers, God's spiritual children, to possibly settle their own differences between one another and to decide who is going to come out on top and rule

the world, but the main purpose they are drawn here by the unclean spirit's deceit is to fight against God himself, Satan still thinks he and his forces have a chance.

Joel seems to have prophesied of this time of gathering. . . *Joe 3:9 Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up: 10 Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong. 11 Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about: thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O LORD. 12 Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about. 13 Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great. 14 Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. 15 The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. 16 The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel.*

Zeph 3:8 Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the LORD, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy.

And possibly even Isaiah ch24 references this.

But during all this, during this final preparation, during all these plagues, God still calls out to those who have trusted in His Son, for He gives them one last bit of encouragement.

V15 *Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.*

The Lord is coming suddenly, unexpectedly, and he encourages the remaining faithful to watch and stay faithful, stay pure, hold fast, don't give in, don't give up, for his return is no longer imminent, but immediate. Judgment is almost over. The time is now, the wicked will be dealt with, Babylon will fall, Satan will be defeated. Cling to the Lord lest you be ashamed at his coming. And thus ends the fourth parenthetical passage.

And now we come to the last plague, the final vial judgment.

V17 *And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done.*

Notice that this plague is poured out into the air, the realm of Satan, for he is the prince and power of the air, God goes head to head with his rebellious angel, pouring out wrath on the devil's area of dominion. As this is done John hears a voice come forth from the heavenly temple that is filled with smoke from the presence of God's glory, a voice coming directly from the heavenly throne of God, a voice that echoes the words that Jesus Christ spoke from the cross, "It is finished", but here we hear God's great voice cry out "It is done", God's judgment upon the earth ends with this last vial and takes us to the moment right before 19:11 where Jesus and the saints return. Between this verse and ch19:11 we have a more detailed view of what happens to Babylon, the empire of the antichrist, during these vial judgments, and we see how it falls, for Satan's entire realm is going to be judged: his religious system is judged in ch17, his political and economic system in ch18, and his military power in ch19. After those words of "It is done" are spoken and finish echoing throughout heaven and creation, they are followed by a spectacular display emanating from the heavenly throne.

V18 *And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.*

Following this great demonstration of power, of voices, thunders and lightnings (ref 7:5 & 11:19), the earth now suffers the greatest earthquake it has ever experienced, no other quake compares to this, the earth has never experienced a quake of this magnitude since before the time man was created in the Garden of Eden. This is a mighty and great earthquake that shakes the earth to its very

core. Every tectonic plate breaks loose, massive volcanic activity is triggered on a global scale. Every volcano, super volcano and even new ones will be forced to erupt as the pressures within the earth are shaken and squeezed. It's as if God takes the earth into his hand and shakes it like a snow-globe. And look at the results of such a quake.

V19 *And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.*

Babylon, the rebuilt city, the rebuilt empire {reference the notes on Revelation ch18 for further explanation on the rebuilt Babylon}, Satan's stronghold upon the earth, is split and divided into three parts. The satanic trinity shattered. Now some think this phrase "great city" refers to Jerusalem due to Rev 11:8, but as we are dealing with wrath being poured out upon Satan's focal power, I believe this is in reference to the rebuilt city of Babylon, the center of false religion, the seat of the beast, as we read in *Re 14:8 And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.* Also in *Re 17:18 And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.* And then look at how many times Babylon is referred to as the great city in *Rev 18:16-21. Re 18:16 And saying, Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls! 17 For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off, 18 And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city! 19 And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate. 20 Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her. 21 And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.*

Babylon truly suffers the fierceness of the wrath of God, she drinks deeply of the cup of His wrath. But not only is the center of the antichrist's power shook to its very foundations and beyond, all the cities of the nations fall. No building is left standing, nothing endures this quake. Man's greatest achievements of civilization fall into ruin.

V20 *And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.*

The islands upon the earth disappear, not into the sea, not by the power of tsunamis, as the seas have been turned into something similar to the blood of a dead man. But instead the islands are shattered and torn asunder, the mountains of the sea, for that's what islands truly are, vanish. Sadly the Philippines will be no more. But they are not alone, Japan, New Zealand, Indonesia, Hawaii, great Britain, Iceland, Greenland, all the thousands of islands upon the earth are erased. But not only are the low lands affected, but the highlands as well for all the mountain ranges fall, such an upheaval in the earth's crust causes the Rockies, the Himalayas, the Andes, even the Appalachians to crumble into ruin, the earth returns to the state it was in during creation, without form or void. A barren, smoking, fiery, scorched, wasteland, a ruinous heap. Truly a picture of hell.

V21 *21 And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.*

And then from the sky great hail stones begin to fall, hail stones that weigh anywhere from 100 to 120 pounds each. Hail of rock, of earth, of fire and brimstone, and even ice (if any is left) as the Arctic and Antarctic are broken and shattered and flung into the atmosphere from such a great quake and volcanic explosions. This hail is far greater and more destructive than the plague that rained down upon Egypt, but we do get a sense of its destructive capabilities when we compare this world-ending hail to the normal hail of Egypt that God sent. *Ex 9:22 And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch forth thine hand toward heaven, that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt, upon man, and upon beast, and upon every herb of the field, throughout the land of Egypt.*

23 And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven: and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground; and the LORD rained hail upon the land of Egypt. 24 So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation. 25 And the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt all that was in the field, both man and beast; and the hail smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree of the field. 26 Only in the land of Gosben, where the children of Israel were, was there no hail.

These stones rain down all over the earth, upon all those that curse and blaspheme God. God takes judgment upon these earthly blasphemers into His own hands, much like he told Israel to do in *Le 24:16 And he that blasphemeth the name of the LORD, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him: as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the LORD, shall be put to death.* These blasphemers of God in the end times are stoned by God himself with great hailstones. But just like the Pharaoh's heart was hardened by the plagues upon Egypt, men's hearts are also hardened at the last of the tribulation, and they blaspheme God all the more.

Chapter 24

REVELATION –CHAPTER 17

We have concluded Rev ch16 and the 7 vial judgments, where much devastation and death was witnessed, and the way prepared for the gathering of the battle of Armageddon. But with Rev ch17 we take a step back and see the effects of the tribulation and these judgments upon the apostate church, the one world religion, here we see the fall of the revived Babylonian religious system. And for us to have a good understanding of what is transpiring here, we are going to have to have an understanding of the history of this revived Babylonian religion. For this false faith was not brought about by the Antichrist or the False Prophet even though it is of satanic origin, nor was it began with the founding of the Catholic Church, as it dates much, much farther back in time than that, where it had its beginnings before the days of Moses and even Abraham, and yet this pagan belief system has existed in some form or another, to this very day and will soon morph into the system that is revealed here in the book of Revelation. And I want to attempt to show you how this comes about and to do that we have to look at the origins of these Babylonian beliefs. This may be a little in depth; some of the information is biblical, other parts are historical, but it helps us put the picture together of how the apostate church comes about in the last days. I also believe that what we are going to discuss, in some way, shape or form, is what the angel showed the Apostle John, for before the angel explained what John has seen, John *wondered with great admiration* (v6) at what the angel shows him, not that John approves of what he sees, but he wonders, is awed, looks on with fearful bewilderment and confusion, at how all this has come about, and how a false faith has become so polluted and corrupted and has changed into something so vast and dangerous yet is ignorantly received.

So with that let's look at what the angel showed the Apostle John. *Re 17:1 And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters: 2 With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. 3 So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. 4 And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: 5 And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. 6 And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.*

One of the angels that just poured out one of the seven plagues upon the earth now approaches John and bids him come hither, all so John can get a front row seat of the judgment upon the great whore that sitteth upon many waters.

V1 *And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters:*

The first two questions that come to mind are who is this great whore? and what are these many waters? Well, later in the chapter during the angel's explanation of what John has seen, we are given the answers to these questions. First we are given the meaning of these waters in *Re 17:15 And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and*

tongues. The waters are the inhabitants of the earth, mankind. That's simple enough, it's the men of the earth that are deceived and follow her and the beast, for did not the antichrist come forth from the sea, from the multitudes of humanity as well? *Re 13:1 And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea.*

But who is this woman that the angel calls the great whore?

V2 *With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.*

Who is it that the kings of the earth and the inhabitants of the earth have committed spiritual fornication with? Men that might have professed belief in God yet were pulled into this false worship and deceived to follow this faith? Some may have even been coerced or forced to believe the lies of this great whore. For they have drunk of the wine from the cup she holds and have become intoxicated and influenced and blinded by the power and seduction of this great whore. Here we are told this whore has influenced global events, has nations tied around her little finger, has duped millions to give allegiance to her all to their own detriment. This woman is alluring and attractive to the worldly, she has a pull, a spell upon her to lure many to their doom, she is wise and ambitious in her craving and search for power, for that is her main drive, she wants more and more power, and she is so wicked, so deceptive, she will do anything to get that power, even sell herself to the highest bidder, let herself be used while she uses others all to achieve her personal goals, all for her own personal gain. This woman, this great whore, is given a name, and bears it upon her forehead, **V5** *And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.* Her name is Babylon, do not confuse this with the city of old, or the rebuilt city in the tribulation, this is a system, a religious, ecclesiastical system, that has caused many to commit spiritual adultery, fornication, against God and has even brought forth other false daughters of idolatry due to that spiritual fornication.

V3 *So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.*

So as the angel carries John away in the spirit, John sees this woman sitting upon a scarlet colored beast that has seven heads and ten horns and is full of names of blasphemy. Now we know who this scarlet beast represents, it is the antichrist and the antichrist's system of power, his empire. Remember the description we are given of the beast in *Re 13:1 And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.* That imagery has a double meaning, it not only speaks of a man but also that man's system of rule. Here we see the beast is scarlet, the color of blood, for even though the beast may come in peace, he will murder and martyr thousands to achieve his own purposes. But here John sees the woman, the great whore that symbolizes the one world religious system, sitting on, being supported by the beast, the antichrist's revived Roman Empire. The religious system and the antichrist and his political power will be allies for a time, using each other to reach their goals. The ecclesiastical system wanting sway and power over the multitudes to influence them and gain wealth from their offerings, and the antichrist's system wanting political and military and economic power to dominate and dictate the world. They are allied together, the woman rides the beast to get where she wants to go, seemingly to have subdued or dominated the beast, having bent it to her will, she rides and guides the beast to her goals. All the while the beast is using the woman to gain power over the earth, over kings, nations, and the multitudes, using religion to put the world at ease as he tries to overtake it. They both use each other for their own means. This is another counterfeit attempt by Satan, for just as Christ has his bride the church, the antichrist has his bride the apostate church, the great whore, these two are united for a while before

they turn on each other (v16-17). For I do not think the woman realizes how deadly the beast that she rides is, so with this imagery we have the revived Babylonian religious system allied with the antichrist's political/governmental system.

Now when we studied the seven churches, did we not come to a point that Christ gave warnings to a few churches that had began to mix with and join governmental powers, not keeping a separation of church and state in a biblical sense? And did he not also warn of false doctrines and traditions brought into the church, such as the separation of the priests from the laity and the development of a hierarchy of power and the introduction of pagan practices into the church? And as we studied that did we not see the Catholic Church birthed out of the church from such compromise and hunger for power? Well that was only a small part of the larger picture of the lengthy evolution of the Babylonian religious system, the one world church. So lets put on the brakes for a moment and take some time to look at the origin of such a system and follow it thru history to the point it becomes what John sees here in the Great Tribulation. I'll be taking a lot of this information from H.A. Ironside's commentary as he gave the most historical detail, but I will be adding in information from other sources.

Now the origin of this woman, the great whore, the Babylonian religious system, dates back to Nimrod who founded Babylon, or **Bab-El**, which means the "gate of God". We are introduced to Nimrod in *Ge 10:8 And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth.*⁹ *He was a mighty hunter before the LORD: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD.*¹⁰ *And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel... or Babylon.* Now you will of course remember the story of the tower of Babel, it was here that Nimrod, as the world's first empire builder and founder of great cities, along with others attempted to unify men and build a tower to heaven. Nimrod wanted to gather a multitude around him, have power over them, in direct disobedience to God's command for men to go forth and multiply, to spread out upon the earth. Nimrod convinced his followers to instead stay together and build a tower, *Ge 11:4 And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.* This tower was to be used for false religion, false pagan beliefs, but as we know God put a stop to this by confusing the languages, and the meaning of Babel is changed to "confusion" and is forever remembered as the Tower of Babel. But this did not stop Nimrod for we read in *1Ch 1:10 And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be mighty upon the earth.*

Nimrod was the son of Cush who was the son of Ham, the son of Noah, Ham being the son that had seen his father's shame when Noah was drunk which brought a curse from Noah upon Ham's son Canaan (Noah could not curse Ham for God had already blessed Shem, Ham and Japheth). So we see that the worldliness of Ham, his weakness to give in to sin, and how it is transferred to his descendents. Ham sinned, the offspring of Canaan sinned, and so too did Nimrod sin. The apple doesn't fall far from the tree so to speak.

Now history apparently tells us that the wife of Nimrod was Semiramis the First, who is believed to have founded the Babylonian mysteries (the religion and its practices) and who was the first high priestess of such an idolatrous religion, but what did this religion consist of? Well, Semiramis knew enough of the promise of Jehovah God that a seed of a woman would be the instrument thru whom God would bring a blessing to the world (Gen 3:15). Well when Semiramis gave birth to a son, some 42 years after Nimrod's death, a son she claimed was miraculously conceived, she proclaimed he was that promised Messiah and called the boy Tammuz. The people of Babylon believed her. Some even believed that Tammuz was a reincarnation of Nimrod. Thus was introduced the mystery of the mother and child, as both mother and child, Semiramis and Tammuz, began to be worshipped, she was even called the Queen of Heaven (Jer 7:18), and he was considered to be the life giving child. Here is Satan already at work trying to bring doubt upon the true coming Messiah.

And so from this center of power in Babylon this mystery religion began to spread over time in various forms to the surrounding nations, it became the religion of Phoenicia who carried it throughout the whole world. Everywhere the symbols of this religion were the same, the image of the queen of heaven and the babe in her arms, the cultish belief of the mother and child. Although the names differed from language to language the rituals were very similar. Semiramis and Tammuz became Ashtoreth and Tammuz, who became Isis and Horus in Egypt, Aphrodite and Eros in Greece, Venus and Cupid in Italy. The mother was worshipped as Diana in Ephesus, and the worship of Baal, the sun god, is identified with Tammuz, which was the Canaanitish form of this Babylonian religion. It was this faith in Tammuz that Ezekiel dealt with in the days of Israel's captivity in Babylon. And even later the names would be changed to the Madonna and Jesus. In 1000 years Babylonianism became the world religion, a religion that rejected God and His promised Son, and in their place received and worshipped a wicked whore of a woman and her pagan offspring. Mere sinners who craved such power and worship.

Incorporated into this religion was all sorts of ungodly practices, which contained hidden meanings to the inner circles, the rites and rituals of this worship were secret, only the initiated were permitted to know its mysteries and true meanings, you had to be in the upper ranks for such privileges. Yet these rituals were practiced by all the followers who remained ignorant to the truth behind such worship. These rituals included disgusting and immoral practices, idolatrous, sexual, pagan and wicked acts and very false teachings which included the doctrine of purification after death in purgatory, salvation by sacraments, sprinkling of holy water, offering of round cakes to the queen of heaven, dedication of virgins to the gods which was basically sanctified prostitution, and get this, a period of 40 days of weeping and fasting for Tammuz which was to take place before the festival of Istar (another name for the mother or queen of heaven and translated into English is Easter). Weeping and fasting was commanded during this time for as the tale goes, the mother said she had received her son back from the dead, Tammuz had been slain by a boar in the woods (some god) and afterwards brought back to life. And so to celebrate this so-called resurrection of Tammuz, an egg was given to him, which became a sacred symbol of this religion, for the egg symbolized his return to life, and the exchanging of eggs among believers at the feast of Istar became part of the celebration (and I would assume they painted them in bright colors). From this made-up myth originated what is now observed as Easter and Lent. The Easter rabbit is even an adaption of the pagan custom of regarding the rabbit as an emblem of life because they reproduce so quickly. Along with this, the evergreen tree was Tammuz's chosen symbol and was set up in honor of his birth at the winter solstice, when a boar's head was eaten in memory of his life and death, along with this a yule-log was burned over which other rituals took place (what holiday "holy-day" do we put up an evergreen tree?). Also the sign of the cross was sacred to Tammuz, which symbolized his life giving ability for it was the first letter of his name. This is depicted upon many ancient altars and temples. This gives a whole other meaning to Easter and Christmas symbols doesn't it? And shows just how far Satan will go to counterfeit and bring doubt upon the true resurrected Messiah.

This false religion in all its many forms was alive and well during the days of Christ, and with the giving of the Great Commission the early believers were confronted with these false beliefs everywhere they went. Even though the city of Babylon had faded away into history, her mysterious religion lived on, centuries later, continuing to contaminate the human race. And let me quote H. A. Ironside "When the city and the temples were destroyed (by the Mede and Persian invasion), the high priest fled with a company of initiates and their sacred vessels and images to Pergamos {so is it any wonder Jesus said to the church of Pergamos... *Re 2:12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;13 I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is*}, where the

symbol of the serpent was set up as the emblem of the hidden wisdom. From there, they afterward crossed the sea and emigrated to Italy, where they settled in the Etruscan plain. There, the ancient cult was propagated under the name of the Etruscan Mysteries, **and eventually Rome became the headquarters of Babylonianism**. The chief priests wore miters shaped like the head of a fish, in honor of Dagon, the fish-god, the lord of life – another form of the Tammuz mystery, as developed among Israel's old enemies, the Philistines. When the chief priest was established in Rome, he took **the title Pontifex Maximus**, which was imprinted on his miter. When Julius Caesar (who, like all young Romans of good family, was an initiate) had become the head of the State, he was elected Pontifex Maximus, and this title was held henceforth by all of the Roman emperors down to Constantine the Great, who was, at one and the same time, head of the church and high priest of the heathen! {the Babylon mysteries were transferred into the church, pagan temples became Christian churches, pagan customs became Christian customs, The virgin Mary became the Queen of Heaven, Semerimus and Tammuz became the Madonna and child}. The title was afterward conferred upon the bishops of Rome and is today borne by the pope, who is thus declared to be, not the successor of the fisherman-apostle Peter, but the direct successor of the high priest of the Babylonian mysteries, and the servant of the fish-god Dagon, for whom he wears, like his idolatrous predecessors, the fisherman's ring."

In the early centuries of the Roman Church Babylonianism was so wide spread and had influenced so many that much of its practices and teachings had been largely absorbed by the "church", Biblical doctrine had been replaced with sacraments and heathen philosophies replaced biblical instruction. Later we know the church became the state, church and state merged, and the Roman Catholic Empire was born. So we easily see the link between the ancient Babylon religion and the Roman Catholic Church of today. And it was all this, as he looked upon what the angel showed him of this great Babylonian whore that caused John to step back in wonder and awe, aghast at how far man had fell into Satan's trap of deception. And if we are not convinced by all that, we are then given two other verses to describe the great whore of religious fornication that will come forth from the Catholic Church.

V4 *And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication:*

Purple and scarlet, symbolizing royalty and blood, power and murder. That is how the Roman church came into and stayed in power. And these are the very colors that the pope and the cardinals wear. Gold, precious stones, and pearls. The pope also wears a vest covered with these. This is also symbolic of the Catholic Church as a whole: its wealth is estimated to be well into the 100's of billions of dollars. The Vatican as we have discussed before is as wealthy as some nations and wields as much power and influence. And in the woman's hand is a golden cup full of spiritual poison, corruption, idolatry, lies and deception which she causes the world to deeply drink, think of the masses that have been deluded by this false religion.

V6 *And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.*

John sees this woman drunken with blood, bloodthirsty. The Roman church over the centuries has murdered and martyred more Christians in the name of Christ than any other faith. It has tortured and killed and waged war. It has hunted down those who would oppose it. Think of the inquisitions, the many wars that the church has had a hand in helping begin. It is estimated that the Catholic Church has killed over 50 million people.

Is there any wonder that John stood totally amazed. What had started off with truth before it had veered off course and had become so perverted and corrupt John couldn't believe what he saw,

for who could dream that the little churches that John knew, which were poor, lowly, persecuted and outcast, would one day become rich, merciless and cruel, and filled with the blood of martyrs of his Lord.

When John sees all this, he does not grasp all the visual meanings, so thankfully for us, the angel takes the time to explain what John has seen, and with that let's pick up where we left off...

V7 *And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.*

The angel asks John why he marvels so, why do you wonder, "I will explain and solve the mystery of the vision of the Babylonian whore and what is to come, I will tell you who the woman and the scarlet beast she rides are", and the angel begins by explaining the beast...

V8 *The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.*

This beast that the woman rides to power over the masses is none other than the antichrist and his empire. Now when we studied ch13 and saw the beast coming out of the sea, we referenced ch17 to help us understand ch13, and back in that chapter we spoke of how the antichrist would be given a fatal wound, he would die, but then he would be raised from the dead, a miracle performed by the power of the satanic trinity. Satan would put truth to the lie that began with Semirimis and her son Tammuz, he would resurrect a false messiah from the grave. *Re 13:3 And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.* Also speaking of the false prophet in that same chapter we read in *Re 13:12 And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.* This is how the beast as shown here in v8 **was** (he was alive as a man), and **is not** (he dies), and then is raised from the dead, he **shall ascend** out of the bottomless pit and go into perdition. Where the antichrist had first come in peace, as a great orator and peace maker, after his death and resurrection he is then fully possessed by the power of Satan, he comes from the abyss and seeks all out war. He has a total change of character, and we have evidence of this when we read of the two witnesses and the antichrist in *Re 11:7 And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.* A mere man does not come forth from the abyss, the bottomless pit, but we know from our previous studies, that very vile and powerful demonic spirits do, and so what this verse refers to is even though the antichrist dies, his soul and something else entirely is brought back from the pit, his soul ascends, rises, out of hell and most likely is demonically possessed, possibly by Satan himself.

And this is when antichrist will demand to be worshipped, when he kills the two witnesses and commits the abomination of desolation in the temple where he declares himself as god. Following all this show of strength and power those that dwell upon the earth, the unsaved and unbelievers of the world, those who do not have their name written in the book of life, will bow before him and worship the resurrected beast that was, and is not and yet is for he shall claim to be the risen messiah, how deluded mankind will be (this claim will be reinforced by the false prophet and his religious system, the whore of Babylon).

V9 *And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.*

Here the angel clearly explains the symbolism of the 7 heads of the scarlet colored beast as speaking specifically of 7 mountains where the woman's center of power is located. And historically the city on 7 hills or 7 mountains has always referred to Rome. This city will be the headquarters of the

Babylonian religion of the great whore, this is the city where the Vatican, the papacy, and all control of the Roman Catholic Church is now located. So this is yet another clue that this woman will come forth from Catholicism.

But in v10, the angel further explains that these 7 heads of the beast also represent 7 kings or kingdoms, the heads have double meaning.

V10-11 *10 And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space. 11 And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.*

The angel says the 7 heads of the beast represent 7 kings, and he further explains that 5 of these kings have already fallen, have passed on into history, one of the kings is, speaking of the current reigning king or kingdom of John's day which speaks of Rome and Domitian at its head, and then the angel says one more king is yet to come, speaking of the antichrist. Now we are not positive who the angel is referring to here with the 5 kings, many have taken stabs at names or kingdoms to who this could apply, but for the most part they have been mostly guesses. Some think it has referred to Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece and with the present kingdom of John's day being Rome, and then the 7th will be the antichrist's empire to come. I guess that's possible, but I would not hold that as concrete fact/wouldn't argue about it. But we are told that when the 7th king comes, that king will only reign a short while, will continue a short space. And then we are told in v11 that the 8th king after these seven is the antichrist, but the angel goes further and says this 8th king is of the seven, meaning the 7th and 8th kings is the same ruler. And I believe this ties in to the antichrist and his rule before his death and resurrection (where he is the 7th king) and then his rule over the world as global dictator as the 8th king after his resurrection. The 7th and the 8th king are the same person, the beast, yet the 8th has ascended out of the abyss and has gone into perdition, he is satanically influenced and demonically possessed. The 7th king is the antichrist as the man who first rises to power thru his personality, intellect and political skill, the 8th king is this same man but in his superhuman form, fully empowered by Satan after his death and resurrection now seeking total world domination and worship.

After this the angel explains the 10 horns of the beast.

V12-13 *12 And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. 13 These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.*

These horns represent 10 other kings that all rule during the time of the tribulation, these are 10 nations or kingdoms, the 10 toes of Daniel's image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. But as John looks upon these kings here in this vision they have not received their kingdoms yet (v12a), but when the antichrist comes on the scene during the tribulation, these kings will receive power and dominion in the great world alliance, the one world government, of which they and the antichrist will be a part of (v12b). They receive power for a short time and rule as subordinates to the beast, for as the book of Daniel tells us, the antichrist will destroy 3 of these horns/kingdoms in order to establish his rule and power and influence over the other kingdoms and the world (Dan 7:24).

But at any rate these kings are all in agreement as they support the beast, they have one mind as v13 says, and they give their power, authority over even themselves and their kingdoms to the beast. They are his puppets, who give him use of their wealth, influence and military strength.

V14 *These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.*

This verse takes a prophetic look at these kings allied with the beast, it looks to ch19. Remember one of the 7 vial judgments/plagues was poured out upon the Euphrates River which caused it to be dried up and thus prepared the way for the forces to gather in the valley of Megiddo for the final battle of Armageddon. And it is there where the beast and his allied nations, these kings and all their military strength will gather to wage war with the Lamb, the Lord Jesus; who comes back riding a white horse and overcomes his enemies with the sword of his mouth, for he, and only he, is the true Lord of lords, and King of kings and he demonstrates it very effectively.

And I think just to encourage us believers we are included in this verse, for we, the church, the saved, are the ones who come with the returning king Jesus, for he is the one who **called** us to salvation 2Ti 1:9 *Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, who **chose** us thru his love and mercy and grace Eph 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: 4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love; and by such grace thru faith in the Lord Jesus we are saved and are counted **faithful** Mt 25:21 His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.* What a picture, all that the devil has tried to set up, all the strings he has pulled, all the lies he has told, all falls apart and unravels with the coming of the Lord Jesus, and we believers get to witness it and have victory over our adversary all because of the victorious true king!

V15 *And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.*

The angel continues to explain what John saw, and we touched on this verse previously. These waters that the great whore of Babylon sits upon, almost crushing them with her overbearing power and authority are the peoples and nations of the world. For the woman, the world church of the tribulation, has ridden the beast, used the antichrist for her own purposes, taken advantage of the system, to become what she has always wanted to be, the dominate authority of the world. Remember she, the worldly church, craves power and is willing to do anything to get it, even sell herself to the highest bidder, just to have more power over the masses. And now she has sway over millions thru her false religion, pagan rituals and erroneous doctrines. Now the antichrist is using the world church to gain power for himself, but she first uses him to become the great one world church. But like I previously stated, the woman does not seem to understand how dangerous the beast is she is riding, for once the beast and his allied kingdoms have no more use for the woman, they turn on her.

V16 *And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.*

The 10 kingdoms hate the whore, the woman, the religious system, for they have to share power with her, she has taken what they believe is rightfully theirs, power, dominion over the earth, she is a threat to them. Political Babylon will hate religious Babylon. Because this woman has much of mankind wrapped around her finger, and that's what the tyrants of the tribulation want for themselves. And so when they no longer need the world church to manipulate and sway the masses, they turn on her. The antichrist divorces his whore bride, the scarlet beast that the woman has ridden to the pinnacle of her power turns on her and devastates her. John Phillips writes: *"The kings of the earth hate the woman because she represents a threat to their own power. She wields an authority that they feel rightly belongs to them. It was one thing for them to court the whore and to use the Babylonian religious system to expedite the unification of the empire. To tolerate her and her political meddling once the end has been achieved is another matter. The religious system soon becomes an unwanted encumbrance..."*

The kings make her desolate, robbing her of her vast wealth, confiscating her bank accounts, her properties, her businesses. They disgrace her, make her naked, expose to the world all her

immorality, her lies, her conspiracies, her secrets. They reveal all about her and bring distrust and great shame upon the world church. Then the kings devour her, they eat her flesh, she is ripped apart and divided amongst the kingdoms, and finally she is destroyed, they burn her with fire, her churches and cathedrals and power fall. And all of this makes way for the antichrist to now step in and declare himself as god, and have all worship and power given to him (which will of course be guided by the false prophet). The false church is removed and now replaced with a false god, the woman is stripped of her power and influence, and worship is now entirely focused upon the beast.

And the thing is, this was God's plan all along. It is His providential will that causes these kings to use the religious system and she in turn use them, but when they have no more need of her their wickedness causes them to turn on her, and the one world church that rejected, mocked and attacked Christ is destroyed. All these doers of wickedness and evil are mere tools, mere pawns in God's great plan for mankind. But sin and Satan do not like this plan for we see in v17 that these kings who have taken power from the great whore now gladly give that power over to the beast.

V17 *For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.*

V18 *And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.*

The angel then concludes his explanation of what John saw. The woman is that great city, that great system, religious Babylon, the apostate world church, the great whore that has caused many to sin with spiritual fornication, caused the kings to be drunk with such power, that was arrayed in great and wealthy apparel, who bore a cup from which poured great abominations and filthiness and sin, the woman who herself was drunk with the blood of the true saints and martyrs, whose name is MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH, at the end of ch17 she lies in ruins.

Chapter 25

REVELATION –CHAPTER 18

In the previous chapter of Revelation 17 we saw the destruction of religious Babylon, the one world apostate church, dubbed MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. We saw that this great whore of Revelation had come and evolved from the ancient false religion of the Babylon of old, which had changed and morphed over the centuries, taking on many different names and faces, even surviving up to and into the tribulation where it had finally engulfed the world with its power and influence. This will be accomplished thru what we believe will be the Catholic Church of that day, for it has many similarities and has incorporated many of the practices of the ancient Babylonian and pagan religions; and the description of the great whore is far too similar to the Roman Catholic Church to be mere coincidence. Yet this woman who rides the scarlet beast is brought to world power only for a short time by allying with the antichrist and his political powers, for we also saw last time that even though the woman represents the ecclesiastical portion of revived Babylon, the political and commercial portion of Babylon rises up against her, the beast turns on her, his subordinate kings/rulers who hate the whore and are jealous of her power, devastate the woman and take religious Babylon's power for themselves and turn around and give it to the antichrist, leaving Satan's man as the lone focus of worship and power upon the earth. So with the ending of ch17 the beast, Satan's false messiah, sits upon his throne as a Caesar, an emperor, a god over the earth.

But as we come to ch18, we must keep in mind there is a difference between the religious Babylon of ch17 and political Babylon of ch18. For if we just casually read ch18, it would be easy to think it is continuing to speak of religious Babylon, for many of the descriptions are very similar to ch17. In addition as we study ch18 we must see that political Babylon is based in a literal city, the literal, actual rebuilt city of Babylon which we also see in ch18, and when one falls so does the other. In ch17 there is a lot of use of symbolism where in ch18 there is a more literal meaning to the words and events given, as the actual rebuilt city of Babylon is destroyed. To help us understand this let me give you this...

1. ch17: Religious Babylon, the great whore, the apostate one world church
2. ch18: Political/commercial/financial Babylon ruled by the beast, the antichrist, and his 10 (or 7) underling kings/nations
 - 2a. We also must distinguish in Revelation when we are speaking about the antichrist's system of rule versus the actual person of the antichrist, the man.
3. ch18: this chapter also clearly shows us an actual city called Babylon (where the center of the antichrist's political power is located). This city of Babylon, will literally be a rebuilt city for it does not exist at present time, and so it must be rebuilt in order to fulfill many prophecies which speak of Babylon and its utter destruction and desolation in Isaiah and Jeremiah

So to begin with we must lay some groundwork for our study of ch18. And first off, to show you ch18 must be talking about a "different" Babylon than the great whore of ch17, let me give you some scriptural proofs. First we see in ch18v1 the phrase "*And after these things*". *Rev 18:1 And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.*

After what things? after the destruction of religious Babylon, after what transpired in ch17. When religious Babylon is destroyed in ch17 we then fast forward to the destruction of political/commercial Babylon and the actual rebuilt city of Babylon which occurs in ch18, one happening during the first half of the tribulation, the other happening at the end.

We also see in v1 a different angel than that of ch17, who announces the final fall of Babylon, but not the fall of religious Babylon, *Re 18:1 And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. 2 And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.* This angel is not speaking of the fall of the great whore but speaks of the events of God's judgment after the 7 vials have rained down upon the earth, I believe this is the same angel and possibly the same instance that we saw in *Re 14:8 And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.* This new angel speaks of political Babylon's fall and the destruction of the actual city as there is a separation or gap of time between ch17 & 18, a length of time from when the antichrist first takes up his worldwide worship (when he commits the abomination of desolation) until the very near end of the Great Tribulation, being the last 3 1/2 years.

Also, we see that in ch17 the ten horns, the ten nations who are part of the antichrist's world alliance/government, hate the whore and destroy her themselves (*Re 17:16 And the ten horns which thou savest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.*). Yet in ch18:9 we see that the kings bewail and sorrow the fall of political Babylon and the city of Babylon, for that is where their power and riches lie, *Re 18:9 And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning.* Along with this we see throughout ch18 merchants and sailors and all those who benefit from Babylon in a financial sense, sorrowing and bewailing Babylon's fall...

Re 18:11 And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more:

Re 18:15 The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing,

Re 18:17 For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off. 18 And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city! 19 And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate.

So just from comparing the two chapters we see that ch17 and ch18 are not talking about the same Babylon, for how many non-Christians do you know who would care if religion disappeared from the earth? Would they weep and wail? Then how many of them would care if their wealth and source of power vanished? That's why we see no weeping and wailing for the great whore, for she is publicly shown to be a fraud, yet we see much mourning for the fall of wealthy and powerful Babylon, the hub of the world's finances and commercialism as well as the focus of the adoration of the beast.

Now earlier I stated that ch18 also refers to the rebuilt city of Babylon in order to fulfill some Old Testament prophecies, so to further show that ch18 is speaking about political/commercial Babylon as well as a rebuilt city, let's delve into this for a moment. If you study Isaiah ch13 & 14 and Jeremiah 50 & 51 you will see some similarities between those prophecies and what is transpiring here in ch18 of Revelation (now of course some of what is given speaks of the fall of old Babylon in the immediate future of that day, but in some instances they also speak of the fall of a future Babylon, and some of the verses even overlap, that's what makes studying prophecy difficult, but that should not deter us). So some of those prophecies were fulfilled with the destruction of old Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar, some have only been partially fulfilled, and others have never yet been fulfilled. But

the thing is if God says a place will be destroyed and never be inhabited again, God means just that. So let me give you a few prophesied instances that have not occurred yet...

Isa 13:6 Howl ye; for the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty.

Isa 13:9 Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. Notice we are given the time this destruction will occur, the Day of the Lord.

Isa 13:10 For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. This did not occur when the old Babylon was destroyed.

*Isa 13:11 And I will punish the **world** for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.¹² I will make a man more precious than fine gold... God has not judged the entire world since the time of Noah. Also man has not been made that rare or valuable since that time, in fact we slaughter millions every year in the womb, so man's life is not precious to us, but during the tribulation believers will have been raptured and 2/3 or more of the world's population will be wiped out, thus man will be very scarce.*

*Isa 13:19 And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. Here God says Babylon will be overthrown as Sodom and Gomorrah, which was destroyed with fire and brimstone. *Ge 19:24 Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven;*²⁵ *And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.*²⁶ *But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.*²⁷ *And Abraham gat up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the LORD:*²⁸ *And he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace. (Now compare that to Rev18:8-9,18).**

Also those sinful cities were destroyed in a very short time span, the reason Lot and his family were rescued so quickly. And what do we see in Rev 18:10, 17, 19?

And then speaking of Lot what do we read in *Re 18:4 And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues?* Now compare that to...

Isa 13:20 It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there.

Jer 50:3 For out of the north there cometh up a nation against her, which shall make her land desolate, and none shall dwell therein: they shall remove, they shall depart, both man and beast.

Jer 50:40 As God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbour cities thereof, saith the LORD; so shall no man abide there, neither shall any son of man dwell therein.

Jer 51:26 And they shall not take of thee a stone for a corner, nor a stone for foundations; but thou shalt be desolate for ever, saith the LORD.

Jer 51:43 Her cities are a desolation, a dry land, and a wilderness, a land wherein no man dwelleth, neither doth any son of man pass thereby. Here in these verses we see that Babylon and the area it lies in shall never be inhabited again, never be built upon again when it is finally judged by God, yet as of right now, the area and even the city itself have been dwelt in, built upon, even other towns are in and on the vicinity, in fact 4 large cities have been built on the grounds of Babylon in the past. Currently people travel there freely, camp and live there, and even shepherds herd their flocks there. So the time that Babylon will never be inhabited has not yet occurred.

Jer 50:46 At the noise of the taking of Babylon the earth is moved, and the cry is heard among the nations. Does that not sound like the weeping and wailing of the earth's kings?

Other verses in these prophetic chapters actually speak of Babylon's violent overthrow, yet the city has never been overtaken as such, even when the Medes invaded during the reign of Belshazzar, they came in so quickly and quietly that some of the inhabitants of the city were unaware they had even been overtaken and their king killed until 3 days after the invasion. Yet what does Rev 18:21 say? *Re 18:21 And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.*

And that is very similar to what Jeremiah done in *Jer 51:61 And Jeremiah said to Seraiah, When thou comest to Babylon, and shalt see, and shalt read all these words;62 Then shalt thou say, O LORD, thou hast spoken against this place, to cut it off, that none shall remain in it, neither man nor beast, but that it shall be desolate for ever. 63 And it shall be, when thou hast made an end of reading this book, that thou shalt bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of Euphrates:64 And thou shalt say, Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her: and they shall be weary. Thus far are the words of Jeremiah.*

Babylon as we know it has never seen what much of these prophecies speak of, therefore we must assume that they are yet to be fulfilled, and how can they be fulfilled if Babylon the city does not exist? For at the very end of the 7th vial judgment a great earthquake strikes rebuilt Babylon, destroying it utterly, so could that and the following volcanic activity be what John sees in *Re 16:17 And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done.18 And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.19 And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. 20 And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. 21 And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.* The city of Babylon has to exist for all this to happen does it not? So Babylon will be rebuilt and share in the magnificence that was of the old Babylon, where riches and power was to be, it was the central power of the world, the hub of all international transactions, and there everything under the sun was for sale.

Also keep in mind, the Babylonian powers were transferred to Pergamos (where the seat of Satan is) and later to Rome, which I think will be destroyed during the tribulation and thus force the rebuilding of Babylon where everything on earth will be focused. So with that understanding lets begin looking more closely at ch18.

V1 *And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.*

After these things, after the events of ch17, most likely 3 ½ years after those events, it is possible that 3 ½ years separate ch17 & 18; after the fall of religious Babylon John sees another angel descend from heaven. This angel has great power and a bright glorious presence, a heavenly presence in a world polluted with the blackest of sins and demonic powers, and as I previously mentioned I believe this is the same angel of ch14:8, for what this angel announces in v2 is very similar to that of 14:8.

V2 *And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.*

This powerful angel cries with a strong & mighty voice, announcing to the world, that Babylon is fallen, it is doomed. Religious Babylon is in ruin and Political Babylon is ready to meet its end, the reign of the antichrist is crumbling, the city rebuilt to house his throne and the center of his worship is about to be crushed under the weight of the 7 vial judgments of God. Looking closely at this, it seems this announcement actually precedes the actual fall of Babylon, for the city has not yet suffered the judgment of God because of what we see in **V4** *And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.* John hears another voice calling out to those that are true believers of Christ to come out, come out of Babylon, out of the city, out of the system and the presence of its influences, out of its grasp, so they will not be partakers or participants in Babylon's sin and thus be corrupted and also so they will not suffer the judgment, God's wrath, upon Babylon's sins, so they will not suffer under the plagues that are about to reign down in very quick succession.

This removal of God's people, as we saw with Lot and his family before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, is another example that God removes the righteous before His judgment falls. We see this with Enoch who walked with God and was not before the great flood. We see this with the rapture before the Day of the Lord and the Great Tribulation. And we see it here before the final destruction of Babylon of God calling out His people before destruction falls.

But back to v2, we see yet another reason for why Babylon is about to be judged by God, for it's not only because of the antichrist, but because Babylon has become the habitation of devils, the hold of every foul spirit, a cage for every unclean and hateful bird. This city is overrun with occultism, Satanism, lies and false beliefs, demonic possessions, wicked spirits and powers of darkness. Legions of demons now abide here, have made their home here, corrupting mankind with unhindered wickedness and evil as they try to dominate the world from this central hub of Satan's power. Every foul and horrible act is found here, every despicable being has found a place in Babylon. But isn't it odd that the description of a bird is used here in v2, sure we understand the meaning of devils and fowls spirits, but what does John mean by every unclean and hateful bird?

Jesus himself explains the meaning behind this in one of his parables in Matthew ch13. In his first parable of this chapter we see Jesus use birds as symbols of the wicked one, the devil. *Mt 13:3 And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; 4 And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up:* Jesus then explains this part of the parable in *Mt 13:19 When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.* Now we understand the symbolism in these parables, that Christ is the sower, the field is the world, the different soils are different kinds of hearts of mankind, and the seed is the gospel, and the fowls, the birds, are the devil and his minions, the wicked ones. So we take that understanding from this parable and go and apply it to a following parable, the parable of the **mustard seed** in *Mt 13:31 Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: 32 Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.*

Here we see the mustard seed, something small and insignificant in size, the least of all seeds. A man, the sower, (Christ) takes the mustard seed (Christendom, the church here upon the earth, the kingdom of heaven) and sows it in his field (the world). Now typically when a mustard seed grows to full maturity it becomes one of the greatest of herbs, it becomes a large plant, actually large enough for birds to come lodge in it. But here in this parable Jesus says the mustard seed produces a tree. But the mustard herb is not actually a tree, it does not have bark, it grows quickly for a season and dies, and other than its size it does not share any similarities to a true tree. So for Jesus to suggest that the mustard seed grows into a true tree signifies an abnormality, an abnormal growth, he is saying something went wrong, that Christendom, the church as a whole, has become something it shouldn't have.

What this refers to is that the Lord Jesus brought forth his word into the world, the simplest of doctrines and the easy to understand truth of the gospel and what he taught with this, humbleness, meekness, a servant attitude, love and compassion, something small and simple which he planted in a small group of persecuted, meek believers who became the church. Yet we see that over time the church from its small beginnings has produced some abnormal growths, there have been many who have branched off from the core of true Christianity with false beliefs, erroneous doctrines, pomp and power. And the example we always seem to go to although its not the only one is the Catholic Church. What began as something pure, as Christianity grew, has mutated and produced offshoots that are not true to its beginnings. The church, instead of remaining small, instead of being a humble little plant, an herb to bring good flavor to the world, has instead grown into a towering tree, with power and wealth,

having a hard and mighty trunk with many great branches and offshoots which keep subdividing into smaller and smaller branches (denominations) until they turn into twigs. The tree symbolizes world power, a symbol of organization, going from a mighty central authority to its various administrative arms to then subdivide into the lowly rank and file.

So the mustard seed, in becoming a tree in this parable, denied its true self, to just be an herb, and rose above what it was intended to be. Much like the church of today, with its many different branches and denominations, even budding into cults and false religions, it has become a worldly system, of wealth, power and influence, not what the Lord intended at all. It has come to the point that some portions of the church can make treaties and form alliances with kings, hire armies, meddle in international affairs and politics, again something the Lord never planned for his true church. The Catholic Church is only a portion of this example, but we can easily see that this religious tree houses many birds and fowl that come and lodge within its branches. And again the birds represent the wicked one, evil and seducing spirits, demonic influences, false teachers, lying prophets, deceit, blasphemy and heresy. So we see the mustard seed grown into a tree symbolizes the false church and the birds evil spirits and doctrines, which have come to rest in Babylon.

But even though this references religion we must remember that in ch17 religious Babylon was destroyed, and was replaced by the worship of the antichrist, he is the one that holds all ecclesiastical power now, and with Satan's man at the peak of his power, the object of the world's affections, the center of all wealth and corruption and evil, devils, foul spirits and hateful wicked ones flock to him, and are caged, held without escape under the beast's control. These birds, the demonic beings, are most likely guided by the false prophet, and point to the antichrist as the object of their affection and worship. So here in the rebuilt city of Babylon, where the beast sits upon his throne, who is worshipped by the world, it is here that the focus of sin and iniquity and demonic foul spirits have been attracted to and made their home. This city will be the wickedest, most morally corrupt, foul city upon the earth, but carnal man will look at it as magnificent, as hope, as a dream, like some small actor going to Hollywood to only be chewed up and spit out at the bottom of the industry, this will be a place where man can fulfill every lust he can manifest, for everything will be available for a price.

And with this in mind, this helps us understand v3, for the nations have been intoxicated with such worldly splendor, become drunk with their adoration of the antichrist and his power and fame and seduction, so they ally with him, trade with him, venerate and worship him, become wealthy and more powerful thru their dealings with him, for Babylon has an abundance of delicacies (luxuries) to offer.

V3 *For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.*

But because of such rampant sin, demonic activity, corruption and wickedness, God is about to destroy this nest of demons, and so he calls forth to his people, gives them warning before his judgment falls, and before they succumb to the lure and temptations of such sin and become partakers themselves.

V4 *For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.*

We see a parallel to this verse in Jer 51:6 *Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul: be not cut off in her iniquity; for this is the time of the LORD'S vengeance; he will render unto her a recompence.⁷ Babylon hath been a golden cup in the LORD'S hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad.*

V5 *For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.*

Here we are given another reason for God's judgment upon Babylon, the angel explains the reason God's people are being called out of the city. God is very aware of the sinful pollution of Babylon and how it is contaminating the world and the time is now come to rain down judgment.

And then a cry goes up to God, for Him to reward, or render, unto Babylon her just reward, for all that she has done against God's chosen people, the Jews, and the followers of Christ. For all the tragedies that were inflicted from Babylon of old to the Babylon of the new, a cry of vengeance goes out, for Babylon to be rewarded double punishment, double tragedy, double wrath. Jewish Law demanded an eye for eye, but this cry goes forth to take both eyes as well as the head of the enemy.

V6 *Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double.*

Why such a cry? Not only because of the sinful pollution, not only because of the intoxication of nations, not only because of those made rich and powerful thru dealings with the antichrist, but because of the outright pride of doing all this before God.

V7 *How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.*

First Babylon has glorified herself, where man is to glorify God, this wicked ungodly system glorified itself, deified its leader, mocked the true God, set herself up as the most high. And while the world falls apart, and many suffer and die, from war, from plague, from thirst and starvation, Babylon has lived deliciously, luxuriously. So for this, the cry goes out to give her much sorrow and torment. She showed no mercy, showed no compassion, so Lord God, to whom vengeance belongs, show her none as well. For Babylon sits as a queen, a tyrant ruler, thinking nothing can touch her, none can stand against her, nothing can overcome her, that she is invulnerable. But she is not alone in this, for she is no widow, as she is wed to the god of this world, the prince of the power of the air, to the beast and Satan himself, and with such a prideful view of herself she believes she shall see no sorrow, no end, no defeat. The voice cries for God to give her a double portion of what she gave to your people.

And because of this attitude, this sheer disrespect for God and His power, Babylon's downfall will come in one day, a very short period, for in one hour she shall be made desolate.

V8 *Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.*

Her plagues will come in the form of death, mourning, famine and fire. She shall be utterly wiped from the face of the earth, for strong (meaning mightier or stronger than she) is the Lord God who judges her for her sin. For we saw in ch16 the forms of such judgment, grievous sores, waters turned to blood, a scorching sun, tangible darkness and a massive, world shattering earthquake, which will divide Babylon into three parts, cause great hail stones to fall, the islands and mountains to disappear, and massive volcanic activity which will burn and consume the city much like the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Beginning with v9 we see what will happen in the aftermath of the destruction of Babylon, as we see three groups of people mourning the smoking ruin of what was once a vast city.

V9-10 *9 And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning,10 Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come.*

The first group we see mourning the loss of Babylon are the kings of the earth, those who have profited from her power and wealth. This includes kings and national leaders, presidents, chancellors, prime ministers, representatives of all nations, who have lived in luxury (lived deliciously) due to their relationship and alliance with, and embracing of, the Beast. They had all desired to bed her and gain from their cavorting with her, but now they bewail the loss of her, their source of great riches, power and fame. These kings of the earth have meddled and “fornicated” with Babylon, they joined themselves to her for profit and gain, they drank of her intoxicating wine of wrath, but as Babylon lies in ruin, a smoking heap, they watch afar off because they are afraid that what has destroyed her may destroy them in the process. These rulers are in shock and fear and sorrow, and cry Alas! Alas! which means Woe! Woe! due to the complete violence and speed of that great and mighty city’s demise, how quickly it crumbled. And they could do nothing to stop it. The focal point of the world has disappeared in an hour’s time despite mankind’s might, wisdom and technology. Nothing can stand in the way of God’s wrath and judgment. And that should make us all think about sin and how God looks at it, for all that is left of this city is a smoking pile of ash. In v11 we see the second group that mourns the loss of Babylon.

V11 *And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more:*

Here the merchants of the earth, those involved in commerce and trade, who export and import all kinds of luxurious items to and from Babylon, who find employment or who employ others to make profit. They have all been made extremely wealthy and prosperous with their business and association with sinful Babylon. And so they weep over the destroyed city, not because they care about Babylon, but because they see their own potential profits disappear, their prosperity, the luxurious futures they dreamed of have vanished. All their clients and buyers are dead, their warehouses and storefronts are burned to the ground, their commercial empires are ruined and their path to even more wealth is gone. Nobody is left for them to sell to, buy from or trade with. So the merchants mourn *for no man buyeth their merchandise any more (11b)*.

And that brings us to what kind of merchandise did these merchants sell?

V12-13 *12 The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble,13 And cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men.*

All kinds of merchandise, anything one can imagine will be available in the new Babylon just as it was in the vast city of old Babylon. Here we see precious metals and stones, jewels, fine clothing, ornate vessels, furniture, art, spices, foods, alcohols, drugs, livestock, vehicles of transportation, and even men themselves are for sale. Even souls are bought and lost here in this city, for remember in order to buy and trade one has to have been marked with the mark of the Beast, and with such a mark we know their names are not written in the book of life which means they will suffer eternal torment, their souls have been bought, they sold their souls, just to survive and live deliciously in this city. *Re 14:9 And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, 10 The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:11 And the smoke of their torment*

ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.

Babylon will be the city that never sleeps, where fortunes and lives are made and lost around the clock. Anything and everything will be for sale, but such earthly luxuries disappear in a moment when God's judgment falls on the city. And what man thought of as priceless artifacts will be just dust and rubble.

V14 *And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all.*

Everything that man's heart desired was available in Babylon, but now all these earthly things and objects and worldly pleasures have vanished like a vapor, a puff of smoke, departed to be found no more. And so we see, like the kings of the earth, the merchants of the earth, stand afar off (again because they fear the destructive force that just engulfed the city), and watch Babylon burn, and cry the same Woe upon the city for how fast it fell...

V15-17a *15 The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, 16 And saying, Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls! 17 For in one hour so great riches is come to nought.*

Then in v17 we also see the third group that mourns over fallen Babylon.

V17 *17 For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off,*

The sailors and shipmasters, the captains and all those that are in the shipping industry who are enriched by bringing all the world's delicacies to Babylon and transporting them throughout the world. I don't know if Babylon will have a harbor, but it seems this one does, for much shipping is done here, yet when God's judgment falls, when the 7 vials are poured out, those within the oceans of blood watch in horror as the very fabric of civilization falls apart. And again, like the two previous groups, the sailors stand afar off and watch the destruction and cry aloud at the city's end. They cry and weep and wail aloud, but again its not because they really care about the city or her denizens, but instead like those before, they cry out of selfishness, for their source of riches and livelihood is gone, how are they going to live in luxury, how are they going to afford all their rich delicacies?

V18-19 *18 And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city! 19 And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate.*

The prophet Zephaniah seemed to have spoke of this time...

*Zep 1:14 The great day of the LORD is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the LORD: **the mighty man shall cry there bitterly.** 15 That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness. 16 A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers. 17 And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the LORD: and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung. 18 **Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD'S wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy: for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land.***

What tragedy! What shock and horror those upon the earth are witness to. The focus of their worship, their wealth, their power and influence, all gone in one calamity. The earth mourns the fall of Babylon, but in heaven there is a different scene, for instead of weeping and wailing, there is great

rejoicing. Where there were three groups on earth, the kings and merchants and sailors, crying out in anguish, we also see three groups in heaven crying out with jubilation and joy because of the fall of Babylon.

V20 *Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.*

Here we see the apostles, the prophets, and all of heaven (which includes the angels and saints and martyrs) rejoicing for God has avenged them and dealt justly with Babylon and its denizens. God has brought to fruition what the prophets prophesied of, he has brought forth what the apostles spoke of, God has fulfilled his promise of vengeance to the tribulation saints, for Babylon is fallen and so the heavens ring with the sounds of joy and celebration. Justice has been done. Sin and evil, the beast and his empire have suffered the wrath of God.

And then in the remaining verses of the chapter we see an angel give a demonstration of how complete the fall and destruction of Babylon will be.

V21 *And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.*

What we are given here is a very vivid picture of the sheer violence and suddenness of Babylon's fall. This angel takes a great millstone, a stone which is great and heavy and used to crush whatever is before it, which is symbolic of Babylon who in her power and glory crushed and overcame all before her, for as we have seen all have fallen before her, all worship the Beast, all succumbed to her seductions, yet with a great splash, the angel flings the millstone into the sea and as it strikes the waters with a splash, the force of the mighty weight thrusts water into the air, causing a great upheaval in the water's surface; and it instantly sinks below the surface, in its wake there is an outrushing of ringlets from the point of impact, and as the waters close over the stone it disappears from sight. With suddenness, violence and completeness the millstone vanishes and thus this portrays Babylon's fall. One moment she stands, the next she is in ruins, cast down. Never, no more, to be found again. Notice the multiple uses of no more in the following verses...

V22-23 *22 And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee; 23 And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived.*

The chapter ends by giving us one more reason for Babylon's judgment and fall, she has blood on her hands...

V24 *And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.*

Political and religious Babylon are both guilty of this...*Re 17:6 And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.*

Babylon was a murderer, a harlot, a thief, a liar, a blasphemer, a drunkard, a fornicator, an idolater, she was vulgar, perverted, filthy, greedy, prideful and horrendously wicked. She tried to set up a one world faith, a one world ruler, a one world heathen god, a one world currency, with her at its center, but she fell, and God had the victory. Babylon epitomizes everything that God is not, and when placed head to head with Him, she comes out the loser.

And I think some scripture from James would fit nicely to what we have just seen in ch18.

Jas 5:1 Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. 2 Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. 3 Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. 4 Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. 5 Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. 6 Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you. 7 Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. 8 Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. 9 Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door. 10 Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. 11 Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.

Chapter 26

REVELATION – CHAPTER 19

For the past couple of chapters we have been dealing with God's judgment being poured out upon the many aspects of Babylon, the first aspect was the religious form of Babylon which had been with mankind in some form or another since the days of Nimrod, and second was the political and commercial form of Babylon in which the beast has ruled the earth with, and thirdly was the actual city of a rebuilt Babylon. All three have fallen as per God's plan. And as the world watched such destruction befall that great city, the kings and merchants and sailors all wept and mourned her, they sorrow for the loss of this great system, over the ruin of the headquarters of the antichrist's power. The cry of Alas! Alas! or Woe! Woe! comes forth as they see the smoke of her annihilation rise into the heavens. But in heaven we saw a different scene at the end of ch18, instead of sorrow we saw joy and celebration, for we saw an angel crying out to all those in heaven, to the apostles and to the prophets to rejoice for Babylon is fallen. *Re 18:20 Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.* The call to rejoice echoes throughout heaven, and in ch19 we see the response to this command...

V1 *And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God:*

After all these things occur, after the destruction of ch17 & 18, John now hears... what does he hear? A great voice! A loud voice! A powerful voice! But not just one voice, but a voice of many, of much people, what people? the people in heaven! The saved, those that have believed, the Old Testament saints, the Jews who looked for the Messiah and trusted in Him, the church, the born again, the tribulation saints, those who suffered greatly but still chose to believe. This is the picture of a vast heaven filled with the children of God. We will be in this number, we will be voicing these very words, for we are there, either by rapture or by death.

This scene sets the stage for a time of great celebration for the time of the marriage of the Lamb is come, the beast is almost totally defeated, the world and sin have been judged by wrath, the marriage supper of the Lamb is soon, the second coming of Christ is at hand, Satan is about to be bound, and the millennial reign is about to begin. What an exciting time, a joyous time, and as the untold multitude of the heavens unite in one thunderous voice, they respond to the command to rejoice, and they cry one word, *Alleluia!*

"*Alleluia*" is the Greek spelling of the Hebrew word *Hallelujah* and means *Praise the Lord!* This is the first time in the entire New Testament that this word appears. It was not cried at the birth of Christ, it was not cried at the crucifixion of Christ, it was not cried at the resurrection of Christ, it was not even cried at his ascension and promise to return, but it is cried at the beginning of the final victory of Christ, at the marriage supper of the Lamb, at the return of the King of kings and Lord of lords. The heavens can not contain their excitement anymore, and so the cry goes out to praise the Lord. The word "*alleluia*" appears 4 times in this single chapter, and what a chapter for it to be used, so many wonderful things culminate in ch19. And so the voice of much people in heaven cry out Praise ye the Lord, praise him, praise him? Why?

(Ref v1b) Because of salvation, the salvation granted by God, because of glory, the glory of God, for in all this HE will receive all glory due Him. Praise Him because of honor, His honor, His character and keeping of His promises, He has seen us through, He has brought all things He has spoken of since the foundations of the world were laid to fruition, and finally praise the Lord for His power, His power to defend, His power to defeat, power to fulfill, His power to save, power to create, power to love and bestow mercy and grace and bestow everlasting life. Alleluia to God and Christ our King! For who He is and what He has done! And what other reason does John give that the cry of praise rings throughout heaven?

V2 *For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.*

The cry of praise goes forth because of God's justice. His truthful, right and fair justice has dealt with the corruption and supremely vulgar sin of Babylon, the harlot, the liar, the murderer. Now no one rejoices or celebrates at the perishing of the lost, but they rejoice only because God has shown His supreme sovereignty, His patience, His longsuffering, His mercy, His love, His grace; He gave mankind every chance to turn to Him, to unite with Him, to draw near to Him, but so many rejected such love, such salvation, glory, honor, and power, and so they faced His wrath instead, not because God hates them but that He hates their sin, their distrust, their unbelief, their rejection of His most beloved Son. He gave everything to mankind, yet so many spurned the gifts and blessings of God and chose to reject Him, yet they embraced one that was anything but godly or good or true or right. They worshipped a lesser power, a lesser being, one who was created instead of the Creator, they worshipped a fallen wicked person, and so God grants them what they have truly wished for, ultimate separation from Him instead of infinite union with Him. And so now the cry goes up, for God has judged the great whore Babylon, because of her corruption of man and the blood of the saints that are upon her hands. God's Justice has been done, He has dealt with her truthfully and righteously. We can apply the words of Moses to such praise, *Nu 32:23 But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out.* And due to this realization another alleluia echoes thru the heavens...

V3 *And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.*

The multitude cries once more Praise ye the Lord, Alleluia! for God's justice has left the abode of the beast, the temple of the false prophet, the habitat of devils and unclean spirits in ruins, Babylon is a burning heap, and the smoke of her burning rises to unseen heights, forever and ever. The only reminder that she ever existed...And now look who joins in this celebration of praise...

V4 *And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.*

The 24 elders that sit upon thrones around the heavenly throne of God, along with the four beasts of Revelation ch4, that were full of eyes, each having six wings, and either looked like a lion, a man, a calf or a flying eagle, they all now join the chorus of millions and cry Amen! Let it be so! Alleluia! Praise the Lord! Those that represent believers from both the Old and New Testament and the angelic cherubim, servants around the throne, burst out in new praise of God, for they whole heartedly agree with the reasons given to praise God and so they exclaim their own joy with the third use of Alleluia.

And believe it or not, over all this rejoicing John hears another voice coming from the throne of God calling for yet more praise...

V5 *And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.*

“Praise our God” cries the voice, all of God’s servants, men, angels, created beings, saints of all ages, the heroes of faith, saved Jews and saved Gentiles, the prophets, apostles and the hosts of heaven, the martyred, the persecuted, all that serve the Almighty, all that fear Him, who revere Him, who honor Him, who glorify Him, who look to Him, from the smallest to the greatest of servants, from the least little action of service to the greatest sacrifice given, all together Praise our God! That is the command that issues forth, and the response to such a call shakes John to his core...

V6 *And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.*

A mighty roar erupts in heaven from much people, a great multitude, all those gathered around the throne, the entire population of Glory and Heaven with a united voice, a voice of 1000’s of mighty waterfalls and earth shaking thunders, that voice cries once more in perfect unison Alleluia, Praise ye the Lord! Why?

For the Lord God, the Almighty, the All powerful, the Omnipotent God, reigns and rules, He has judged, He has redeemed, He has dealt justly with all and has demonstrated His power, His power that is without end, without limits, without question. Praise God for what He has done for His servants and to his enemies!

What a day that will be when the heavens rejoice and celebrate, and we that are saved will be right there in the midst of it all. Filled with fervor, desire, excitement, love, purity, holiness, glory, and we will praise the one who made us so. For now the time has come for a wedding to take place in heaven, the marriage of the Lamb and his bride...

V7 *Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.*

All in heaven are to be glad for what is about to happen, all are to rejoice for the privilege of the bride, and are to give honor to the bridegroom, for the marriage of the Lamb, the wedding of the Lord Jesus, of the Son of God, is about to take place. Notice here it is the groom who gets the attention, not the bride. We have reversed it here on earth, always referring to a wedding as the bride’s special day, it being all about her, and the groom being an afterthought. But in heaven this wedding will be all about the groom, the Lord Jesus. **For it is thru his actions of love for the bride that made all this possible.** It is He who loved the bride, who fought for the bride, who sacrificed for the bride, who died for the bride, it is he who demonstrated his power over death and hell and sin for the bride, it is he who called the bride, who came and took his bride home so that he may now wed his bride.

And who is this bride? Its none other than the church, those who were saved by faith in the Lord Jesus during the age of grace upon the earth. Please note, the bride does not include all believers in heaven, for she does not consist of the Old Testament saints nor the tribulation saints. She consists only of the church, this is a special privilege for the believers of this age, but all the others are not left out of this celebration, for in v9 all these others are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb, they get to join the celebration of such a union, *Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.* A bride is not invited/called to her own wedding, the guests are, but the bride has other things to do, such as to ready herself for the ceremony, which has come to pass as we see at the end of v7, *and his wife hath made herself ready.*

The heavens rejoice for the marriage of the Lamb is come! Christ's union with His bride, the church, has either just happened or is about to happen, which will be immediately followed by the marriage supper of the Lamb, which is the celebration of this union.

But did you know that many make the mistake of thinking it is Israel, but that can not be for the Bible clearly teaches that Israel is the bride of God the Father and that they were married by a legal covenant, the promise to Abraham. We read such scriptures as *Jer 3:14 Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you...* *Isa 54:5 For thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called.* But because of Israel's unfaithfulness as a wife, because of her whoredom with other gods, she was put away or divorced by God when He removed His protective hand from them... *Jer 3:8 And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also.*

Jer 3:20 Surely as a wife treacherously departeth from her husband, so have ye dealt treacherously with me, O house of Israel, saith the LORD.

Eze 16:35 Wherefore, O harlot, bear the word of the LORD:36 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thy filthiness was poured out, and thy nakedness discovered through thy whoredoms with thy lovers, and with all the idols of thy abominations, and by the blood of thy children, which thou didst give unto them;37 Behold, therefore I will gather all thy lovers, with whom thou hast taken pleasure, and all them that thou hast loved, with all them that thou hast hated; I will even gather them round about against thee, and will discover thy nakedness unto them, that they may see all thy nakedness.38 And I will judge thee, as women that break wedlock and shed blood are judged; and I will give thee blood in fury and jealousy. 39 And I will also give thee into their hand, and they shall throw down thine eminent place, and shall break down thy high places: they shall strip thee also of thy clothes, and shall take thy fair jewels, and leave thee naked and bare. 40 They shall also bring up a company against thee, and they shall stone thee with stones, and thrust thee through with their swords.41 And they shall burn thine houses with fire, and execute judgments upon thee in the sight of many women: and I will cause thee to cease from playing the harlot, and thou also shalt give no hire any more.42 So will I make my fury toward thee to rest, and my jealousy shall depart from thee, and I will be quiet, and will be no more angry.43 Because thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, but hast fretted me in all these things; behold, therefore I also will recompense thy way upon thine head, saith the Lord GOD: and thou shalt not commit this lewdness above all thine abominations.

Israel as the wife of God was divorced from God, put away by Him (for a while at least) because of her whoredom, her spiritual adultery, her worshipping of other gods, so in this sense she is not spotless, nor a virgin, and that is one reason why Israel can not be the bride of the Lamb. In addition to this, Jesus as our high priest is expressly forbidden to marry a divorced woman or widow according to God's Law... *Le 21:10 And he that is the high priest among his brethren, upon whose head the anointing oil was poured, and that is consecrated to put on the garments, shall not uncover his head, nor rend his clothes;...13 And he shall take a wife in her virginity.14 A widow, or a divorced woman, or profane, or an harlot, these shall he not take: but he shall take a virgin of his own people to wife.*

But the good news is, Israel the wife of God the Father will be reconciled with Jehovah, they will be reunited as husband and wife as prophesied... *Isa 62:1 For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.2 And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name.3 Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God.4 Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married. 5 For as a young man marieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.*

Jer 31:31 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:32 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD:33 But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. So Israel is God's wife and the church is the bride of the Lamb.

So back to the Marriage of the Lamb where many wonder what the order of events are here? When does all this take place? Let's see if I can give you my limited understanding of it with biblical support...

First off we of course have the rapture taking place before the tribulation, before the beast is revealed, before the judgment upon the world takes place. This, as we all know, is when the church,

those who make up the body/bride of Christ, is taken to heaven when the Lord Jesus comes in the air to take her home. *1Th 4:16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*

Now once in heaven, the bride needs to finish being made ready for the wedding ceremony, for what does v7 say? *for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.* How is this done? How does the bride ready herself? Well, there are two portions to this, first God has a hand in this, with the plan of salvation, for the process of salvation begins the engagement period and establishes that the saved individual will be part of the bride, in that aspect the bride is made ready, but the bride also has a responsibility in this readying of herself. While on earth during her engagement period, the bride, the church, is suppose to be drawing closer to God, growing in the Lord, working out her own salvation (Phil 2:12), doing good works, which are all part of the sanctification process. But it is quite impossible for the bride to become absolutely perfect since we are dealing with carnal mankind, right? And so once the bride has been gathered in her totality in heaven she has thus brought many of her works with her to show that she has been readying herself for this event, she brings a lot of baggage with her in the form of works, but some of those works were done in selfishness, pride and for misguided reasons, not for the glory or honor of the bridegroom. So how does God separate the good works and the bad? How are final preparations made for the bride for her presentation to her groom? She goes thru a final inspection, what we call The Judgment Seat of Christ. So the second event to happen that immediately follows the rapture is this judgment, where the church as individuals are judged in their readiness for the marriage, rewarded for their good works and their bad works are burned away, *Ro 14:10 ... for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.*

1Co 3:11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; 13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. 14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. 15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

2Co 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad

1Jo 2:28 And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

*1Co 4:5 Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: **and then shall every man have praise of God.***

*Re 22:12 **And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me,** to give every man according as his work shall be.*

Remember back in ch4 when John was told to come up hither and he is peering around the throne room of heaven he sees the 24 elders, *Re 4:4 And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.* They have their robes, they have their crowns, they are representatives of the saved, John just got there and it seems the Judgment Seat of Christ has already taken place, this lends support that the judgment seat is before the marriage.

It is thru the Judgment Seat of Christ that the impurities of the bride are burned away and the righteousness of the saints allowed to shine forth, for what remains is precious, the worthless is gone, and so the bride is bedecked in her good works, her services to God, her rewards, that is what the bride is arrayed in, that is how she is made ready to be presented to the Lamb.

V8 *And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.*

This verse says the bride's dress is fine linen, which later in the same verse, is defined as the righteousness of saints, which again refers to the good works, righteous deeds and praiseworthy acts of the believers. This of course includes not only the inner righteousness we find in Christ (which covers our filthy rags of righteousness) but also the righteous works produced in our life due to our relationship with Christ. *1Co 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.* So the bride is adorned with righteous works, all the impurities are now gone, and so she is now beautiful and ready to be presented to the bridegroom.

And something I want you to notice is the contrast we see here, for we do see lots of contrasts presented in this chapter, the contrast of the bride and the great whore, the contrast of judgments of the saved and of the world, the reward of the bride and the punishment of the whore, the contrast of the marriage supper of the Lamb and in v17 the supper of the great God. But take note of the contrast of the bride and the great whore, the bride is clean and white, bright and pure and arrayed in righteousness and heavenly reward, while the great whore of the beast is described in *Re 17:4 And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour {power, murder}, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls {luxury, pleasure, greed, earthly treasures}, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication {ungodly, sinful, idolatrous}: 5 And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. 6 And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus:*

As the bride stood before the Judgment seat of Christ she was not all that beautiful, she was spotted, wrinkled and blemished but after the cleansing of fire, after her true beauty is revealed, after she is bedecked with her rewards, she is able to stand before the Lord pure and holy. And is that not how the bride is to be presented to the groom?

*Eph 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; 26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, 27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, **not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.***

*Eph 1:4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be **holy and without blame before him** in love.*

*2Co 11:2 For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a **chaste virgin** to Christ.*

Speaking of Christ...*Col 1:28 Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man **perfect in Christ Jesus:***

Now while the bride is being readied for her wedding, while the church is being judged for their good works in heaven, the world is being judged for its sinful works below. The great whore of Babylon suffers God's wrath and burns with actual fire while the bride of Christ is dressed in robes of righteousness and only has her worthless works burned away.

So with that, we have had the rapture and then the Judgment Seat of Christ to make the bride ready and then thirdly we have the Marriage of the Lamb, the actual ceremony, where the bride, the church, is presented to Christ, and the full union of the church with Christ commences. And I think that has just taken place here in ch19, for now after the union of Christ and the church, the wedding celebration begins, the guests are invited to join the bride and groom in their rejoicing, in the fourth event, the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

V9 *And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.*

Now the guests, those who are blessed because they are called to this occasion, are the Old Testament saints, the apostles, prophets, the heroes of faith, those who are espoused to God the Father, not the Lamb. Also included in this are the tribulation saints, the angels, and a few others of

which I'll point out later. But what a feast, what a party this is, and some think Christians can't have a good time; this is a celebration like the earth has never ever seen!

And notice how John is so enraptured by the groom and the bride and the guests that he doesn't even see what the marriage supper consists of. He makes no mention of the heavenly delicacies spread across the Father's table, but what a feast this will be. *"The Lord's first miracle was at a wedding when, earth's resources having failed, He transformed water into wine. Now it is His wedding feast, and He drinks the new wine of the kingdom as he promised long ago; lo, He has kept the best wine until last!"* {John Phillips}. Remember the institution of the Lord's Supper, where Jesus said in Mt 26:27 *And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; 28 For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. 29 But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.* Well, at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb Jesus partakes of the fruit of the vine once more with His bride.

And John is so overwhelmed by all he sees that he falls down once again at the feet of the angel that is showing him all this...

V10 *And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*

(testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy: what Jesus foretells, what he testifies as truth is the very substance of prophecy, for a prophecy means nothing if it does not come to pass. So when Jesus says something will happen it will happen, no doubt about it, his words are so true that even when he speaks of future events it is like they have already come to pass).

Following the supper, the fifth event to take place is the second coming of Christ but before we move on I wanted to address the participants who attend the Marriage of the Lamb. Some of them we have already discussed and went over in great detail, so I'll just mention them and move on. First we know the Father of the groom, the one whose house the bride and bridegroom are united in, is of course God the Father. The bridegroom is the Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ. The bride is of course the church. And the guests include the Old Testament saints and tribulation saints. Now, at very formal weddings there are servants that minister to the guests and the wedding party, so the servants in heaven will of course be many of the angels, we read speaking of angels in Hebrews 1:14 reads... *Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?* Following that, many think that the best man will be none other than John the Baptist, who says in Job 3:28 *Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. 29 He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but **the friend of the bridegroom**, which standeth and beareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. 30 He must increase, but I must decrease.* And then there is the messenger who takes messages back and forth between the bride and groom during their time of separation (when the bride makes herself ready and the groom prepares a home), and this could be none other than the Holy Spirit, who is sent to comfort the bride in the absence of the groom, who speaks to the bride of Christ's love through the love letters he has sent his church, the word of God. Then we have the herald of the wedding who makes the announcement "the bridegroom cometh" and sounds the trumpet when the bridegroom comes forth for his bride, this could very well be the angel Gabriel. And I'm sure we could think of others that could fill other positions but for the most part a lot of this is speculation, so I'll leave it at that...

Now we'll move on to one of the most magnificent passages in the Bible, the event that so many down thru the ages have looked for, prayed for, prophesied of, anticipated and hoped for: the second coming of Jesus Christ, and what an entry he makes, for what we see depicted here in ch19 is Christ's literal return to the earth, because remember, in the rapture he did not come all the way to the earth, he met his bride in the air and took her home, but in this event, the second coming, the Lord

Jesus comes with his bride back to earth to set up his long awaited kingdom, thus fulfilling the prayer of untold multitudes... Mt 6:9...*Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. 10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.* And so here we see the heavens open and the king appear, coming forth to establish his kingdom on earth...

V11 *And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.*

Remember in the early part of Revelation we saw a different rider & white horse appear, Re 6:1 *And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see. 2 And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.* Who was that? The antichrist. The one who would deceive and lie to obtain power, the one who said he came in peace but who would break that treaty with Israel when he revealed himself as the beast. He is part of the satanic trinity, the offspring of the Father of Lies. He is unfaithful and full of lies.

But here in v11 we have another contrast, for this rider on a white horse is called Faithful and True, he does not lie or deal deceitfully, he does not break his word or promises. He is the one who bore those very names when he spoke to the Laodicean church in Re 3:14 *And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; he is the very one who proclaimed he is the way, the truth and the life. This rider is none other than the Lord Jesus whose faithfulness and truthfulness we read of in Isa 11:1 And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots:2 And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD;3 And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: 4 But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.5 And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.*

John here sees none other than the Lord Jesus, Faithful and True, riding upon a white horse out from heaven, and keep in mind the mention of horses carries the meaning of battle and warfare in the Bible, so Jesus is prepared to righteously, to justly and fairly, judge and make war upon the world, upon those gathered against him.

-Jesus here has returned to wage war with the Beast and his armies. The Prince of Peace has come to judge and conquer... Ac 17:30 *And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: 31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.*

-Jesus has come to destroy the wicked and to deliver his people, Ro 11:25 *For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. 26 And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: 27 For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.*

-Jesus has come to put down evil and to bring righteousness and peace to the earth 1Jo 3:8 *He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.*

V12 *His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.*

Since Jesus is coming to judge and make war, his eyes reveal the power and burning judgment within, for his eyes burn with a holiness that no sin or iniquity, no matter how well hidden, can escape, for he sees all. Nothing escapes his gaze, as God he knows all, sees all, which makes his judgments truly fair. What John describes matches the description that he spoke of in Rev ch1 where Jesus was

walking amongst the seven golden candlesticks... *Re 1:14 His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; ... And then John wrote in Re 2:18 And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass;*

Now concerning Jesus as the judge that is all seeing, we know he also holds the title of the Word of God as we see in v13b *and his name is called The Word of God.*, as well as in *Job 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God* and *1Jo 1:1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;*. And it is this Christ, the Word, who discerns and judges the heart of man, for notice the description of the Word of God and how he sees all in order to judge sin... *Heb 4:12 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twodged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*¹³ ***Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.*** No sin, no evil will escape his judgment.

We also see in v12 that Christ wears upon his head many crowns, golden diadems, *and on his head were many crowns;* which speak of his absolute authority, his sovereignty, his kingship, his right to judge, make war and rule and reign, for as we see in v16 he is the King of kings and Lord of lords.

But before we go that far we also see in v12 that Jesus bears another name, *and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.* In v11 he is called Faithful and True, in v16 he is the King of kings and Lord of lords, and throughout the Bible he is given many, many different names and titles, but here he has a name written upon him that only he knows, a secret name, a name of mystery. And I wonder if this name is connected with the new name he mentioned when he spoke to the church of Philadelphia? *Re 3:11 Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. 12 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name. 13 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.* Its exciting that we will learn even more about our Savior in heaven, *1Co 2:9 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.*

V13 *And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.*

Christ's garments are coated in blood as he comes from heaven, but it is not his blood that stains his vesture, for his blood was not wasted, was not splattered or spilt, it was shed, every drop used to cover the sins of mankind, which can only mean one thing, the blood that coats his garments here, is the blood of his enemies, those he has been judging throughout the tribulation. We reference *Isa 63:1 Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. 2 Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? 3 I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. 4 For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come. 5 And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me. 6 And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth.* These blood stained garments were foreshadowed back in Rev ch14 where we saw the Lord identified as the reaper and the one who trods the winepress... *Re 14:14 And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. 15 And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. 16 And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped. 17 And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. 18 And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. 19 And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. 20 And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.*

This is the blood of his enemies from the judgment being poured out upon the earth that stains Christ's clothing, even to the bridle of his horse, and yet he is not done yet, for the greatest battle the world has ever seen is about begin, v15c: *...and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God;* a battle he is very prepared for, for he does not come alone, even though he needs no help...

V14 *And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.*

Here we see the bride of the Lamb coming with the bridegroom, these are the saints, the church, for notice how they are clothed... in fine linen, white and clean, and how was the bride just described earlier in this chapter? *Re 19:7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. 8 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.* This army also most likely contains all the guests of the wedding celebration, all the participants, even the holy ones of heaven, the heavenly host, the angelic armies. *Jude 14...Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, 15 To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.* This army rides forth with the Lord from heaven opened above, yet this army will only be spectators to the battle to come, for they will not raise one hand, fire one shot, because the Lord Jesus alone will defeat his enemies by his own power...

V15 *And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.*

We have seen this description of Jesus before, *Re 1:16 And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength....*

Re 2:12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;...

Re 2:16 Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

Isa 11:4 But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.

And then Paul writes in *2Th 2:8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:*

The sharp sword is a symbol of God's Word, and we have already seen that Christ is the Word, so to him, the Lord Jesus, belongs the battle; the victory is the Lord's.

The rod of iron is a symbol of his justice and supreme power. Nothing will stand in the way of his rule, no opposition, his word is law, and his commands stand above all. Once his enemies are smitten his rule will be established, his kingdom set up, the millennial reign begun.

And then lastly notice one more name for Jesus, the name that is above every name...

V16 *And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.*

He is emblazoned with this name, this title. It is this Lord and this King that will have the victory, *Re 17:14 These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.*

Paul speaks to Timothy of such *1Ti 6:13 I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; 14 That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: 15 Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords;*

It is this Lord, and this King that all other lords and kings must submit to, for he is a saving king, a living king, a faithful and true king, a just king, a mighty king, a conquering king. It is Jesus

Christ who has dominion over all creation, who has the title deed to creation, who gave his all to save mankind, and has returned to set up his kingdom in righteousness and holiness, and all honor and all glory are due his name! He is the King of kings and Lord of Lords and he has returned to make everything right.

Prophetic Psalm of the Anointed, the Messiah, the Christ

Ps 2:1 Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? 2 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, 3 Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.4 He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision {mocked}.5 Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. 6 Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. 7 I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. 8 Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. 9 Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel {Re 2:27 And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. ... Re 19:15... and he shall rule them with a rod of iron:}; 10 Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth.11 Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

This psalm speaks of the time we are studying in Rev ch19, the raging and ungodliness of the heathen, the alliance together and defiance against Christ and how the Lord will laugh at their pitiful attempts. It also speaks of the coming of Christ, the battle of Armageddon, when Christ in his wrath judges and makes war with the armies of the Beast, dashes them into pieces, breaks them with a rod of iron, and sets up his kingdom. For in ch19 of Revelation the kings of the earth and its rulers are gathered in the valley of Megiddo for battle, a gathering we saw foreshadowed back in...*Re 16:12 And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared.13 And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.14 For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.15 Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.16 And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.*

So now the pieces are all in place: the church has been called home to heaven, the bride is with the bridegroom, the Lamb has the little book in his possession, the 7 seals have been opened, the 7 trumpets have sounded, the 7 vials of God's wrath poured out, the marriage and the celebration supper of the Lamb have been concluded, and now the armies of heaven have assembled and begin to ride forth behind the Lamb that comes back to earth as a Lion. And upon earth, Israel is under siege by the armies of the beast and the false prophet, Israel is ready to be overtaken by such overwhelming force of the nations and kings of the earth. But suddenly the heavens open up, the sky and clouds peel back and Christ the King of Kings and Lord of Lords rides out upon a white horse to do battle with the antichrist and destroy the works of the devil once and for all. *Mt 24:29 Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: 30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.*

As the Apostle John sees all this playing out something pulls his attention away for a moment...

V17 *And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God;*

Here John sees an angel, silhouetted by the sun (remember the heavens are opened, the darkness and clouds have been peeled back), and John hears this angel cry out, not to the men of the earth or to the kings and armies gathered in the valley, nor to the army coming from heaven, but this

angel cries to the fowls of the air, the scavengers and predators of the sky. He bids these birds of prey to come from the far reaches of the earth and gather themselves here above the battlefield, to prepare themselves for a great feast is about to be served... the feast of the great God. God is going to demonstrate his power over all the earth, over all the might gathered against Him, over the devil himself, for a great slaughter is about to ensue and the flesh of men to be offered up to the gathering flocks.

If you recall in heaven there was a great celebration of unity and life, a great feast of joy {the Marriage Supper}, but here upon earth there will be a great feast of sorrow and pain and death. Down thru time when man has went to battle, and his armies have gathered across the field from one another to make war, the skies above them were darkened with carrion eagerly awaiting to feast upon the fallen dead, such a gathering of men would attract these scavengers, and as these birds descended upon the dead bodies scattered across the battlefield, they would not care who they feasted upon, whether it be servant, slave, captain, or king, these birds of death paid no heed to titles or rank, they just wanted to satisfy their hunger and fill their bellies, and so here we have the largest gathering of fowl the earth has ever seen, scavengers from all over obey the command of this angel in the sun, they come hungry, starving, maddened and driven by a divine command, they come in the thousands, possibly millions, for remember much of their sustenance has been wiped out with all the plagues poured out upon the earth, so the chance to gorge their empty gullets can not be passed up. So they gather and their cries and caws echo over the valley of Megiddo as they wait to be served a feast from their God.

Alluding to this we read in *Mt 24:28 For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.* As well as in *Eze 39:17 And, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord GOD; Speak unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field, Assemble yourselves, and come; gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh, and drink blood. 18 Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bullocks, all of them fatlings of Bashan. 19 And ye shall eat fat till ye be full, and drink blood till ye be drunken, of my sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you. 20 Thus ye shall be filled at my table with horses and chariots, with mighty men, and with all men of war, saith the Lord GOD. 21 And I will set my glory among the heathen, and all the heathen shall see my judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid upon them. 22 So the house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God from that day and forward.*

So these fowls of the air are bid to come to feast upon the upcoming slaughter...

V18-19 *18 That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. 19 And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.*

Here John sees the armies of man spread out across the valley of Megiddo, like a large table covered in all sorts of edible delicacies, among them is the beast and the false prophet, most likely speaking lies to the men in order to encourage them for the upcoming fight. Remarkably the earth's kings and nations are in alignment and agreement here, but not surprisingly they are allied together against God, and now they see their target, the one upon the horse and the army that follows behind. You can imagine that the air is tense, nerves are on edge, soldiers making final preparations to engage, they believe this is going to be a long drawn out bloody fight, that they have a chance, that they can win, but little do they know they are staring death in the eye, for before the armies of the Beast even get a chance to pull a trigger or react to a command, their leader and second-in-command are surprisingly taken prisoner...

V20 *And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.*

Notice these two, the most powerful, the miracle workers, the Satan empowered, are taken captive, taken alive, and are immediately cast into the lake of fire, their judgment already decided. They are immediately condemned. Now in the Old Testament we read of two who did not die but were taken to heaven, Enoch and Elijah, and here these two do not die but are cast alive into hell. They are the first of many to be thrown into such a horrible devastating place, a place where torment never ends, where time stands still, and eternal judgment is forever endured. *Re 20:10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, **and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.*** The beast and false prophet will suffer the vengeance of eternal fire, they are not annihilated nor is there a chance for pardon, their fate is forever set, to perpetually drown in flame and fury. These adversaries of the Lamb struck no blow, gave no command, hurt not one soul from the army of heaven, but immediately with the coming of Christ two thirds of the satanic trinity are defeated, taken and cast out. Following this, as the armies of the earth look on in fear and confusion, the Lord Jesus speaks a word, a phrase, and that remnant is consumed with the brightness of his coming and the sword of his mouth, and the buzzards begin their feast.

V21 *And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.*

With a word the Lord Jesus has instant victory, just a word. A word from God has absolute power. God spoke creation into existence. When Jesus as God in the flesh spoke to the fig tree it withered, when he spoke to the wind and the storm, both fell silent, when he spoke to the legion of demons they obeyed his command and fled from his presence. And now Jesus demonstrates once more his equality with God, his position in the godhead, his place in the trinity, for with one word the ultimate war is over before it began. The armies of the antichrist fall where they stand and all that Satan has strived for collapses, his plans lay in ruins, his schemes have come to naught. For Satan can not overcome God, he tried once, failed miserably, and was cast out of heaven with those who followed him, and now he has tried the same thing upon the earth and has failed yet again, so he and his earthly followers will now be dealt with in similar fashion as before, they once again will be cast down, cast out, to a lower existence. And so the Great Tribulation comes to an end.

Something we can take from these verses is that if we notice that the word “flesh” appears multiple (5) times here, flesh is very present, flesh has amassed in power, flesh stands against God, but no matter how much flesh is brought to bear in defiance, it still fails because the flesh has no power, not even the flesh of kings, captains or mighty men, not the flesh of horses or those that ride upon them, not the flesh of all men. For the flesh is carnal, is weak, is sinful, fallen, and defeated.

Ro 7:18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing.

Ro 8:8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

Ro 8:13 For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die:

And since that is the condition of all flesh, all mankind, how could it ever assume that it could stand before its creator in defiance? *Isa 45:9 Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker!* So we must learn not to depend upon flesh, trust in the flesh, or work in the flesh, but instead we are to look to the one that overcomes all flesh, the one that gives life to that flesh.

Chapter 27

SERMON – THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB

Revelation 19:7-9

In our studies we have come to one of the greatest events every Christian looks forward to, a time when Christ and his bride, the church, are truly united, we know this event as the Marriage of the Lamb. What a wedding and celebration this will be in heaven. For a marriage relationship is something God holds as very precious and dear, in fact other than His own relationship with man, marriage and the family was the first institutions God set up, the first couple were united into a family. Marriage and the family came before government, came before Israel, came before the Law, came before the church, so such a relationship must be very important to God. And that is why we see the symbolism presented to us throughout the Bible of the church as the bride of Christ being betrothed and united with the bridegroom, the Lord Jesus. The marriage of the Lamb and the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (the celebration that takes place after the wedding) are spectacular heavenly events that occur after the rapture, after the Judgment Seat of Christ, but before the second coming of Christ to this world. But something far beyond mere coincidence about this heavenly marriage is how this event and all the events that surround it have many similarities to the actual, traditional, earthly Hebrew wedding, and Jesus used such symbolism in his teachings. This is something I think we will all benefit from as we look at these similarities, for we shall see that we who are a part of the bride are to make ourselves ready, to be watching and waiting for the bridegroom, for we do not know when he shall appear ... *Mt 25:6 And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.*

Step 1: Betrothal, espousal, or the engagement period, where the bride and groom are set apart for a future union, a covenant/contract/agreement is made between two parties

Hebrew: Under the Hebrew tradition, most marriages were arranged marriages. Many times a young man would go out and find a girl who he liked very much and then he would come and tell his father about her and that he would like to wed her, other times the father would tell the son who he was to wed. There was no such thing as dating or courting among young couples, no such thing as having a boyfriend or girlfriend. Once a bride was selected the father and son would go and meet with the bride and her father and a price would be discussed, a price the bridegroom and father would pay to ensure the bride was well cared for. This price was a very high price, not easily come by, this showed just how much the bridegroom was willing to sacrifice in order to be with and have a life with the bride.

When a price was agreed upon, a covenant or binding agreement was almost complete. One thing was left to do, to show her acceptance of such a covenant, the bride would be offered a cup of wine, and she could then choose to accept or refuse it. If she drank it the covenant was established, a covenant that could only be broken by legal divorce or death, for the young couple was now considered to be in a relationship that was nearly the same as marriage even though no wedding had occurred as of yet. And from that moment on until the

time of the wedding the bride would be set apart specifically for the bridegroom. Now how does that compare to Christ and the Church?

Heavenly:

-The Going Out & Choosing of the Bride: Over 2000 years ago the Bridegroom Jesus Christ left his Father's house and came to this earth to choose out a bride, and even today he is still choosing that bride, for the bride is the church, and the church is still growing. Jesus came to this earth, the bride's house, to find His bride. Speaking of Christ we read in... *Php 2:6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*

Job 3:13 And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.

Job 1:14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us,...

Ga 4:4 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,

-The Wedding Covenant: God made a covenant before the foundations of the world were laid for such a union between Christ and man: *Eph 1:4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.*

1Pe 1:20 Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,

Job 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. 17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

We become part of that covenant, the marriage agreement, at the time of our conversion, when we accept the Lord Jesus' marriage proposal, when we receive him as Savior. We are then engaged to the bridegroom, set aside for him, promised to him.

-The Price that was Paid: The price the Lord paid to purchase the bride was very high, it was the Bridegroom's own Blood and His Life

1Co 6:20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

Ac 20:28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

1Pe 1:18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; 19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

Mt 20:28 Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Ro 5:8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

-The Cup: Jesus drank the cup of iniquity for us to make the covenant binding, remember his prayer in the garden? *Mt 26:39 And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.* He drank to the covenant upon the cross. While those of us who accept him as Savior drink to the same agreement with the Cup of Remembrance which Christ instituted at the last supper. *1Co 11:23 For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: 24 And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. 25 After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. 26 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.*

We drink this cup in remembrance of Christ, we drink the cup to remember his sacrifice (his payment), his promise (his covenant), and his imminent return (the taking of the bride to the wedding ceremony).

Step 2: Separation & Preparation Period

Hebrew: In the Jewish custom once the marriage covenant was established, the price paid, the cup drank, the groom would then return to his Father's house. And so there would be a time of separation between the bride and groom, their first kiss would come after the wedding. This time apart could vary but was typically around a year. But while apart the bride and groom each had certain responsibilities to prepare for the upcoming ceremony. The bride would be busy gathering things that were precious to her that she would like to take to her new home. The groom was to go and prepare a living area for his future wife. This place was either a room attached to his father's house or a new home built on his father's land.

Heavenly: That sounds kind of familiar doesn't it? For Christ after he came to this earth, after he paid the price for our redemption, after the cup was drank, he then ascended into the clouds to his heavenly home, he returned to his Father's house. *Ac 1:10 And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.*

While there in His father's home the Lord Jesus is preparing a place for his bride, *Job 14:1 Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*

And while Christ is doing that, the bride, the church, has responsibilities as well. And how is the bride to ready herself? **Re 19:7** *Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.* She is to be a representative of the bridegroom, to bring him honor for what he has done for her in choosing her, loving her, sacrificing for her. To do this she is to be a doer of good works, good service to God. *Mt 6:20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

Eph 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. The bride is to be doing the work of the Lord, witnessing to others about her bridegroom, striving toward the mark, waging a good warfare, fighting a good fight, living a life that would be pleasing to him, for all honor and glory are due him for what he has done for the bride as well as what awaits her in heaven. For she shall stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ for a final inspection, where worthless works are burned away and all that will remain are the precious holy works done for the Lord (that's the only thing she brings, those works done in the name of Christ). It is those works that are the righteousness of the saints the bride is adorned in at the marriage of the Lamb (i.e. her wedding gown). **Re 19:8** *And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.*

Step 3: The Retrieving of the Bride

Hebrew: When the father of the son was satisfied with the preparations made, when the home or room was to his satisfaction, the father would then say to his son to go and retrieve his bride. Only the father knew when this time would come, only the father could give permission. Once given the son would return to the house of the bride with a great procession, with his friends and best man. It was a happy, joyous event. This procession would also most typically take place at night, where all in the wedding parade would be carrying lights and lanterns, thus adding to the visuals of such a spectacular event. As the bridegroom drew near

the bride's home a herald would announce his approach with a shout and/or a trumpet, surprising the waiting bride and those with her, and that is why she was always to be ready, always prepared to go with her groom, to have oil for her lamp and her bags packed for her groom could come get her at any moment. And as this wondrous parade of joyous friends arrived at the bride's house the groom would collect his bride, like a thief in the night, he would quickly snatch her away, as well as all her friends who were gathered and waiting with her, and then they would all return to the groom's home for the wedding ceremony and celebration, where the groom's father would provide special wedding garments for the bride. Something else to take notice of here is that sometimes when a well-to-do young Jewish man would get married he would escort his bride home by carrying her away in a very ornate chariot, much like we do with a limousine or horse and carriage today.

Heavenly: Now how does this compare to the church that even now awaits the return of Christ? I think its pretty easy to see the similarities here don't you? For Christ, who is preparing a place right at this moment for his bride will one day be told by God the Father to go and retrieve his bride and bring her home. No one knows when this will take place, Jesus did not even know, that's why the church is to always be ready, to be prepared, to look up and lift up our heads for our redemption draweth nigh. *Mt 24:36 But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. . . .Mt 24:44 Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. . . .Mt 25:13 Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.*

Lu 12:35 Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; 36 And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. 37 Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. 38 And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. 39 And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. 40 Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.

When the Lord Jesus comes back one of the most anticipated events of the church will take place, the rapture of the church, the carrying away of the Bride of Christ. Paul warns believers to be ready for this event in **1Th 5:2** *For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. 3 For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. 4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. 5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. 6 Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. 7 For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. 8 But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. 9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.*

Paul describes this event in the previous chapter... **1Th 4:13** *But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. 15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. 16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*

The Greek word for "caught up" in v17 is *harpazo* and means to snatch away quickly, **1Co 15:51** *Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.* The church, the bride, will be given robes of righteousness, crowns of gold, we will be rewarded if our works stand the test of the

Judgment Seat of Christ, God the Father will dress us for the occasion of the marriage ceremony... *Isa 61:10 I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.*

Re 19:8 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

The church is taken home, the bride taken to the Son's Father's house, and its quite possible, we will be escorted and carried home by chariots of fire like Elijah was, for our bridegroom is rich in mercy, grace and love and wants the very best for his bride.

Step 4: The Marriage Celebration and the Revealing of the Couple to the World

Hebrew: Once back at the groom's father's house the marriage would be consummated and all the guests would join in the celebration. And then the happy couple would be revealed to the world as they began their life together.

Heavenly: This is just like what will happen in heaven, there will be many guests invited to such a wedding, *Re 19:7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. 8 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. 9 And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.* We have discussed who will be such guests, so just to cover them quickly remember that the bride is the church: those who have placed their faith in Christ, followed him in the example of baptism and joined themselves to a local church, so the guests are not the church, but the guests consist of the Old Testament saints who lived before the church, the apostles and prophets and heroes of the faith will be there, they will also include the tribulation saints, and some believe they will include those who were saved but did not join themselves with the body, the church. *Mt 8:11 And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.* And they will all be rejoicing for the blessed occasion.

And once the celebration is over the bride and groom will be revealed to the world at the second coming of Christ... *Re 19:11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. 12 His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. 13 And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. 14 And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. 15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. 16 And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.*

Jude 1:14 And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints,

The Lord Jesus will return to this earth to rule and reign as King and Lord, and as we know, every King needs a queen, the bride will rule with him for 1000 years.

I hope from this you see the love of the bridegroom for his bride, I hope you have seen the price that was paid for you, and now if you are not saved, the cup is before you, to accept or reject the marriage proposal of the Lord Jesus Christ, he wishes for you to become Mr. or Mrs. Christian.

Chapter 28

REVELATION –CHAPTER 20

With the end of Rev ch19 the Day of the Lord and the Great Tribulation have drawn to a close. From ch6 all the way thru ch19 we have taken a quick look at the events that will transpire during that time, some wonderful and some terrifying, but it all ends as the heavens opened up and the second coming of Jesus took place, the armies of Satan were defeated where they stood and the dragon's top two lieutenants, the beast and the false prophet, were taken captive, taken alive and cast into the lake of fire. And beginning in ch20 we find out what happens to the third portion of the satanic trinity, the dragon, Satan himself and thus begins the millennial reign of Christ.

The Apostle John has just witnessed the antichrist and the false prophet being taken at their pinnacle of power and cast into eternal torment, John has seen the armies of the earth slain and turned into bird food, and now we see God dealing with Satan. But Satan is neither killed nor cast into eternal torment, at least not yet, for God still has use of him before it's all over.

V1 *And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.*

Here John sees an unnamed angel descend from heaven, most likely this is the same angel we saw all the way in back in ch9 during the 5th trumpet judgment, *Re 9:1 And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. 2 And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit. 3 And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power... Re 9:11 And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon.*

That star that fell from heaven was an angel who has the key to the bottomless pit, just like we see here in ch20. This angel must be very mighty, for he is the jailor of powerful demonic forces, he keeps them bound, locked away, in the abyss or bottomless pit, for it is from this place that the demonic locusts issued forth, and it is from here that the demonic force that possesses the one who is the antichrist comes from... as we see in the portion of scripture that deals with the antichrist and the two witnesses *Re 11:7 And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.* As well as is in *Re 17:8 The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.* As we see, dark and powerful things are kept hidden and locked away in the pit. The bottomless pit is a special place for super powerful fallen angels to be imprisoned, as some angels were bound or chained there when they were cast out of heaven. *2Pe 2:4 For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;*

Jude 1:6 And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.

When Jesus confronted the demons of Legion, those demons begged to not be sent to this pit... *LM 8:31 And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep.* The pit is a reference to a specific, inescapable portion or area of hell (not the lake of fire). The Greek word used for such a place is Tartarus, and describes the deepest, darkest abyss of hell. The actual meaning of the word "bottomless pit" is abyss and is defined as depthless. And it is in this bottomless pit that the angel of ch20:1 casts

the Devil into. So Satan is cast into the lowest of the low, the darkest of the dark, and is in a sense the furthest away from God as he can get for now.

V2-3 *2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, 3 And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.*

Notice in v2 the angel laid hold of Satan, one of the most powerful created beings of God. The angel overpowers Satan and casts him into the pit, then closes the door behind him and seals or locks that doorway which will not be opened again for a period of 1000 years. This demonstrates the sheer power of this angel, the divine strength he has, the purpose God created him for, to battle and wrestle the dragon, as King David battled the bear and the lion, to overcome the dragon and hurl Satan into the void. I can imagine Satan fights back, when he is grappled by this angel he thrashes and twists and tries his very best to escape, almost like trying to give a cat a bath, but that old serpent is overcome by this keeper of the keys and thrown from the earth and is now shut out, much like he was cast out from heaven. Satan has been free to roam earth for thousands and thousands of years, but now his freedom has been taken, now Satan experiences something he has never felt before, absolute helplessness. For no matter what he does or how much he struggles he can not escape his prison. *Isa 24:21 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. 22 And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited. 23 Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the LORD of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously.*

So Satan is sent to the bottomless pit, he is imprisoned here to suffer and to scheme, but his incarceration only lasts for 1000 years. But while Satan is imprisoned he will have no influence upon the earth, he will not tempt, he will not corrupt, he will have no control whatsoever upon mankind, he will deceive the nations no more, not until this 1000 year time period is completed. And what a time period this will be, a time referred to as the Millennial Reign of Christ, the Millennium, for while Satan is locked away, the Lord Jesus sits upon the throne of David and reigns and rules the earth along with his bride. V4 to v7 of Rev ch20 covers a period of at least 1000 years. We call this time period the Millennial Reign, even though that word or title does not appear in scripture, simply because the Latin word for 1000 (which is similar to the Greek word which is actually used in Scripture for 1000 years) is *millennium*.

It is this time period that is addressed in v4-6. Now these verses do not describe a whole lot of what happens during this time, but throughout the Bible many prophetic texts do and give greater detail of what will transpire. But before we look at those references, lets address what we are presented with in v4-6.

V4-6 *4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. 5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.*

Once Satan is bound, and taken care of, John's view takes him to see the faithful of Christ, serving their Lord as they reign and watch and judge the earth, just as Daniel prophesied in *Da 7:18 But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.* This time is also

prophesied of in *1Co 6:2 Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?*³ *Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?*

2Ti 2:12 If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us:

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

So the faithful will be sitting upon thrones on earth, much like what we saw in ch4 of Revelation where 24 elders sat upon thrones in heaven, those elders being symbolic of the saved and saints of old. And upon these thrones John sees the martyred, the tribulation saints, along with all of those who are a part of the first resurrection. John sees all those that v6 makes reference to, which includes the bride of Christ (the church) (see also Rev 5:10, 2:26-28, 3:12, 21; I Thes 4:13-18, II Tim 2:12), the Old Testament saints (Dan 12:1-4), and the tribulation saints, all who are blessed and holy, who by the blood of Christ are made immune to the second death, by the blood they are saved from such condemnation, and are instead made priests of God and of Christ, made kings and priests (Rev 1:6) and servants to the most high, all who have been granted everlasting life and rule and reign for a period of a 1000 years with Christ. Please take careful note here, these are the only ones who are resurrected at this moment, only believers, the faithful, for as v5 points out, the rest of the dead, the unbelievers, the unsaved, are not resurrected until the Millennial Reign is over, at which point they too will be raised, but not for reward but instead for final judgment.

So here we clearly see there are two separate resurrections, separated by the 1000 year reign of Christ. We refer to these as the 1st and 2nd resurrections, or the **resurrection of life** and the **resurrection of damnation** as Jesus names them in *Job 5:28 Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, 29 And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.* Those that are saved, whose names are written in the book of life, are part of the resurrection of life of which Christ was the first fruits of {We also see reference to this in Luke 14:14 as the resurrection of the just}, while the unsaved those whose names are not written in the book, are part of the resurrection of damnation and will face judgment before the Great White Throne.

So those who are a part of the first resurrection, the resurrection of life will actively participate in the Millennial Reign of Christ, so the question is what will transpire during that time, what is in store for those who are privileged enough to experience this? We know believers will rule and reign, peace will abound, the promises to Israel will be fulfilled, and man will live and prosper like never before but what else? The easiest way for me to tell you is to let the Bible speak for itself...

Isa 2:1 *The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. 2 And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. 3 And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. 4 And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.*

Isa 11:1 *And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: 2 And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; 3 And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: 4 But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. 5 And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. 6 The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. 7 And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. 8 And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. 9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.*

Isa 35:1 *The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. 2 It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the LORD, and the excellency of our God. 3 Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. 4 Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; he will come and save you. 5*

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. 6 Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.7 And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes. 8 And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. 9 No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there:10 And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Isa 65:17 *For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. 18 But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.19 And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. 20 There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed. 21 And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. 22 They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. 23 They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the LORD, and their offspring with them. 24 And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. 25 The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD.*

Jer 33:14 *Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah.15 In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. 16 In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The LORD our righteousness.*

Da 7:13 *I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.14 And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.*

Zec 8:3 *Thus saith the LORD; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the LORD of hosts the holy mountain.4 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age. 5 And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof.*

Mic 4:3 *And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. 4 But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it.*

Israel:

Am 9:14 *And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them.15 And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the LORD thy God.*

Jer 24:6 *For I will set mine eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them again to this land: and I will build them, and not pull them down; and I will plant them, and not pluck them up.7 And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the LORD: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart.*

Jer 23:3 *And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase.4 And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the LORD. 5 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. 6 In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. 7 Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that they shall no more say, The LORD liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt;8 But, The LORD liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land.*

Jer 31:31 *Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:32 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: 33 But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.*

Ho 3:5 Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days.

In addition to the unsaved dead being absent during this reign of 1000 years, Satan will also be bound and locked away in the bottomless pit where his influence can not further corrupt mankind, for as we discussed, there will be human beings living and prospering during this time, the believers that have made it thru the tribulation period without dying will bear children under the most perfect circumstances this world has ever seen. And those children will experience very long lives for war will be no more, the earth will be rejuvenated, predators and prey will lay down with each other, crops and food will be plentiful, peace and justice will abound, disease, disaster and death will be extremely rare. This will be similar to the time before the fall of man. And what a wonderful time this will be with the Lord Jesus in charge. But just as Satan ruined the first paradise upon earth, so too will he try once more to do the same here. For after the 1000 year reign of Jesus Christ upon the throne of David, where he rules the world by a rod of iron, we now see that Satan will be freed from the bottomless pit to tempt man one last time.

V7-8 *7 And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, 8 And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.*

Now the question most people ask is why does God set Satan free? Why not just get rid of him like He did the beast and the false prophet? What we must understand is God always has a good reason for doing what He does whether we understand it or not. But I think the reason for this action is quite simple. For during this time Christ has ruled justly and rightly upon the throne, people have grown up under his divine reign, sin & wrongdoing is dealt with quickly and severely, but just because man lives under Christ does not mean they all accept or trust him. Remember, God gave man free will, so He will not force Himself upon anyone, Christ will not force anyone to receive Him or accept Him, even though He loves them and gave himself for them. So man, as he is born into a near perfect world and lives and prospers during these 1000 years, will still have the choice to believe or not, for man is still a “whosoever”. So the children who are born during the Millennial Reign and grow into adults will still have the choice to believe or not believe. And those that do not choose to accept Christ as King and Lord, due to the strict rule of the King, will basically just go thru the motions, they will obey the laws, do what is expected of them, yet in their heart there is no faith, no trust, no sincerity, no relationship, no change. They are still sinners playing/pretending they are believers, playing as good citizens of the kingdom, they feign obedience and allegiance but heir hearts are just not in it.

And many wonder how could anyone be like that during that time? How could anyone not choose Jesus? But I could ask the same question about this day and age, the age of grace, why do so many reject Christ, why do so many profess to be believers, sit under biblical preaching and teaching, but never give their heart to God? Why do so many play at church and being a Christian? We have no good answer, all we can do is point at the nature of mankind. For the reason man rejects Christ is because man is sinful, *Jer 17:9* *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;*, man is full of pride, man is carnal and fleshly and weak and easily gives in to ungodly desires. And thus sin during the Millennial Reign will be due to self-will and giving in to fleshly lusts, Satan will not cause man to sin, but man himself will, as it is in his nature. *Eph 2:1* *And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; 2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: 3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were **by nature** the children of wrath, even as others.* So sin will exist in the Millennial Reign but it will be

dealt with quickly and justly, which could cause some hearts to harden against such a strict Judge. And since there will be many who do not truly affiliate themselves with the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, something will have to happen to pull them out of their hiding, out of their pretending, and that is where the release of Satan upon the earth comes in.

For when Satan is loosed for a short time he will go out to deceive and seduce the nations, to pull those nonbelievers out and convince them to follow him in rebellion to the King. And because of the length of the 1000 year reign and death being a rare incident and birth being very frequent, the world will be greatly populated, and that is how Satan amasses one last army with numbers as the sand of the sea (v8). This isn't just a mob of a few unbelievers, but it is a vast multitude whose hearts are not subject to God, not tender to His Son, not indwelt by the Spirit, who have sided with the Dragon, that Old Serpent. With so many unregenerate hearts Satan will find it quite easy to gather many to his side.

So once more we see man fails the test, even under near perfect conditions. It's the same old story. When man was tested in the Garden of Eden man broke the one rule given to him, and man failed his first test. Under the age of conscience, the antediluvian age, man filled the earth wickedness and violence and so the great purging flood came, again man failed; When living under divinely appointed government man slipped into idolatry and turned his back on God (time of the tower of Babel and Nimrod), and so man failed; Under the Law man crucified his Savior, therefore man failed; When man was tested under grace, man did not appreciate mercy and rejected the gospel, once more man failed. And now tested under the personal reign of Christ, under the rule of glory, man still sides with a defeated, imprisoned, cast out foe. Man fails yet again. *1Co 2:14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* And in that failing, do we not see man's absolute need for Christ? for man is a failure without him, empty without him, lost without him, most miserable without him, but with him man has everything.

V8 *And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.*

Now do not let the mention of Gog and Magog confuse you, as this IS NOT a reference to the Gog and Magog invasion spoken of in the book of Ezekiel (in Ezekiel the army came from the north, here it comes from the four corners of the earth, also the time and judgments are different Ezk 38:16, 19-22). This simply refers to the armies of Satan made up of a rebellious people, with hearts that are similar to the hearts of those that were part of the previous Gog and Magog invasions, as both armies come with ill intent to Israel and Jerusalem. But this invading army, Satan's last grasp of some form of victory, is defeated by God himself...

V9 *And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.*

As Satan's army, composed of men who have seen no warfare for 1000 years, surrounds Jerusalem and the camp of the saints, fire comes down from heaven and devours the entire invading force. God fights and wins the battle for His own. And so left alone and defeated Satan is now taken and finally cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, a place created for him, a place of torment, of fire, of pain, of eternal separation.

V10 *And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.*

Finally after 1000 years the satanic trinity is united once more, united as eternal prisoners that forever endure the wrath of God.

V11 *And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.*

Following such a victory, John now sees a new scene, and what he sees is stark, dreadful, with an overcast of doom upon it, it is simply a great white throne, pure and holy, an emblem of all that is just and fair, and upon that throne John sees none other than the great judge himself, the Lord Jesus Christ. *Job 5:22 For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son:... 27 And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.*

2Ti 4:1 I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;

This is no court room scene that John sees, for even though there is a judge with the accused before him, there is no jury, no defense attorney, no prosecution, for all judgment falls to the one who knows all, sees all, for as v9 states the earth and heaven flee away and so there remains no place for man to hide from the judge's piercing gaze, no where to hide from his searching of hearts. All will be revealed, all will be dealt with fairly and justly for Christ is the omniscient judge. But please note, no believer will be here, no saved will ever stand before the great white throne, for believers stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ where their rewards are determined. Before the great white throne is where the damned will stand and receive their sentence. For as Christ readies himself to judge, the second resurrection, the resurrection of the damned, takes place in order to summon the unbelieving dead of all the ages.

V12-13 *12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.*

Here as death delivers up the physical bodies of each and every unbeliever and as hell coughs up their tormented souls to be united once more as body and spirit, each individual stands before the great judge, before the very one their sins crucified, the very one they rejected, the very one they mocked and jeered, the one they hated and scorned, all will stand there terrified with the shadow of doom overhanging them as they look upon the face of Christ in fear. Then we see that the books are opened, a book for each individual, a book of record of all things done and not done, for good or for evil, in his or her lifetime. Along with those books, we also know that the Word of God will be one of the books used to judge as well, for Jesus says in *Job 12:48 He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. Ro 2:16 In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.* And one other book that will be opened will be the Book of life, the Lamb's Book of life, and as v15 states...

V15 *And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.*

Whosoever could choose to believe *Job 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* And whosoever could choose not to believe, *Job 3:18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.* These whosoever will have no defense for their rejection of Christ, no argument, no appeal, they will each reluctantly accept the ruling against them as just. Both small and great, rich and poor, mighty and weak, religious and infidel will stand and have their life and choices played out

before them and then they will receive their sentence. That is why its so important to know that your name is written there, in the book of life, for the sinner can either ask God for a free pardon or demand a fair trial, and I would much prefer freedom rather than a death sentence, for every one that stands at this judgment is condemned already, they stand here to be judged according to their works to see what kind of sentence they will receive not to have their guilt or innocence determined.

And that brings me to a question that came up last time, if there are different degrees of punishment for these unbelievers who will forever be separated from God. And it seemed that there must be as God is a just God, a fair God, and if believers receive varying degrees of reward it makes sense that unbelievers would receive varying degrees of punishment, for v12 & v13 both end with the expression the dead will be judged “according to their works”, and since all deeds are not the same in quantity or quality, this must mean there are varying degrees of punishment. And according to Scripture this assumption seems to be true...

Ro 2:5 But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; 6 Who will render to every man according to his deeds:

Mt 11:20 Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: 21 Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. 22 But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. 23 And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. 24 But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.

Mr 6:11 And whosoever shall not receive you, nor bear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city.

Lk 12:46 The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. 47 And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. 48 But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

Along with these verses the book of Romans actually teaches that one will be judged based on the amount of light they have received, not in those exact words, but the principle is there. Now we do not know exactly what all this entails, but we can trust that God will do right by everyone because as Ac 17:31 states... *he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness...* But the sad fact remains that all those that stand before the great white throne are sent to the lake of fire, and it will be worse for some than it will for others.

V14 *And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.*

And so as each one shown to be guilty is cast into the lake of fire, death and hell are cast in along with them. Neither death nor hell are needed any longer. For in eternity with the Lord there will be no death and there will be no need of a hell to store unbelieving souls until judgment, for now all that are left are believers, and they are forever united with their Lord, while those in the lake of fire are forever separated from God, and as v14 says, this is the second death, the lake of fire is the place of eternal separation, because those who have experienced the second birth are eternally united with God.

Chapter 29

REVELATION –CHAPTER 21

At the end of Revelation chapter 20 Satan and those whose names were not written in the book of Life were cast into the lake of fire after the 1000 year reign of Christ upon the earth. The Great White Throne Judgment is now over, the 2nd resurrection, the resurrection unto damnation completed, and starting in ch21 the history of time comes to an end as the history of eternity future begins. And I think it may help to point a couple of things out about these last chapters before we just jump into a verse by verse break down...

The first thing we see in these last two chapters is that John shows us at least seven new things to come.... In v1 there is a new heaven **(1)** and a new earth **(2)**, in v2 we see there is a new city **(3)**, the new Jerusalem, and with a new city comes new inhabitants **(4)**, which to my understanding is the bride of Christ, the church. We understand that this is what v2 and v9 is inferring because in the time of John's writing it was customary to describe a city by those that lived within it, such a city was identified by its inhabitants, and that's why we see the city described as a bride adorned for her husband, for the bride of Christ along with her friends, companions and attendants will abide in the new holy city. In v5 we see the Lord makes all things new **(5)**. Then in v23 and ch22:5 there is a new light **(6)** and finally in ch22 in v1-5 there is a new paradise **(7)**. Many things are going to change as the believer's eternity with Christ begins, old things will pass away and a true newness of everlasting life will begin.

The second thing we see in these last two chapters are many contrasts with the first three chapters of the Book of Genesis, which is appropriate for Genesis is the beginning and Revelation the ending with new beginnings. Such contrasts include *(taken from Preacher Jerry Honeycutt's commentary)*...

- in Genesis there was light before the sun, moon and stars appeared, in Revelation there is light forevermore
- in Genesis the curse is introduced, in Revelation it is removed
- in Genesis man was driven from the Garden of Eden and the Tree of Life, in Revelation he is brought back to the Tree of Life
- in Genesis Paradise is lost, in Revelation it is regained
- in Genesis the serpent enters in, in revelation he is cast out and nothing shall enter in that defiles
- in Genesis death enters, with Revelation there will be no more death
- in Genesis God was with man until man sinned, in Revelation God returns to dwell with man
- in Genesis God first made the heavens and the earth and then mankind, in Revelation the new man is made first and then the new heaven and the new earth are brought about
- in Genesis the seas were created in Revelation there are no more seas
- in Genesis there is sorrow and pain in Revelation there are no more tears, sorrow or pain
- Genesis begins with "In the beginning..." in Revelation 21:5 the Lord says "It is done", it is ended, completed.

And with those things in mind lets begin looking at ch21.

V1 *And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.*

Here the Apostle John sees a new heaven and a new earth, they are new for the first ones have "passed away". Now to begin with we need to understand exactly what we are talking about here. I think we all realize the term "earth" refers to this earth, this planet that we walk upon, but the word "heaven" may confuse some of us. For if you recall we are presented with three heavens in the Bible, **1.** first we have the atmospheric heaven, the sky around the earth, **2.** second is the universal heaven

where the sun, moon and stars abide, and then of course the third heaven **3**. is where the Lord abides, but here in v1 the word ‘heaven’ only speaks of one or possibly two of those heavens. So which does v1 refer to? Well, if we think about it and consult the Word of God, we can eliminate one easily, for it can not be the third heaven, for God’s abode will never undergo change for His house is perfect, unblemished by sin. But which heaven has been contaminated by sin? Remember, sin does not affect just one person, it affects all around him including his environment, so the one heaven that has to be referred to in v1 is the atmospheric heaven, where the devil’s kingdom once stood, for was he not the prince and power of the air, and did not his demons fill that kingdom? This heaven was the closest to man and therefore contaminated and must be purged or cleansed.

Such passing away could also include the universal heaven for it seems to be tainted as well for we read in *Job 15:15... the heavens are not clean in his sight...Job 25:5 Behold even to the moon, and it shineth not; yea, the stars are not pure in his sight.* Plus we will see evidence that the universal heavens of light will be needed no more in these last chapters of Revelation for God’s glory will light the world (v23). So a new heaven here in v1 most likely means a new universe and a new atmosphere with a new earth within it.

But something else we must have an understanding of in v1 is the term “passed away”, what happens to the old heaven and earth. That phrase does not mean the existing earth or heavens of the present will be destroyed or annihilated, but instead it means they will pass from one condition to another, to change their state of existence to another state. Simply put the heavens and earth will be renovated, made anew, they will be changed, not destroyed, they will change from something old to something new. And how do I know that? Because the Bible tells me so!

First we see the promise of a new heaven and earth in *Isa 65:17 For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.*, which correlates with v4, for the phrase passed away in that verse is translated from a different Greek word which means to be left behind, to depart, to actually pass away, meaning the former things of our lives, the bad things will be remembered no more, which I take as our memories of sin will be wiped away.

We read of another promise of a new heaven and earth in...*Isa 66:22 For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain.* So God has said there will be a new heaven and new earth, but God also said in *Ec 1:4 One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever.* So how can the earth pass away and yet abide forever? We also know that God promised Israel they would dwell in the earth forever, *Isa 60:21 Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified.* So does forever mean forever or not?

Well if we take God at His word and we do and if the earth is to abide forever, that means it in some way has an eternal existence. So if this earth is to remain how is there a new one and how does the old pass away? Well do we not have evidence in the Bible of God taking something old and making something new with it? Did not God make Adam out of the dust of the earth, and Eve from the body of Adam? Did not God, thru His grace and the blood of Christ and our faith placed in him change us from an old sinner to a new saint, a new creature? Now was we destroyed in that process? No. we were changed from the old man to the new. *2Co 5:17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are **passed away**; behold, all things are become new.* The same Greek word is used for “passed away” in this verse as in *Rev 21:1.* When a sinner is saved he is changed, transformed, made new, yet he is still the same person isn’t he? But his state and his standing before God are different. And this is just as the earth and heaven will be made new, just as a saved sinner is made new and the curse of sin removed so too will the curse be removed from the earth, it will be changed. The earth craves such a change just as lost souls crave salvation... *Ro 8:22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. 23 And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit,*

the redemption of our body. So how will creation be redeemed, purified, renovated, changed, made new? Well, the Apostle Peter sheds some light on this for us.

2Pe 3:3 Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, 4 And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. 5 For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: 6 Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished:

In v5 Peter is speaking of the creation, the heavens of old, the earth's surface changing to bring land masses about that would be inhabitable for animals and man. At first the earth was without form and was void, but God changed that during creation, something old was made new, not by destruction but by change.

In v6 Peter speaks of the great flood of Noah's time, a world overran with sin and violence was changed and made new by wiping out 99.9% of humanity with water. Following this, a new covenant was made, a new promise was given, yet the core of what the earth was remained the same, the planet as a whole was not destroyed or removed from existence, its surface was simply changed.

Now look at what Peter says in v7...*2Pe 3:7 But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.* After the Day of Judgment of the ungodly, after the Great White Throne Judgment, the heavens and the earth are reserved unto fire. Now many might think that fire destroys and consumes, but does the lake of fire annihilate the souls within it, did it destroy the beast or false prophet that were cast alive into it, or the resurrected bodies of the damned? No, so such fire will not destroy the earth or the heavens, but instead the fire will purify, will cleanse them like the flood did. The earth and the heavens will be changed by fire and fervent heat (much like volcanic activity does now for land masses)

*2Pe 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens {skies} shall **pass away** (the same meaning as "changed") with a great noise {exploding flammable gases}, and the elements shall melt {liquefy} with fervent heat, the earth also and the works {manmade things} that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved {loosened from chains}, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, 12 Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? 13 Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new {refreshed} heavens and a new {refreshed} earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.*

Fire will remake the surface of the earth, fire will purify the heavens, thus they shall be changed and loosed from the curse, much like what we read in *Re 6:14 And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.* This verse pictures the burning away of the heavenly atmosphere, but does not mean it is destroyed for a scroll when it is rolled up does not disappear, it is simply changed in shape. And such will the earth change shape when every mountain and every island are moved out of their places, when there shall be, as *Rev 21:1* says, no more sea. Again this does not say there are no more seas, plural, but with such a change of the earth's surface everything will be reordered and made as God wishes. There will still be water, and I can only imagine there will still be oceans and seas, but not as we know them. The surface of the earth will be forever changed into something new, it will not disappear and something entirely new created, but instead the new will be formed from the old.

V2 *And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*

We now come to the third new thing which John calls the holy city, the New Jerusalem. What a magnificent sight John sees, for he does not approach this city to see it from upon a hill or spread out across a valley, he does not walk or travel to it, instead John sees this great city coming to him, descending from heaven above. This city comes down out of the sky with a mesmerizing brilliance about it. This city of light is beautiful, wondrous, awe inspiring. John describes it as a bride who has

prepared herself for her husband, alluring, beautiful, breathtaking. It is adorned as a bride for this will be the home of Christ's bride, this will be the believer's eternal home, we have a reservation in this wonderful city of God! This is a sight to behold for this city has long been sought after, long anticipated, it is the very city Abraham looked for *Heb 11:10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.* This is the city, the mansions, the home for the bride of Christ, that Jesus went to prepare, *Job 14:1 Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*

Now the Bible does not specifically say if this city, as it descends from heaven, actually makes contact with the earth and settles somewhere or if it floats or levitates above the earth's surface. Harold Sigtler thinks it becomes sort of a planetary satellite that orbits the new earth or is at least suspended above the surface, and I tend to agree with this thought for as we to look at the description that John gives us of this city, we see that its foundations, which are typically beneath the ground, are fully visible, John can see every detail about them... *Re 21:14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb....Re 21:19 And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones.* This city seems to be in the heavens above the earth, and therefore we dwell not only in the new city but in the new heaven as well.

V3 *And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.*

It is within this new city that God will dwell with His people, who are the fourth new thing we see, the new inhabitants. God will dwell here in full fellowship with His people in this glorious city, believers will forever be in His glorious presence. This tabernacle, this dwelling place, of God will be inhabited by believers, God will dwell with mankind, man will be His and He will be our God. This was God's desire all along, for man to have unity and relationship and fellowship with Him, but sin always marred that bond. Think about it, God walked with man in the Garden of Eden until man fell into sin. God then dwelt with Israel in the tabernacle and later the temple until sin caused Him to depart. Later still, the Lord Jesus came to this earth and tabernacled, dwelled, with man, as we read in *John 1:14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt {tabernacled} among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.* Yet once more sin intervened, Christ died for man's sin upon the cross. And now in this present age, God does not dwell in manmade temples but He dwells within believers themselves... *Ac 7:48 Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, 49 Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest?... Ac 17:24 God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;...*

1Co 6:19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? 20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

Eph 2:19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; 20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; 21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord; 22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

Yet that indwelling is hindered by sin. But in the age of new things, man and God will dwell together once more, in peace, in harmony, we will be able to boldly approach the throne of God in person, to properly worship Him, serve Him in absolute perfection, because sin will be done away with, what a day that will be!

Now before we go too far looking at the new inhabitants of this city, I want to continue looking at John's description of the holy city, the new city, and deal with the new inhabitants later. So with that let's skip down to v9 where we begin to see a more in-depth description of the New Jerusalem.

V9 *And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.*

Again the city is not THE actual bride, but it's the city of the Bride of Christ. The phrasing here has to do with the time of John's writing, for a city was often identified with or by its inhabitants. That is why the angel calls it the Lamb's wife, the Bride of Christ, for this city will be the bride's home, the home of all saved believers, which to my cloudy understanding, will then leave the renovated earth for the non-church Jews to inhabit.

V10 *And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,*

The angel carries John away to stand atop a great and high mountain where John gets a wonderful unobstructed view of the holy city descending from heaven.

V11 *Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal;*

The city shines brightly with the glory of God, His *shekinah* glory that illuminates all around, just as His glory shone in the tabernacle and the temple as well as Mt Sinai. This shining glory signifies God's presence, that He is present with His people. The light of the sparkling city is described like a precious stone, like a jasper or diamond, clear as crystal, bedazzling and brilliant. This city sparkles and gleams, (*Re 21:23 And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.*), the light that shines from Christ, whose countenance is as the sun (*Rev 1:16*), is refracted and reflected throughout the city thus entirely lighting the enormous metropolis. Like a radiant crystal chandelier, light shines forth from this holy city in all directions.

V12-13 *12 And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: 13 On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates.*

John sees that this city is surrounded by a great wall, which speaks of protection, for its inhabitants will have nothing to fear for God is with them, this wall is penetrated by 12 gates, and a guardian angel stands at each one, and upon these gates are written the names of the 12 tribes of Israel, one name for each gate. John also sees that this wall around the city forms a shape in the form of a large square, and there are 3 gates on each side of the square, north, east, south and west, with sections of wall in between each one.

V14 *And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.*

Under this wall that surrounds the city are massive foundations, which speak of permanence, for where the tent or tabernacle could be easily uprooted and moved because they had no foundation, this city shall not be moved, shall not fall, for its foundations are mighty, strong and eternal. Upon these 12 foundations are written the names of the 12 apostles.

Notice we have 12 and 12, 12 tribes of Israel, 12 apostles, for a total of 24. Do you remember the 24 elders that were gathered around the throne that represented believers of all ages?, Well once more we see such symbolism in these written names, 12 for the Old Testament believers, the 12 tribes, and 12 for the church age believers, the 12 apostles that helped lay the groundwork for the church. Both Old and New Testament saints are represented in this holy city, the saints of the Old and New covenants are united in this city, we are all brought together in the Lord, where there is neither Jew nor Gentile but instead one family.

Now that's what John sees from a distance, but in v15, the angel that is speaking to him allows John to approach the city and the angel then measures this massive city and gives John the dimensions...

V15 *And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof.*

Now back in Rev ch11 John was commanded to measure the temple of God in the earthly Jerusalem, *Re 11:1 And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. 2 But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.* If you recall such measuring symbolized God laying claim to that temple, it was His, and that's what we see here, this city is the city of God, His dwelling place with His people, His throne is here, His glory is here, His presence is here, so the whole, the entire city, the city and its inhabitants, belong to Him, so this measuring signifies God's ownership of such. God measures it because it is His, He has the rights to it. And with the measuring done we are then given the dimensions of this massive city...

V16-17 *16 And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. 17 And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel.*

We can see this is no normal city, it is gigantic, even if we are conservative in our approximations, it is larger than any city we have ever known. First John says it is foursquare, meaning it is equal on all sides, speaking of its perfection, nothing is out of order or balance. John also points out that the height is equal to the length and breadth, which gives us the distinct impression of two possible geometric forms the city can take, it is either in the shape of a cube or a pyramid, (the Holy of holies was also a perfect cube).

The length, breadth and height of the city are 12,000 furlongs, a furlong of that day and time was approximately 600 feet long, so calculating the breadth, length and height of this city turns out to be around 1500 miles each. 1500 miles long, deep, and high. Such a city would reach from Maine to Florida and from the Atlantic seaboard to 600 miles west of the Mississippi River. Just the base of this city would cover over a half of the United States. There is plenty of room for believers of all ages. Now that is a city, and again it might even be suspended in air, talk about all things made new, all things are possible with God!

V18-21 *18 And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. 19 And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; 20 The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. 21 And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.*

Now that John gets a closer view of the city, he gives further details of the walls, foundations and the gates. John says the walls, like the city itself in v11, are of jasper, clear as crystal, reflective, sparkling, dazzling, they are 144 cubits high, 1 cubit equals about 18 inches, so the walls compared to the city are fairly small, being only 216 to 250 feet high, but its not like the city needs protection for it has God within it, *Zec 2:5 For I, saith the LORD, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her.* So these mighty walls of jasper with the names of the 12 tribes, are penetrated by 12 gates that are made out of a single apparently very large pearl, these are the pearly gates that only the pure and just,

only believers, can enter in. These Pearly gates, are representative of the suffering, the wounding and the death of the Lord Jesus which allows believers entry into this holy city, the faith they place in Him that places their name in the book of life.

And then John describes the city as something that's hard to imagine and even harder to describe, for the city proper and its streets are made of gold, pure gold, but gold that is clear as crystal, clear as transparent glass, which again allows the light of God's glory to pass thru and thus illuminate the entire city. God's glory shines in every corner and facet of the city. And so all within it will feel the warmth of God's presence, all will have His glory upon them. And then as the light of God's glory passes thru the 12 foundations that supports the city and its walls, that are decorated with all sorts of different colored precious stones, I can imagine that light is split into all sorts of different colored lights, from a divine radiance to a holy rainbow, an everlasting reminder of God's promises. What a remarkable sight, such a massive display of power and majesty, of holiness and divinity and beauty, and we will dwell in its midst with God.

But then something catches John's attention, he notices something is missing in this city...

V22 *And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.*

John does not see a temple, a place where people gather to worship God, a place where worship is focused, instead God and the Lamb are the temple, God is the focus of worship, all are gathered to Him to honor Him. This shows us that the presence of God is not confined to one specific place or building in heaven, where some believers would be close to God and others far away, but instead with there being no temple we see that anyone will have full and free access to God at all times, for He will be among us, not in a walled house or building, but in our midst and all around. All will be equally ever close to God, for there are no buildings, no meeting places, no churches to meet and worship for God as our new temple will be all in all and we in Him.

No More: Something we should take note of here is how John, when he is not sure how to describe what he sees, uses the absence of things to describe this heavenly place, think about it, in v1 he says there is no more old earth or old heavens, there is no sea, in v4 there are no more tears for there is no more death, sorrow, crying, or pain in this new city. Here in v22 there is no temple for God is the temple, later in v23 there is no need of the sun or moon, for as v25 says there is no night, we see the same stated in ch22:5 with an addition of there being no need of candles, or the sun or moon. In v27 of ch21 there are no defilers or abominations or liars, for in ch22:3 there is no more curse, no more sin, no more evil, no more disobedience. What a way to describe heaven, John can't limit the goodness that he sees with words that fall short of a glorious description so he simply says these things are no more, they are gone, absent, and that makes heaven all the better for it.

Now, since God and the Lamb are the temple, since they are ever present, and their glory continually shines forth, in such a presence we will have no need of the sun or moon for we who are in the city will be illuminated by God's glory, the 5th new thing, the new light.

V23 *And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.*

(ref v11) God's glory and the Lamb who is the Light, whose countenance is as the sun, who shone upon the mount of transfiguration, who shone as John watched him walk among the seven golden candlesticks, whose light will shine upon us in glory. Jesus described himself as the light of the world and we read in *Job 1:4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men.5 And the light shineth in darkness;* In this new city it is Jesus, who not only shone on those who were in spiritual darkness and guided them to

salvation, but who now emits a physical light that lights the entire city, *Re 22:5 And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light.*

We read in *Isa 60:19 The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. 20 Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the LORD shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.* And notice in the next verse that the nations of the saved, the believers upon the earth (for that is all that is left) walk in that light of the Lamb as they bring praise and glory and honor to the holy city.

V24-26 *24 And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. 25 And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. 26 And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it.*

Believers all over the new earth, representatives of all peoples, who will form new nations or groupings of people, will have free access to the city, kings of godly nations and godly peoples will ever pay homage to the Lamb and to God. Israel will flourish. Peoples of the new earth & the new heaven will not be barred from entering the city, or going back and forth, for there will be free communication and transportation between the city and earth, between heaven and earth, between God and man, at all times, for the gates of pearl are only shut at night, but the fact is, there is no night there, no darkness, no shadow, only the light of the glory of God who watches over and dwells eternally with man. All the faithful will bring glory and honor to God, for He has taken away all sorrow, all sin, all darkness, all fear.

No More Sea: If you recall, we read earlier that there will be no more sea, which I take as a literal body of water, but this could also be symbolic of God removing all the negative things that are related to the sea. For the sea can represent danger, peril and fear; think of the crossing of the Red Sea, of Noah's flood, of the tale of Jonah, those waters were dangerous and lethal. The sea also symbolizes distress, unrest, agitation and commotion for it is never still and constantly restless and in motion, yet in this new city there is peace and rest and safety and eternal security in the presence of God. The sea could also represent division and separation, barriers and boundaries, for the seas separate many peoples and lands, but in glory there is no separation between man or God, they are perfectly united. The sea may also symbolize secrets and mysteries for much is hidden beneath its surface, but much will be revealed in heaven. And even in the Bible, the sea is full of powerful storms, representing the storms of life, the struggles one undertakes to keep their head above water, storms where the light is clouded out and all that is left is cold dank darkness. But none of that is in the new city, not in New Jerusalem for there is no more sea, all that has passed away, been changed into something better, its opposite or its absence. And because all those harmful and depressing and discouraging things are removed the kings and nations of that day will praise God all the more for it. They will walk forever in the light and give God praise for it. In addition to all that, they will honor God for there is no more defilement, no evil, none that worketh abominations or lies left upon the earth, evil, sin, corruption, darkness, Satan and demonic influences are no more {which is distinctly different than "passed away" in v1 }.

V27 *And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.*

Only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life can enter in, and since these events of new things happen after the 2nd resurrection (unto damnation) and all evil and sin have been cast into the lake of fire, those are the only ones left, the ones that have their name written in the book! The city and the earth are only inhabited by the faithful.

So thus far in ch21 we have looked at (1) the new heaven and (2) the new earth, (3) the new city, holy Jerusalem, (4) the new light of Jerusalem which is the Lamb and is alluded to in *Pr 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.*, and we have also mentioned but not gone into great detail of (5) the new inhabitants of the new city and new earth, (6) the new Paradise in ch22, and finally to cover anything we might miss or not mention (7) all things that are made new as mentioned in ch21:5. Now in the making of all things new we know the earth will be purified by fire, totally cleansed, the surface of the earth will be reshaped and reformed and prepared to be populated once more, then the new Jerusalem (built & prepared by Christ) will descend from heaven and most likely hover above the surface of the earth in all its wondrous glory, and there in that city God will dwell with His people, Christ with his bride, and His light will illuminate the entire city, thus the city's inhabitants will bathe in the glory of the Lord all day long forever and ever for there is no night there. But believers will not be confined just to the city, for the earth with its land masses changed and most likely enlarged, with the seas either gone or reformed to be much smaller, will be populated by the redeemed as well, especially those of Hebrew lineage, thus fulfilling God's promise given to Abraham long ago. New nations will be formed by these new inhabitants of the new earth, new heaven and new city. And now we will take a closer look at those who will occupy the mansions prepared by the Lord Jesus and who dwell upon the earth, so with that lets first look at the new inhabitant's state in this new perfect kingdom; and that's something I want you to keep in mind about all these things that are made new, all of them are perfect.

V3 *And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.*

In v3 we see these new residents are a united people, a people united with each other but more importantly united with God. God will dwell in their midst, His dwelling place is with these people, they are called His people, God claims them as His own and they in turn fully accept Him and revere and honor Him as their God. Thus we have perfect worship in perfect unity with a perfect relationship between a perfect God and His now perfect people. In v4 we see these people will have a perfect disposition...

V4 *And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.*

Heaven would not be heaven if any of these existed there, but thanks be to God, death, sorrow, crying and pain are "passed away", or as the Greek meaning for that phrase in v4 are "left behind", (which differs from the same phrase in v1 which means changed), these troubling things truly are no more. No more death, no more disease, no more loss, no more fear, instead the new inhabitants are given life, life eternal, security, and assurance. No sorrow, no sadness, no disappointment, no depression, instead it will be joy unspeakable and literally full of glory, there will be praising and shouting and singing. Happiness and euphoria will abound. There will be no reason to shed tears or cry in heaven. *Isa 25:8 He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it. ...Isa 35:10 And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.* I once thought that we would remember this world and the lost and our failures and sin against God, but I think I have changed my mind on that, for even though I think we will be able to recall such things, those memories will be so small and insignificant now that we can see things how God sees them that we will not be bothered by such small moments that have disappeared in the past, instead

we will be focused on the Lamb, on eternity, on service to God, on our new responsibilities, so the new inhabitants will not dwell on such negative memories but will instead focus on all the good ones and glorious ones revealed to us of how great God is. *Isa 65:17 For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.* Also we see there will be no pain, no sickness, no hurt, physical or emotional, no more heartache, no suffering of any sort, no need of medications, health insurance or doctors or hospitals, no health problems whatsoever, my wife Michelle as a nurse practitioner, will be out of a job, for the new inhabitants will dwell in the presence of the Great Physician. The city's residents will exist in a perfect state with a perfect attitude and disposition, with a mind set like that of Christ's, with an understanding of how God views all things, for no negatives will exist in heaven.

V5 *And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.*

In v5, we are given the all encompassing 6th new thing, the fact that God will make all things new, not just the specific things we are covering in these studies. God in His rightful place on the throne in the midst of the new city (which is confirmed in ch22) makes a plain statement, that it is He that makes all things new, and so He does, for we have a new heaven, a new earth, a new city, a new light, a new paradise, all prepared by God for those that God made new by the blood of Jesus Christ, who will get to experience all these new things and more in the kingdom of perfect newness. To quote John Phillips and I really like the wording of this... *"Most people like to move into a new home; one day we shall move into a brand new world. It will indeed be a splendid place in which to live, for God will lavish the genius of His creative imagination upon it and will furnish it from resources of His unlimited power."* That is the reason God commands John to write that these words are true and faithful because the statement "Behold I make all things new" is full of truth and God is faithful to fulfill such a promise of newness. Also notice that as soon as the new heaven and earth are prepared, the new city descends from heaven, and once the new inhabitants are ushered into this new existence, God then says "it is done". He is finished making, preparing, this new perfect place for a new perfect people.

V6 *And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.*

"It is done", God's word and plan perfectly fulfilled, echoing what Jesus said on the cross when his work on earth ended, "It is finished". God the Creator, the beginning of all things, all creation, is the end. Like the alphabet, from the first letter, alpha, to the last, omega, God was before, during and will be after all this takes place, when this phase of God's plan is done, which He plainly states and then eternity rolls on.

And with such a statement we are given the promise that God will wholly satisfy us throughout eternity for He will freely quench any thirst we have, freely supply any need that we may have, v6... *I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.* This statement also echoes the words of Christ... *Job 4:14 But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.* There will be an abundant supply for every believer of only what God can supply, we will never thirst again, never be in need, never want again, The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want, shall not thirst, which is severely contrasted with the never ending, never quenched thirst that nonbelievers experience in eternal torment; remember the words of Lazarus the rich man who was cast into hell in *Lu 16:24 And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.* So we see we will finally be a

satisfied people, perfectly & freely satisfied and filled and eternally sustained with the goodness of God.

V7 *He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.*

Here we see we are also an overcoming people, which has some glorious repercussions. We are only an overcoming people because we have accepted the Overcomer, the Lord Jesus, who overcame sin, death, Satan and hell by His death, burial and resurrection. The book of Revelation mentions these overcomers quite a bit...

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

Re 2:11 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

Re 2:17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.

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

Re 3:5 He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

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

Re 3:21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

Martyrs... *Re 12:11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.*

1Jo 5:1 Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him. 2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. 3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. 4 For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. 5 Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

1Jo 4:4 Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

We actually see many hints of what is in store for the overcomer in these verses, but notice what else the overcomer is blessed with, in v7 it says the overcomer will inherit all things, for we are heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ; Jesus is the preeminent Son, the only begotten Son, but we, the new inhabitants, are also counted as the children of God because we are overcomers thru Christ. *Ro 8:14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. 15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. 16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: 17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.*

Ga 4:7 Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

Now what this inheritance of all things from God consists of we do not fully know, but we do know the heavens are his throne, the earth his foot stool and Jerusalem the city of the great King (Mat 5:34-35), but the awesome thing is God will be our God and we will be counted as His sons. Because the phrase He uses in v7 clearly says "my son". Talk about being like Christ, we will be loved and cherished as Christ by God, treated as His true Son, honored, rewarded, privileged, no wonder we can cry Abba Father! What a time that will be, we will be counted as fully God's and God will be counted as fully ours. Think about it, **1st** God gave His Son to us, as we read in John 3:16, **2nd** God gave us His Spirit, Lu 11:13 *If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?* And **3rd** in this time of new things, God gives Himself to us, for He will be our God, dwelling with us, present with us, and we will inherit what is His: all things. Total Perfection.

That is what is in store for overcomers, but v8 gives us a brief reminder of what is in store for those who are not overcomers thru Christ, but who are instead overcome by sin.

V8 *But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.*

None of these will exist in the new heaven and new earth, for they are cast out, eternally separated from God. Now they do receive a prepared place, but it was not originally meant for them, as this place was prepared for the devil and his angels, yet their rejection of Christ sent them here, and in the lake of fire there is only death, it is not “no more” but it is ever-present: eternal death, eternal pain, eternal sorrow, eternal tears and eternal flame, all those have not passed away where the unforgiven sinners are. Fortunately we see no such thing of sin, evil, wickedness, or curse, no worldly corruption or satanic influence in the new earth, the new heaven, the new city or the new inhabitants, for **ONLY** the redeemed of all ages who are now in perfect form are here. *2Pe 3:13 Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.* Not unrighteousness.

And now we come to the question we ran upon earlier, who are all these redeemed people in the new city and new earth, who is where, and so forth? Well, we know for sure there is a home for the bride of Christ, the church, in the new city, and that seems to be the majority of the population of the New Jerusalem for the city itself is referred to as the bride, but that does not mean there will be no correspondence or going back and forth between the new city and new earth by those specific believers, in fact, part of our responsibilities may be serving God upon the earth or reigning over parts of it as we will see in ch22. But at any rate the church will most definitely have a home in the new city. Maybe we will summer on the earth and winter in the city, if seasons even exist then.

I also think the Jews will have a specific honor during this time (specifically the Old Testament saints), for their lineage will continue according to God’s promise, as we see in *Isa 66:22 For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain.* Israel will be a nation of redeemed people during this time, redeemed and resurrected people, and possibly even a raptured people who are not part of the church... let me explain that...

{In preaching this I used an example of different colored jelly beans, so you, the reader, will have to imagine a bowl filled with white and black jelly beans to begin with...}

- 1. {white and black jelly beans only in the bowl}** in the present age before the rapture of the church there are **believers (white)** and **nonbelievers (black)** on the earth
- 2.** after the rapture **{remove white ones}** only **unbelievers (black)** are left and the Day of the Lord and the Great Tribulation take place. Now during this time some of those living on the earth come to faith, such as Jews being converted due to realizing that Jesus was the Messiah, some due to the 144,000 and the two witnesses evangelizing the world. We call the believers of this time **tribulation saints {add red jelly beans}**. Now many of those converted will be martyred by the antichrist and his forces, they too will go to heaven **{remove some red but not all}**, but others of the tribulation saints will make it all the way thru to the Second Coming of Christ.
- 3. {red & black beans are only in the bowl now}**At the end of the tribulation when the Lord Jesus comes back with his saints, the armies of the antichrist are vanquished, **{possibly all unbelievers killed or possibly some remain – remove most of the black}** and humanity gets yet another chance under the millennial reign of Christ and the first resurrection, this is a time that humanity will once again prosper and produce offspring {from

the tribulation saints - the red beans} who must decide for themselves whether to accept or reject King Jesus, those that believe will be **millennial believers (add green jelly beans)** as opposed to being **nonbelievers (black)** who will side with Satan when he is released after the 1000 year reign to wage war one last time.

4. {red, black, green are now in the bowl} After the 1000 year millennial reign, Satan is cast into the lake of fire, the great white throne judgment occurs and all who are not written in the Lamb's book of life, the **unbelievers {all black removed}** are cast in the lake as well, but this leaves people still upon the earth, only believers that have come thru the millennial reign, the **millennial believers {green and red only left}**.

What happens to these believers? for something must be done with them before God purges the earth with fire and makes all things new? Are they raptured or given glorified bodies at this time? Are they removed from the earth for a moment while God renovates the earth and then dispersed once more across the world but now in glorified bodies, for remember, there is no sin and no curse, no corruption anymore? Are they **(the green only)** possibly in a state as Adam and Eve were before the fall? Unfortunately we are not told the answer to this in Scripture or at least I have not ran upon such an answer, it is one of those things we have to wait and see about. But we do know there will be people on the new earth other than of Jewish descent, for Israel will be established and other new nations will be formed, different areas on the earth will be populated by different peoples, all believers, we see this in *Re 21:24 And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light;... Re 21:26 And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it.* (ref Ps 68:29) These are not nations like today, for again the new earth is only populated by glorified beings or at least beings in a perfect state on a perfect earth. One of these nations is Israel, and the other nations could be made of the tribulation saints, the martyred saints, the millennial saints, Old Testament non-Jewish saints, saints that are not part of the church/bride but of the church age. These nations could also include those children that died before the age of accountability. We just don't know.

Maybe this lends to a deeper meaning to what God told Abraham in *Ge 17:1 And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. 2 And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. 3 And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying, 4 As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. 5 Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee. 6 And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. 7 And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. 8 And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.*

Whatever happens and whoever all these peoples are, we can rest assured that they know Jesus and we will be there with them, and we will have all eternity to figure out all these questions.

1Co 2:9 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him...

Isa 64:4 For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.

Chapter 30

SERMON – THE PEARLY GATES

Revelation 21:1-2

In our studies we have looked at this holy city, the New Jerusalem, that will be the future home of believers, specifically those that make up the bride of Christ, the church. We see that this city descends from heaven after the last resurrection, after the last judgments, after the 1000 year reign of Christ, after Satan and all unbelievers are cast into the lake of fire. This city appears when God makes all things new, when the earth and heavens are renovated and prepared for eternal inhabitation by all believers. This is the city Abraham looked for *Heb 11:10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.* This is the city, the mansions, the home, that Jesus went to prepare for His bride, the church, *Job 14:1 Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.* This is the city where God will dwell with His children, His people, in absolute perfect fellowship and relationship. We as the children of light will live in this city of light in God's eternal glorious presence.

Now, the Apostle John goes into great detail describing this city, but for this message I want to focus on one particular area: the 12 gates that lead into this magnificent holy city... **v10-12, 21**. What I want to direct your attention to is the material these gates are made from, 12 gates each made from a single pearl. Each of these massive gates, located three to a side on all four sides (N, E, S, W) of the 250 foot high jasper wall that surrounds the holy city, are made from a single pearl, and the only way into or out of this city is thru these mighty gates of pearl or what many call the pearly gates. And it is not the Apostle Peter who stands here to bar one's entry, but instead 12 angels guard these gates of pearl. Now we are not told how large these gates are, but in comparison to the city & the wall they must be very large, very grand, very ornate and beautifully decorative.

But lets stop and think about this for a moment, what is the significance of these gates being made of pearl? How is it possible that each one is made from a single pearl? Because natural pearls do not normally get any where close to being large enough to form a gate out of them, most of them are pretty small. In fact the Pearl of Lao Tzu is the largest known pearl in the world. It was found by a Filipino diver in the Palawan sea that surrounds the island of Palawan in the Philippines. It measures 9.45 inches in diameter and weighs 14.1 lb. If that's the largest pearl ever found, how in the world is one gate, much less 12 gates, each made from a single pearl?

Formation of Natural Pearl: Well I think God is trying to tell us something here, because how is a pearl formed? I'm glad you asked. Typically, a pearl is formed by any kind of shelled mollusk, like an oyster or clam and begins when the mollusk is wounded, attacked by a parasite, or even when a grain of sand becomes lodged in the soft tissue inside the creature's shell and acts as an irritant. The mollusk's survival and defense mechanisms are then set into motion, as it forms a pearl sac around the foreign object or injury and begins to coat it, layer upon layer, with a smooth calcium carbonate substance. This is done time and time again and thus a pearl is formed. If done perfectly, the pearl forms a smooth sphere, the rarest of all pearls. The finest of these pearls have been highly valued as gemstones and objects of beauty for many centuries, even being called a royal gem, and because of this, the word "pearl" has become a metaphor for something very rare, fine, admirable, and valuable. This is also the only "gem" that is formed by a living creature and so many hundreds of oysters or

mussels have to be harvested, forcibly opened, and thus killed, to find even one pearl, and for many centuries that was the only way pearls were obtained. This was the main reason why pearls fetched such extraordinary prices in the past.

So we see that a rare and precious pearl is formed thru the suffering of a living being and something being done to avenge that suffering. It is a jewel that is formed from a wounded creature, for without a wound there is no pearl. And to harvest the pearl the creature must give its life. So that should make us all think about the magnitude of the suffering, of the wound, of the death, that allowed not one, but 12 gigantic, priceless pearls to be formed and made into the pearly gates of the New Jerusalem that each believer will enter in to their eternal home. For these pearly gates of the holy city will remind every one that passes thru them of the suffering that Jesus Christ underwent for them to have a home here in the dwelling place of God, each one will be reminded that they have access to this new city only because of Calvary, they will be reminded of the immense suffering that Jesus underwent all so that he could then invite whosoever will into his home. It was Jesus' wounds that made our salvation possible, that allowed these gates to be made, gates as v25 says that... *shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there...* Gates that will be eternally open to the faithful, gates that lead to the throne and dwelling place of God, gates that only righteousness can enter in... 27 *And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.* Jesus gave his life upon the cross of Calvary so that we may believe upon Him, be saved, receive everlasting life and be given the privilege to enter into the presence of God.

He suffered: Like a pearl, those gates were made from great suffering, and our Lord Jesus He suffered, for as the Son of God he willingly came to this earth in the form of man, going from being all powerful to feeling the weakness of flesh, what a humbling experience for Jesus tired, he hungered, he thirsted, he suffered the limitations of flesh, but that was a minor inconvenience compared to the suffering others poured out upon him. For Jesus suffered mocking and ridicule and hatred from his own people. They rejected him, sought to kill him, wanted nothing to do with him other than see him die. Yet Jesus was heartbroken for his people, so much that he wept over Jerusalem. He was moved with compassion for man's sinful state. And once Jesus began his final journey to the cross his suffering magnified and multiplied. For He suffered such great stress in the Garden of Gethsemane that his sweat became as great drops of blood as he prayed to the Father. He suffered the judgment of lesser beings and opened not his mouth to defend himself even though he was innocent of all charges. And then when the time came He suffered vast amounts of pain and agony, especially when he gave himself up for the sins of mankind. *Isa 50:6 I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.* He suffered at the hands of the Jews and the Romans, they slapped him, beat him, spat upon him, pulled his beard from his face, humiliated him. Paul writing of the crucifixion says of Jesus *Heb 13:12 Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.*

Lu 22:63 And the men that held Jesus mocked him, and smote him. 64 And when they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, Prophecy, who is it that smote thee? 65 And many other things blasphemously spake they against him.

1Pe 3:18 For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.

Jesus suffered in place of man suffering, he suffered to avenge mankind of their suffering under sin, he done something to avenge the pain, the curse, the condemnation, he suffered the wrath of God, suffered death and hell, all to allow mankind the choice of entering in thru those pearly gates.

He was wounded: And not only did Christ suffer, he was also wounded, because for the formation of a pearl to begin the creature must be wounded, and we know our Lord Jesus was wounded: a scourged back, a beaten and bloodied face, a thorn crowned head, nail pierced hands and feet, a spear pierced side and a broken heart. Jesus was crucified upon the cross of Calvary, the worst

torturous death known in that day. Wound upon wound upon wound, he bore it all, bore our pain, our torment, our sin. *Isa 52:14 As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men:*

Isa 53:3 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. 4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. 5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

He gave His life: Once a mollusk is wounded and does something to avenge the suffering and that pearl is formed inside its shell, for that pearl to be harvested, the creature must give its life, and so too for the harvest of salvation, of mankind's souls, the Lord Jesus laid down his life for each of us. The living being gave his life for a pearl of great price, great value.

Job 19:30 When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

Ro 5:6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

Ro 5:8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Job 15:13 Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

Jesus done all this, he suffered, he was wounded, he died all so that we could have the opportunity to enter into that holy city of the new heaven and the new earth. Jesus had once said he was *Job 14:6 ... the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.* He also said in *Job 10:9 I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.* And it is by the suffering, the wounding, and the death of the Lord Jesus, death that he conquered by the power of the resurrection, that our entryway into the eternal city is obtained, it is by the loving actions of the Lord Jesus Christ that our sins are forgiven, that we are saved, that we receive everlasting life and now have the privilege to pass thru those pearly gates of the New Jerusalem by going thru the Way, thru the Door, thru the blood of the Lord Jesus into that city of promise. Such great suffering took place to form the pearls that each of these gates of heaven are made from.

Man had an irritant, a parasite of sin, so Christ became flesh and suffered as a man, he was wounded as a man in order to offer himself as a satisfactory sacrifice, a propitiation, for our sin, and Christ willingly gave up his life all so a way could be procured, so a gate of pearl could be formed that would allow one who accepted Christ entryway into the dwelling place of God. It is all because of Jesus and the grace bestowed upon us that we can place our faith in him so that we may have our names written in the Lamb's book of Life, which is the only way one is allowed to pass thru those pearly gates, **27** *And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.* You have to be on the guest list in order to enter in those pearly gates that were made by the sufferings, the wounds, the death, of the Lord Jesus.

So my question to you is your name on that guest list? Is your name written in the Lamb's book of life? Will you see those pearly gates and enter in? Jesus suffered for you, was wounded for you, died for you so that you might have life and have it more abundantly...

Chapter 31

REVELATION – CHAPTER 22

So far in our study we have looked at the new heaven, the new earth, the new city, the new inhabitants of that city, the new light in that city, as well as looking at the all encompassing fact that God will make all things new; it will be a time, an age, of new things for things are definitely going to change. It will be a new existence for believers who will be given a new name, along with Christ, and together there will be a new and perfect and eternal relationship between them. An existence that is contrasted with our present existence, for in that new future there will be no more temple, no more sea, no more death, sorrow, pain, suffering or crying, no more darkness, no more need of the sun, moon or even a candle, no more that defileth or that worketh abominations or that maketh lies for there shall be no more curse, no more devil, no more sin. What a time of all things made new! And in this new life, we will enjoy and freely partake of the last new item shown to us in the first few verses of ch22, it is a new place contained within the new city, it is a special part of the New Jerusalem. So to complete our study of the New City and all things new, we see in ch22:1-5 the 6th new thing, what we will call the New Paradise.

Re 22:1 And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. 2 In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. 3 And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: 4 And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. 5 And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.

From this description of the New Paradise we see some similarities between it and the first paradise upon earth, in the first paradise (Eden) before the fall of man, in both paradises we see there is a river, a tree of life, there is gold and precious stones aplenty, and man is placed there in order to serve God. We also see that God walked with man and had a close relationship with man in each paradise... *Ge 2:8 And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. 9 And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. 10 And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads. 11 The name of the first is Pison: that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; 12 And the gold of that land is good: there is bdellium and the onyx stone. 13 And the name of the second river is Gihon: the same is it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia. 14 And the name of the third river is Hiddekel: that is it which goeth toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river is Euphrates. 15 And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.*

So we see similarities between the two paradises, but we also see contrasts, for the first paradise was not perfect as the new paradise will be, for sin and death entered into it, the serpent (devil) was there to tempt and twist God's words and cause man to fall, the relationship between man and God was broken, and the result was a curse upon the earth and mankind, man was cast out, forbidden to eat of the tree of life, but in the new paradise as v3 states, there shall be no more curse, no more sin, no death, no Satan, no temptation, instead of corruption there will be perfection. Instead of being forbidden and cast out, the overcomer will be welcomed in and allowed to partake of the tree of life, the believer will lay down beside the waters of the river of life, he will walk on streets of gold, and will serve God and have a perfect relationship with God. The overcomer will also be allowed to drink from the pure river that flows thru this perfect paradise...

V1 *And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.*

Two things are shown to us here, first we see that God's throne is in the new city (see also v3b), God is the central focus point of the city, from Him issues forth His never ending light, His glory. And in addition to that light from His throne a never ending river issues forth, for here the angel shows the Apostle John a crystal clear river, a pure river, with no pollution whatsoever, springing forth not from some basin or reservoir of water, but proceeding out from the throne of God and of the Lamb. This river contains the water of life, of God given life. Nothing can live without water, water sustains life, and here this holy water comes forth from the throne of the sovereign God and the Lamb, from the Creator and sustainer of life. The life this water gives is everlasting which should remind us of *Re 21:6 And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.* The waters from the throne will never run dry, will be given freely, there shall be no thirst in heaven, for God will be with His people and His people will be with Him, and He will generously and abundantly supply any and all needs.

This river that comes from God and the Lamb is also symbolic of the Holy Spirit and how He proceeds forth from the Father and the Son to give eternal life to the faithful believer, *Joh 7:38 He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. 39 (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive....* In addition to that this pure river also symbolizes prosperity and pleasure which will be in abundance in heaven...

Ps 1:3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

Ps 36:8 They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.

Ps 46:4 There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High.

Joe 3:18 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the LORD, and shall water the valley of Sbitim.

Thus we see this crystal clear river flowing thru the crystal-like city, shining and sparkling as it goes due to the light of God and the Lamb, the waters filled with sustaining, eternal life, and the best part is all are welcome to come and freely drink of it. And then my guess is as this river exits the city it creates a great wonderful waterfall as it falls to the earth in spectacular, sparkling fashion. What a sight to see!

Now along the banks of this river we see even more evidence of its life giving, prosperous and pleasurable properties, for on both sides of the waters we see the tree of life, not just a single tree like we find in the first paradise, but more like orchards of them...

V2 *In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*

These trees are found in the medians of the street and on each side of the crystal river. Now we remember the tree of life in the Garden of Eden, as it was forbidden to Adam and Eve once they had eaten of the Tree of knowledge of good and evil, for had they eaten of the fruit of the tree of life after their sin, they would have lived forever in a sinful state, and so would have all of their offspring. But God fixed that problem of sin thru the atonement offered thru the Lord Jesus and so here in the new city, the inhabitants, the overcomers, believers, are permitted to eat of these trees of life once more as promised by Christ... *Re 2:7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.* The privilege of eating from these trees is one of the many things overcomers will inherit ("all things" 21:7).

We also see that these trees have a perpetual harvest, 12 manners of fruit for 12 months of the year; from the river there is a never ending supply of life giving water and from these trees a never

ending supply of fruit, thus the river and these trees signify abundant life in the new paradise, *Job 10:10 ... I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly*. Remember it was upon a tree that Christ gave his life so that we might have our sins cleansed and forgiven once we believe upon Him and are thus granted everlasting, eternal life in heaven, and I think these trees of life and the river will be an ever present reminder of what Christ done to make all that possible, for upon the tree we find the fruit of life, and at the base of the tree, flows a river of life, just as we look upon the tree of Calvary, we find life thru Christ that hung upon the cross who was the firstfruits of the resurrection of life, and from the base of the cross, a river of his precious blood flows in order to wash us, cleanse us, purify us of all sin so that we might have everlasting life.

Notice also that the leaves of the trees of life are used for the healing of the new nations (v2c). Now what can this mean, for in this new earth there is no sickness, no pain, no sorrow, no curse, so what meaning does this “healing of nations” carry? Well, it does not mean that the nations are in some sort of hurt or harm or downfall and are in need of healing or repair or discipline, but instead the leaves of the trees of life are used to contribute to the life and health of these new nations, just as the fruit and the waters of the river bestow life so do these leaves but on a larger scale than the mere individual. These leaves are for the nations. Nothing is wasted, all is used to give and sustain glorious pure perfect life. These leaves are not to cure some disease or sickness or sin in the nations for these things are no more, but instead these leaves are more like a spiritual vitamin to sustain and preserve the health of the nations, because we see in the very next verse there is no more curse...

V3 *And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:*

We read of the beginning of the curse in *Ge 3:14 And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life:15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. 16 Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. 17 And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;18 Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; 19 In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.*

That was the beginning of the curse but here in v3 we come to the end of the curse, the curse is no more! Glorious day! We have mentioned this fact over and over, but no more curse means no more sin, no more hindrances, no more broken fellowship, no more being out of the perfect will of God. Instead there will be perfect sinlessness and perfect holiness. Harold Sightler writes... “*Sin has wrought havoc in this world both in the human family, in the animal kingdom, as well as the physical earth. Paul speaks of the earth in Romans ch8, groaning and travailing, awaiting that day when it too shall be liberated and released from the curse of the fall of Adam...John sees that the Holy City has no mark, no scar, no evidence of the curse of sin...When we get to the Holy City, one thing is for sure, there is nothing in the Holy city to remind us of sin. The ravage, and the ruin, and the curse of it, and the hurt of it, the grief of it, the bereavement of it, there will be nothing in heaven that will ever remind you of the curse of sin.*” EVER AGAIN!

There is no more curse in the new paradise, but God is there, ruling, overseeing, reigning, and is available and accessible to each and everyone for He is ever present with His people because His throne is there in the New City, the Lamb abides in the new city with His bride, and notice the last part of v3 *and his servants shall serve him*, His servants, that’s us, are serving Him. We will have jobs, duties, responsibilities in the new earth. Remember Adam tended the garden, had dominion over it, and in like fashion so shall we; but what this service entails we do not know. God leaves that information absent, but we shall know when we get there, and what a joy it will be to serve the perfect God perfectly with no hindrances or mishaps in a perfect environment.

V4 *And they {the servants, the bride} shall see his face;...*

Mt 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

1Co 13:12 For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

1Jo 3:2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

Something we have never done, only dreamed about, yet at this time we will get to see His face and live, the face of God, the face of the one who so loved the world, the face that spoke all into existence, the face of the Almighty, of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of Israel, the God of salvation, the face of our Savior. We will look into his loving and compassionate eyes, we will see his smile, hear His voice, smell His scent, taste His reward, feel His touch, we shall see the face of the Triune God, we shall stand before God. There will be full recognition of who God is, thus completing the perfect relationship and unity of us with Him.

Also like what God done for the 144,000 Jews during the days of the tribulation we will bear His name, God's name, His mark of ownership and family, in our foreheads.

V4 *And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.*

Re 14:1 And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.

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

We are His, He claims us as His own, His bride, His servant, His children, we now forever belong together with God!

V5 *And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.*

This reminds us of *Re 21:23 And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. 24 And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. 25 And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.* In the new paradise there will be an eternal day, there will be no night, no darkness, no children of darkness, no forces of darkness, no things done in darkness, no deeds of evil done by lovers of darkness for there is only the light of the Lord God, the glory of God and the Lamb who is the light of the new world.

And in this never ending day, in the new heaven and new earth, in the new city and new paradise we will have a new reign and new dominion as we serve the Lord in utter perfection for all eternity, v5...*and they shall reign for ever and ever.*

Ro 5:17 For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. As Adam and Eve were given dominion over the earth, so shall we be given rights and responsibilities to reign, we will serve, we will reign, we will live eternally at the feet of the one who was pierced for us. And much like the millennial reign I believe some will be given authority over the nations, some a few, some many, their authority and service and rank will depend upon one's faithfulness and obedience during this present age. Great will be the reward, great will be the honor, great will be the day we serve and reign with our Lord and savior for all eternity. What a time of all things made new!

With v5 we come to the end of the descriptions given to the Apostle John of all things made new. John has gotten to see people, places, things and events that no other person has, he had the

privilege to pen down the descriptions of what he witnessed for future generations to study and glean from his words the wondrous things that await those who have believed upon the Lord Jesus. And now with the pictures of heaven behind us we come to the final closing remarks of the book, beginning with v6.

V6 *And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.*

Again the angel that has been speaking with John tells the apostle that all he has seen and heard are faithful and true, the visions and statements are the coming reality, they will come to pass, the angel affirms the authenticity of what John has been privileged to see, and even explains that God sent him(the angel) to show these things that must shortly or quickly come to pass, first to John who would in turn show them to the servants, the followers, the believers of God, to even us of this day, thru the written word, so all would be aware of what would shortly take place. And with that idea of things that must shortly be done, what main event must now come to pass? The angel gives us the answer by quoting the Lord Jesus in v7...

V7 *Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.*

Behold I come quickly. From the moment the last days began during the age of the apostles all the way down thru time to the present day, all true followers have been awaiting the Lord's return, his imminent return. Christ promised he would come again, he would come to retrieve his bride, the church, in the event we call the rapture. That is the next main event on God's calendar and it could happen at any time. And quick will be the Lord's return, in a twinkling of an eye will he snatch us away. The church will be whisked away before anyone is aware of what happened and the Day of the Lord and the tribulation will begin. And in our studies we have seen that those events that follow the rapture will also only take a short while to happen, for a period of around 40 years for the Day of the Lord transpires that then leads up to the 7 years of the Great Tribulation. All of these events happening on a relatively pretty short time scale, so in one sense the coming of Christ during the rapture will be quick.

In another sense this saying of Behold I come quickly also means that it will be a short while before he comes, but some may say "its been over 2000 years since Jesus made that promise that he would come quickly", and they would be right, yet we must take into account that time has no bearing on God, millennia flash by God in an instant and then a moment could last 1000 years, so in God's perspective, time has no meaning. So I believe the term quickly used here is used to speak not only of the speed at which all these prophesied events will take place, but it also speaks of how soon, how imminent their happening truly is. Both applications are biblically valid.

But continuing on, lets notice what the angel says, that while believers are to be watching and waiting for the speedy, imminent return of the Lord, the angel also relates to us that the person who keeps or guards or holds sacred the sayings of this book, the one who clings to and has hope in the prophecies of this Book of Revelation, and is thus prepared for Christ's return, a person that does so is truly blessed or happy, *blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.* The person who reads and studies and tries to grasp the realities of what is to come: the dire situations of the lost sinner and a sinful world, the wonders that await the faithful believer, the one that takes this prophecy seriously and to heart, that meditates upon the majesty of heaven and the Lamb and has believed upon the name of Jesus, happy is he, blessed is he. We had the same benediction at the beginning of this book *Re 1:3 Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.* If one is truly prepared to meet God, he will be full of happiness and joy unspeakable. And we see that John

is a happy and blessed man now, for so overcome by awe and excitement and adoration by what he has seen, he once again falls at the feet of the angel and begins to worship.

V8 *And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things.*

John is so awed by all he been witness to he just has to worship and so he falls before the angel. But the angel forbids it...

V9 *Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.*

Don't worship me says the angel, for I am your fellow servant, a brother in arms. The angel states that he also serves God, just as John does, along with the other prophets God has commissioned, and notice one other group the angel mentions he is allied with, "*and of them which keep the sayings of this book*", just as v7 spoke of, the angel is allied with those that are prepared by heeding these prophecies. The angel serves on the side of those who serve God, who are prepared to meet God, so he instructs John once more to not worship him but to worship God, worship the Lord, worship your Savior, worship Christ. Then the angel follows that statement with even more instruction.

V10 *And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand.*

The angel makes it very clear that the Book of Revelation is not a sealed book, this is not like what was told to the prophet Daniel... *Da 12:4 But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased. ...9 And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.* The book of Daniel was a sealed book, sealed until the end times, its understanding shrouded in mystery and prophecy, but now if you notice, there has been much preaching and teaching from the book of Daniel, for in this time of what I believe are the last days, the end times, the seal of Daniel's book has been opened, wisdom and understanding of that book has grown and grown at a very rapid pace, we have even used it to help us understand some of what transpires in this book.

But John is clearly told not to seal this book for as we have already said that the man who keeps the sayings of this book, that studies it, reads it, hears it, blessed is he. If he could not read it how would he be blessed? If it was closed how could he think upon it? And do you want to know the number one reason why this book is not to be sealed? It is because it is the book of the revelation or the unveiling of the Lord Jesus Christ (Rev1:1). This book speaks of Christ, his dealing with the churches, his return, his victory, his marriage, his judgment, his reign, his eternity, so we are not to hide it but to proclaim it! Preach it to encourage believers! Preach it to convict the unrighteous! Preach it to honor and glorify the Lord, for He is coming quickly and everyone must be prepared to meet their maker! Because as v11 points out, when the end times are over however a man is found to be, in whatever spiritual state he is in, so shall he remain for all eternity...

V11 *He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.*

Once the end comes, when one leaves this world, they will leave one of two ways, saved or unsaved. If he is unjust he will remain unjust, if he is filthy he will remain filthy as he wallows in torment in the lake of fire, but on the other hand if one has been justified by the Lord Jesus then he will be counted righteous and remain eternally so, he will be counted holy and remain eternally holy.

Here we see that Jesus is a divider of men, for he will separate the wheat from the tares, the sinner from the saved, just as he separated the faithful thief and the condemned thief on the cross. That is why it is so important to be ready, to keep these words, to be prepared and to be sure that others are prepared as well. Why?

V12 *And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.*

Once more the statement quoted from Christ, be ready for he is coming quickly. One will not have time to change their ways, their soul, their destination if they wait for the trumpet to sound, by then it will be far too late. And notice how this verse speaks of Jesus' return, for he brings his reward with him, reward for his church, reward for his followers. He brings to them new life, resurrection, a glorified body, a mansion in heaven, the marriage of the Lamb, the marriage supper celebration, the judgment seat of Christ where further rewards are granted, a millennial reign and a new heaven and new earth. With Christ comes eternal reward, eternal treasure, and eternal blessings, why is that? Its because he is...

V13 *I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.*

He is the omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, omni-temporal God. He was before all things, he created all things, he is among all things, and he will always be, so...

V14 *Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.*

Blessed and happy and fortunate are those who obey him, who follow him, who heed his instructions, who place their faith in him and are saved by grace, for because of such salvation one will be granted the right to partake of the tree of life in the new city of Holy Jerusalem, happy is he who is allowed to enter in thru the gates of pearl by way of the only Way, the Lord Jesus, to cometh unto the Father who dwells in that city of lights. For Jesus said in *Job 14:6* *Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.* What a time of happiness it will be for all who enter in! *Ps 133:1* *Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!* Because the alternative will be...

V15 *For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.*

These are the outcasts, those that dwell in outer darkness, those that have been told to depart for they are strangers to the house of God. How sad it is for them, but it does not have to be, not yet, for there is still time for them to choose to be saved in our present day, they still have time to repent and seek forgiveness because as Jesus has said in v16...

V16 *I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.*

Jesus has sent his angel, his messenger, to testify the faithful and true words of this prophecy, not only to John but to the churches, to the world, to all those who will give an ear down thru the ages. Jesus as God has done this to benefit mankind.

And once more he establishes his claim of divinity, by stating he is the root of David, meaning that he was before David in eternity past, that he created the lineage of David and all mankind by divine power, but that when Jesus was incarnated, when God became flesh, that flesh was a blood descendant of David, so Jesus was also of David's royal line, and now at the end of this book, we have seen the Lord Jesus sit upon the throne of David and now upon the throne of God and he now lights

the new city for Christ is the bright and morning star, a star that will never fade, never go down, for this will be a time of eternal day.

And so because of all this, of Jesus coming and setting things right, of being in his rightful place of preeminence, because of the anticipation of getting to be forever with the Lord, notice what the Spirit, the Comforter that has been sent to believers upon the earth in the age of grace, says along with the church, the bride of Christ...

V17 *And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*

Come! Jesus said "I come quickly", and now the Holy Spirit cries Come! Come now Lord! Come and take your rightful reign, come and take your rightful place, come and receive your deserved honor and glory and praise! Along with the Spirit the cries of the church's hearts ring out, Come! Come Lord Jesus. The bride yearns for her bridegroom, wishing to be joined in eternal union. Come, take us away from all this sin and death and decay! And even further goes forth the cry from those who hear the words of this book and keeps them, Come! Says all!

And then mid-verse the invitation goes out, the invitation of the gospel to those who have not received Christ as of yet, come ye sinner, come ye stranger, come ye unbeliever and receive the Lord Jesus before he does come so your thirst will be quenched by never ending living waters, come and receive Christ so that you too may freely partake of the river of life in the new city. Come before its everlasting too late!

And that is why v18 & 19 are so important, because any alteration to these faithful and true words could alter the eternal destination of a man's soul.

V18-19 *18 For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: 19 And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.*

Now there is a distinct difference between ignorance, which we all have concerning the word of God, where we do not fully understand or clearly see the meaning of what is written, there is a difference between that and trying our best to teach it and out right rebellion to God's word where one deliberately alters it, either by adding to it or taking away from it. For either way of such deliberate alteration will bring severe judgment and punishment upon the one who would so willfully twist the word of God. To one who would add to it, like adding the book of Mormon or other cultish addendums, to even altering the translation in an unscriptural way, will bring the severe judgments of Revelation down upon the head of one so bold and so stupid. And if one takes away from the book, his name will not appear in the book of life or in the new city, nor will he partake of all the blessings spoken of here. But we know no such true believer would ever dare do such a thing, to not purposely, not intentionally, and God knows the heart, alter God's word in such a way, we do know it would take a reprobate unbeliever, a blasphemer, an unsaved person to do such a thing, so who is spoken of here that would subtract from God's word is not saved to begin with, and so never had their name written in the book of life, was never a receiver of the promises of God. And so with that warning, the Lord Jesus leaves with one last reminder...

V20 *He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.*

And John adds his amen to such a promise, he will come quickly, the world will be left in ruins, many will die and be lost forever, but others will be saved, and the plan and purpose of the plan

of salvation fulfilled. So even though all this evil will transpire, every believer has the urgent prayer in their heart, come Lord Jesus.

And John ends with a benediction to us all...

V21 *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*

And so ends our study of the Revelation of Jesus Christ, may this be a blessing to you and an honor to Him, and I leave you with a simple prayer, I pray that you know Him as your personal Savior, so that I may meet you in eternity. And in the words of my late grandfather, Preacher Carl Wilson, "Hooray for Jesus!"

Chapter 32

SERMON – HOW WE ARE CARRIED HOME

A Scripturally Based Speculation on How Believers will be Raptured.

As saved born again believers the next main event on God's calendar that we are eagerly awaiting is the rapture, a time when Christ comes as a thief in the night to retrieve his bride, a time when the saints of God who have already passed away will be resurrected and those that are yet alive will not have to taste death but will receive a glorified body and we will all be called up into the clouds to meet our Savior. We read in *1Th 4:16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.* That is our blessed hope. That is what many of us are looking forward to. And what I want to do today is look at exactly how this will take place, how will we, if we are yet alive here on earth, when Jesus comes be raptured? Brother Dewey Williams mentioned a few things in passing about the rapture and this subject in his prophecy conference, but I haven't got to hear him preach on this, yet what he said piqued my interest, so I've been studying on this and reading after Dr. Mazakis that Dewey recommended and want to take my stab at discussing this.

So my question is how are believers taken to heaven, in what manner are the saints carried home? When the rapture takes place do we all just quickly float up into the sky, do we fly away like Superman, or even disappear from earth and reappear in heaven, do we teleport like Captain Kirk and Mr. Spock on Star Trek or is there something more to it? Well, from what I have found the Bible actually tells us how believers are taken to heaven, but we have to do a little digging to find it out. So I want you to turn with me today to Acts 1, and I want you to keep up with me as we turn to different passages so you can see exactly what I'm trying to present you with, as this should be an encouragement to believers, to get an idea of what God thinks of us and shows it by how He carries us home.

So to begin with let's look at the promise that was made when Christ himself ascended into heaven. *Ac 1:9-11 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.10 And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? **this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.***

Now in these verses we see that Jesus was with his disciples giving them last bits of instruction then he is taken up and after his ascension into heaven two angels appear and tell the disciples that Jesus would come back in the same manner in which he left, *this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.* So the question is, how did Jesus go to heaven? In what manner did he ascend?

Well, we are given part of that answer in these very verses. First we see in v9 that Jesus "*was taken up*", this carries the meaning that Jesus did not go by himself or even under his own power, he didn't float or fly away, but that someone or something took him to heaven. Jesus was taken up, carried up. And that raises the question, who or what took him?

Well, we are given a little more light on the subject by the same writer of the book of Acts in the book of Luke about this very same occurrence of the Lord ascending into heaven. *Lu 24:50 And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. 51 And it came to pass, while he blessed them, **he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.** 52 And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy:*

Notice here two informative phrases, first that Jesus was parted from them, Jesus was parted/separated from his disciples. Something or someone separates them and then secondly we see the Lord Jesus is carried up into heaven, carried by someone or something.

And this raises another question. Who or what is fit to carry the King of Kings and Lord of Lords up into heaven? And on a lesser note who or what is fit to carry a believer, a saint of God to heaven? Well again we have to look at Scripture, and Jesus himself actually gives us an account of how a saint at the time of his death goes to heaven in his discourse of Lazarus and the rich man in Luke 16:19-22. *Lu 16:19 There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: 20 And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, 21 And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. 22 And it came to pass, **that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;***

How was Lazarus taken to heaven? The angels carried him. But how did they carry him? Did they piggy back him, did they carry some limp form of Lazarus in their arms, did they club him on the head and stuff him in a potato sack and throw him over their shoulder? How did/do the angels carry an eternally living and vibrant soul, one who has been freed from the body of his flesh, that has been quickened by the Spirit, that is full of excitement and life and vigor, into heaven?

Well to answer that we need to explore who we as saved by faith believers are and how God looks at us in such a justified state. If we are saved, God paid the highest price possible to save us, He did not find us worthless but very valuable in His sight. God expressed the depth of love towards us in what He done for us. If we have been washed in the blood of Jesus Christ, if we are born again and made a new creature we know that because of that transformative act we are new and different than before. Instead of enemies with God we are now His friend. Instead of being children of the devil and this world we have been adopted into the heavenly family and have become the sons, the children, of God. Because of salvation, we are saved to serve as the dignitaries of God for we are ambassadors of Christ. We know we will one day reign with our Lord, so for that we are princes, rulers who have not yet taken the throne, *Ps 113:7 He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill;8 That he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people.*

But not only are we princes, we are kings, kings and priests. *Job 36:7 He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous: but with kings are they on the throne; yea, he doth establish them for ever, and they are exalted.*

Re 5:9 And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

And because of the blood of Christ we stand before God justified, just as if I'd never sinned before, for when God looks at us He doesn't see us, He sees His Son, His blood, His righteousness that is imputed to us. So if God looks upon us saints as a close friend, a son, a heavenly ambassador, a prince, a priest and a king, seeing only the holiness of Jesus and not our righteousness which is as filthy rags and he looks upon Lazarus the same way, and then Jesus himself is the King of Kings we see that in each occurrence they were carried by the angels to heaven. They were escorted not by one angel but by an entourage of angels, a heavenly honor guard to escort such a special VIP into the heavenly gates. So we see a whole group of angels carried Lazarus, escorted Christ, and goes with every believer to

take them to heaven. Angels, super divine, super powerful creatures accompany each one as they are ushered into heaven. But the question still remains is **how** does this group of angels carry or take a prince or a king to heaven, what is a fitting manner to deliver such a one that God highly values and esteems?

Well lets look at another selection of Scripture to get an idea. Turn to II Kings 2:1-13 paying close attention to v11.

Here we see Elijah and his protégé Elisha walking along and talking, Elisha has been warned repeatedly that Elijah would be taken away today so Elisha sticks close to Elijah, and after he has requested that a double portion of Elijah's spirit be upon him and Elijah says that will only happen if you see in what manner I am taken, what appears before them, what parts them asunder, what separates them, and what takes or carries Elijah to heaven? A chariot of fire pulled by horses of fire. The wording in these verses echo those of Acts ch1. When Christ was talking to his disciples he was parted from them and then carried away, taken to heaven, just as here where Elijah is parted from Elisha, the chariot coming in between them, and taken up; they are both separated from their companions and taken up, carried away, by a heavenly chariot of fire, escorted by angels, pulled by horses of fire. So this is my suggestion of how all saints are taken to heaven, with a grand entry, with honor and celebration, in a magnificent chariot of fire. The Lord sends his finest vehicle, his heavenly limousine to carry his saints and sons home.

Now this is not just some war chariot, a simple platform with wheels and low side walls that would transport one or two warriors, this chariot is more like the one some countries would use to transport dignitaries. Such larger more ornate chariots were a sign of prestige, eminence and honor down thru history. Kings and princes and powerful authority figures rode in such chariots. Think of when Joseph was promoted in power when he was in Egypt and made the right hand man of the Pharaoh, the second most powerful man in the world at that time, let me read to you the very first mention of chariots in the Bible. *Ge 41:38 And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is? 39 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art: 40 Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou. 41 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt.42 And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; 43 And he made him to ride in the **second chariot** which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt.* Joseph here was given a place of honor, was escorted by Egyptian soldiers, the elite of the elite, he rode thru the streets while others cheered and bowed before him. This is much like Roman generals and conquering emperors or Caesars would do after a successful campaign, they would enter the streets of Rome, riding in a very ornate chariot, a place of great honor with all their pillaged treasure and prisoners behind them. The chariot has long been a symbol of prestige and power and wealth, even throughout the Old Testament, many nations were measured in military strength by how many war chariots they had.

But like I already said, this heavenly chariot, this chariot of fire is no mere war chariot, its more similar to a horse drawn carriage or coach, having anywhere from 2-4 wheels and where the rider can comfortably sit and have a driver or drivers and be able to store his belongings and such. To get an idea of what we are talking about here, everyone is familiar with the fairy tale of Cinderella right, and as the story goes a pumpkin is used by her fairy godmother and is turned into a carriage in order to take Cinderella to the ball, this carriage is big, ornate, intricately detailed, luxurious with an entourage of drivers and footmen, all that would be befitting a rich and powerful princess. That's kind of the picture I get of this, but lets give a biblical description of such a chariot to help you out... Acts 8:26-39.

Also I want you think about this, if the Lord is coming to get his bride in the rapture, do you think he's just going to let that bride float up in the air to him, or will he, like many dignified grooms, send his best limo to carry his bride home? And then think about this, what about that old spiritual that sings "*Swing low, sweet chariot, coming for to carry me home...*" what simple truth lies within that song.

So if this is how the Lord Jesus was taken to heaven and received into the clouds, he is then going to come in like manner to get his saints, in a heavenly chariot of fire. And we see this contrasted to Jesus' return to the earth when he comes as king and conqueror, where his second coming is depicted as riding on a white horse in Revelation. We also know that when the rapture occurs it will happen in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye. One moment we will be here, the next we are gone, on our way to meet the Lord in the air, and the world will have seen nothing of what just happened. But notice back in II Kings, Elisha was allowed to see the chariot of fire; when Jesus ascended to heaven, his followers and disciples watched him go. But typically no living person sees what happens when a chariot comes to take one to heaven. Elisha saw it but 50 other men just across the river Jordan did not see it even though they were watching and waiting to see Elijah taken (2:7), later they even formed a search party to go and see if they could find Elijah after the whirlwind (tornado) struck, for they never saw the chariot come and take Elijah away. What we see here is it took special spiritual sight to see this chariot, Elisha had asked for a double portion of Elijah's spirit be upon him and God blessed that request, he saw the chariot, the others didn't. We also see in another passage special sight given in order to see these chariots of fire. II Kings 6:13-17.

So this shows us that when the rapture occurs only those who are carried away will see these chariots of the Lord, the world won't know what happened but believers will be escorted to heaven with pomp and splendor.

And finally we see another verse which to my understanding can only be a reference to the rapture, chariots mentioned once more, *Isa 66:15 For, behold, the LORD will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire.* Notice here there is a definite contrast. The Lord comes with fire and his chariots to retrieve the saints, but this coming, the rapture, will also make way for God's judgment upon the world, the Day of the Lord and the Great Tribulation, in which God renders his anger with fury and rebukes the world with fire, His wrath. *1Th 5:2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. 3 For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.* And this sudden destruction also has a connection with the rapture and these chariots and the whirlwinds we see associated with them, and suffice to say the world will be very aware and distressed when the rapture does happen.

So that leaves us with one final question, when the Lord Jesus does come for his saints, when the angels come to escort the saved home, when chariots of fire come to carry the bride of Christ to her heavenly abode, when God calls home his dignitaries before war begins, are you going to have the honor of stepping into one of these heavenly vehicles or are you going to be left here facing sudden destruction? The only way you will be allowed to see, allowed to board, allowed to meet the Lord in the air in a chariot of fire is if you are saved.

And then we as believers are to be looking for his coming, praying thy kingdom come, thy will be done, for the Lord Jesus to come quickly

*Jg 5:28 The mother of Sisera looked out at a window, and cried through the lattice, **Why is his chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariots?***

Chapter 33

SERMON – THE GLORY THAT DOES NOT FADE

Exodus 34:1-4; 27-35

Here in these verses we see Moses going up to Mt Sinai to receive the second version of God's commandments written on tablets of stone, because if you remember the first tablets were broken when Moses angrily threw them down after finding Israel worshipping before the golden calf. So once more, Moses has gone up into the mountain to commune with God in order to receive the Law for Israel. And what a glorious event this was, and that's something I want you to remember as we go thru the message, that the giving of the Law was glorious, it was a glorious event. For here is Jehovah God speaking directly to one of His chosen servants on behalf of His chosen people, giving them a second chance after their sin and idolatry; here our most gracious God was willing to renew His covenant with His people despite their sin, and was now giving them instructions of how to live in relation to Him. This giving of the Law, this renewing of God's covenant with His people was a momentous glorious event, for if you remember back in chapters 19(v18) & 20(v18) God had come down to Mt Sinai with thunders and lightnings and the sound of trumpets, the mountain had smoked and the ground quaked and nothing, no man nor any beast, was to approach the mount less they die, not until God gave them specific permission to do so for God's glory was present upon that mountain, God had come down to speak with His people. And at such a manifestation and display of the power of God and His glory Israel had stood terrified.

But it was also here upon the mount that Moses had asked God to show him His glory (33:18), and God granted that request, He allowed Moses to see his hind parts from a cleft in the rock as He passed by, what an experience this was for Moses; he not only verbally spoke to God, he also got to see God, at least part of Him, and live. And now here is God giving to His people, as He communed with Moses, what we call the Mosaic Law, the commandments and instructions that would guide all of Israel and rule the Hebrews in every aspect of their lives as they served Jehovah God. This was a glorious time for the glory of God was present with His people here on earth, His glory was visibly demonstrated, His glory was visibly seen, His glory was visibly given with the Law.

And let's look at what happens when Moses is exposed to such glory for an extended period of time. **Ex 34:27-28**. Moses, as he writes down every jot and tittle of God's words, of the new covenant with Israel and as he prays and fasts for 40 days and nights before God, here he is sustained by the presence of God. Moses' nearness, his closeness, to the glory of the Father was sufficient for his physical need to survive. Moses went without food and water for 40 days and nights, that's amazing for it is nearly impossible to do this, sure man can survive 40 days without food, that's been done, but he can only survive a few days without water, but with God all things are possible, and when one is near God the supernatural can take place. For we see the same thing happen with Elijah, who when God sent an angel to give him meat to eat was able to go 40 days and nights on that one meal, and we are also reminded of Jesus who fasted for 40 days and nights before being taken into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. What we see here is a nearness and closeness to God can sustain us, can keep us beyond our physical needs, for God is capable of supplying all our need and we truly have need of nothing except for God, for when God is with us nothing is impossible, we can do all things thru

God, thru Christ, who strengthens us. But the only way He will strengthen us is if we are close to Him. (Moses was listening to God, Elijah was serving God, Jesus was in the will of God, and God was more than sufficient for each of them)

But as we look at Moses and the giving of the Law here and what with the number 40 being a biblical symbol of testing and trial, we see that the Mosaic Law would put Moses, would put Israel, would put all of mankind to the test, it would test their purity, their righteousness, their holiness, their morality, and as we all know, all of them would ultimately fail that test, for thru the Law, thru man's own efforts, man can not be as near to God as one needs to be in order to be spiritually sustained, for man can not fulfill the Law, as the Law points to our inadequacies to fulfill it, it points to our impurity/unrighteousness/unholiness/our immoral selves, the Law points to our sin, how far short we fall from the glory of God, short of His holiness and righteousness and purity, and not only does it point to our sin, it also condemns us, for the Law pronounces death upon those who break it which is all of us. The Law shows us, exposes us, in our depravity and hopelessness to do anything about our sin.

But what else do we see here in these verses? **v29-30** Here we see that as Moses came down from the mountain with the Law we notice something distinctly different about Moses and his appearance. *when he came down from the mount, that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him.* Moses did not realize there was a glow about him, that his face shone after talking with and being in the presence of God. Moses had been near God, had prayed to God, spoke to God, seen God, been sustained by God, was carrying the word of God, and now unbeknownst to him, he shone like God. He had been so much in the presence of God that the light of God's glory now radiated from Moses' face. Moses had so much God about him he couldn't help but show it. Moses was now simply reflecting the light of God's glory that he had been so near to. He had been exposed to and absorbed so much glory that he glowed.

And we see that Aaron, his brother, and the rest of Israel were afraid of such a display. They were afraid to approach Moses, afraid to come near him for the glory that was upon him, just as they were afraid to approach Mt Sinai due to the presence of the glory of God there in the mountain; they feared Moses just as Israel would later be afraid to approach the holy of holies in the tabernacle, the place where the glory of God dwelled, where only one man would be allowed to enter once a year to make an oblation for Israel's sins; all of Israel was afraid of the glory of God and for what it stood for (they were afraid of the glory upon Moses, on Mt Sinai, and in the Holy of Holies), for God's glory stands for holiness and righteousness and they knew in themselves they were anything but that. They knew they were sinful, were corrupt, were unclean. This fear they had of God's glory was a fear of reproach for their own sin, a fear in awe and respect of God and his character, it was reverential fear of his power and sovereignty, fear that they knew they did not measure up to such magnificent glory, that they fell far short of that glory. They knew God had no equal, knew God's purity and they knew to besmirch that would mean death. So they drew back from Moses who shone with the glory of God.

But isn't it odd that Moses glowed, that his face shone? Don't we find that somewhat bewildering? Well, not so much when we begin to think about God and the descriptions given of God to us in the Bible, for doesn't Scripture say that God is light? *1Jo 1:5 This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.* And did not God create light when He said "Let there be light", and thus created the sun, the moon, the stars and all the heavens that emit light? Does not Ps 19:1 say... *The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.* The heavens declare God's glory for they shine just as He shines, they radiate light, showing mankind just how magnificently glorious God is. And did not God appear to Moses in the burning bush on the backside of the desert, and did not that fire which did not consume give off light of God's glory? Did not God

lead Israel out of Egypt with a pillar of fire by night to give light to see by? Did God not use a star over Bethlehem to announce the coming of His Son to this earth, and by that light wisemen were guided to the babe? Do not the Jews have a term for this glory and presence of God that shines, they call it the Shekinah glory? And does not the prophet Ezekiel describe God's glory in his visions as shining? *Ezke 10:4 Then the glory of the LORD went up from the cherub, and stood over the threshold of the house; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the LORD'S glory.* *Ezke 43:2 And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and his voice was like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory.*

And was not Jesus himself, the Son of God, considered to be light as well? *Job 8:12 Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.* The Apostle John describes Jesus as such in *Job 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.2 The same was in the beginning with God.3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men.5 And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. 6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.7 The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.8 He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.9 That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.* Does not Hebrews 1:3 say that Christ is the brightness of God's glory? Is not Christ called the bright and morning star? And is it not this light, this Jesus, of whom the golden candlestick of the tabernacle is a type of, that candlestick being the only source of light in that holy tent, just as Jesus is the only source of light to this dark world? And was it not this light shining from the resurrected and glorified Lord Jesus that the Apostle John saw in his vision in the first chapter of Revelation? *Re 1:14 His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire;15 And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. 16 And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. 17 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; ...* The word countenance there refers to Jesus' face or appearance. He appears intensely bright/shining/glowing, for he is described as having white hair, wearing shimmering gold, his eyes are flaming, his feet are glowing white hot brass, and his whole face shines as the sun, both terrible and beautiful at once. And I believe that vision reminded the Apostle John of the transfiguration of Christ *Mt 17:2 And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.* We then read further descriptions of the Lord Jesus in *Mt 28:3 His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: Mr 9:3 And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them. Lu 9:29 And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening.* We see here that Christ's glory can not be contained, its so magnificent it has to shine forth! So do we see that God is light, and Christ as God is light as well, he's the light of the world that shines in the darkness, His glory shines forth, and his glory is bright and shining and brilliant and holy and blinding.

For I believe it was this brightness of the glory of Jesus that blinded Paul on the road to Damascus, *Ac 9:3 And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: Paul then says in his recollection of those events to King Agrippa in Ac 26:13 At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me.* And then we also see in the book of Revelation that the glory of Christ will light the new city of Jerusalem that comes down from heaven, and that glory is so bright there is no need of the sun or moon... *Re 21:23 And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.* The sheer power and holiness that radiates from the glory of Christ and from God is unimaginable. His glory ever shines forth! God is light, Christ is the light, so is there any wonder that Moses glowed after being in the presence of such glorious light, the divine glory of God? For just as the moon produces no light of its own but only reflects light from the sun, so too did Moses reflect the light of the glory of God, he reflected the light of the S-O-N, for his face shines as he has been in the presence of THE Light, he had been with the Light of glory.

But another odd thing I find here is what Moses does about this glow coming from his face, what he does with the glory upon him. **V30-35**. He puts a veil on it, he covers up the glow, as my grandfather once said Moses was glowing so much they had to put a sack on his head. We see here that when Moses privately speaks with God he removes the veil, when he comes out to speak to the people he puts a veil on to cover the light, to cover the glory shining forth from his face. Now that begs the question, why would Moses do this? Well just from our reading here in Exodus we might say because it terrified the Israelites, he veiled his shining face because they were afraid, but if that was so, Moses would have never got them calmed down enough to come back and listen to what he had to say (v31). So if its not for Israel's fear, why would Moses cover up such a wonderful light, a wonderful glow of glory, evidence of being in the presence of God, why hide it? why not let that glorious light of God shine for all to see?

Well, let me ask you another question first, what is the best commentary on the Bible? The Bible itself right? Well if we look in the Bible we are given the reason Moses covers his face, but we have to wait all the way until the writing of the New Testament, where the Apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthian church gives us the explanation of why Moses covered his face. So with that lets turn to **II Cor 3** to find out what the Bible says about why Moses covered his face.

Now before I read anything here let me give you a little back ground so we all understand what Paul is addressing. In this third chapter of II Corinthians we see the Apostle Paul comparing the Mosaic Law with God's new law of grace, the gospel of Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament we had the Law and God's commandments and instructions for life, which we have already seen could not be fulfilled by mankind, all it done was point to man's failure of living a life in accordance to God's holiness and righteousness, and in that failure the Law condemns mankind, and thus pronounces death upon him. But with the unspeakable gift of God's grace in the form of his only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself so that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, should not be condemned and put to death, but will instead be granted everlasting life, so in grace we have life where in the Law we have death, and with that kind of grace, we have something that is far better than the Law, the reason for this is because Jesus is the better way. And that's what Paul is trying to get across to the believers here in Corinth, that Jesus Christ is more glorious than the Law, His new way is better than the old way. So lets begin reading at v6...

V6 Speaking of God Paul begins... *Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament* {participants in a new covenant, the covenant of Grace}; *not of the letter* {Mosaic Law}, *but of the spirit* {message of grace}: *for the letter* {the Law} *killeth* {the Law kills, for we sin and the Law points to a person's sins, it is the school teacher that teaches us we fall short of the glory of God, it condemns us of un-holiness before a holy God, of unrighteousness before a righteous God, it shows that we are guilty of sin, and we know the wages/results of sin is death, therefore the Law killeth}, *but the spirit*{grace} *giveth life* {the Law produces death but the new covenant of grace, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, produces life, everlasting life}.

7 *But if the ministration of death* {the Law, the ministry of death, as I just pointed out condemns one to death for their sin}, *written and engraven in stones*, {that's what Moses carried down from the mountain} *was glorious* {we must not ignore this fact, the Law was glorious, we saw it was given in glory, the Law came from God upon the mount, His glory was present on that mountain, and such was that glory that Moses' face shone from being in the presence of it and from the receiving the Law} *so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance*; {remember they couldn't stand it, they had a reverential fear of that glory and was scared to come near, to approach Moses, for the glory that shone on his

face} ***which glory was to be done away.*** {Here is the answer to my question of why Moses covered his face with a veil, the glory was to be done away, the glory that was revealed on Moses' face, just as the glory of the Law, was at some point going to fade away. The glory that shone forth from Moses' face was only temporary, just as the glorious Law was meant to be temporary for it was to be replaced with something better, and so Moses did not wish for Israel to see God's glory fade, so he covered his face with a veil}

8 How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? {Paul here makes a comparison between the Law and grace, if the ministration of death, the Law, was considered to be glorious even when it brought death, even though it was temporary, then how much more glorious is the ministration of the spirit, the grace of the gospel of Jesus Christ that brings forth everlasting life? Life that is not temporary but forever permanent? The word "rather" there in v8 actually means "how much more" or "how much better". And how much more and how much better is the grace of God versus the Law of God? Do we not learn from the book of Galatians that the Law cannot justify the lost sinner, cannot bestow righteousness, cannot give the Holy Spirit nor give an inheritance or liberty or life, yet in the book of Hebrews we see that Jesus is better all around, that he is better than the prophets and better than Moses, he is a better advocate, he is a better high priest, and he is a better covenant, and because he is better he is even more glorious than the Law that God gave. And we that are saved have become recipients of God's grace thru faith in the Lord Jesus and that's better than trying to live under the Law. The ministry of the spirit, the ministry of grace is much more glorious than the glory of the Law, the ministry of death. How much more glorious is grace and life versus the Law and death? And that's what Paul asks in v9}

9 For if the ministration of condemnation {the Law} ***be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory*** {grace is superior}.

10 For even that which was made glorious {the Law} ***had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth.*** {what Paul means here is that when compared to grace, when compared to Christ, the Law basically loses its glory for the glory of Christ far outshines it, it excels in glory, **EX:** its like a little flashlight, when you are in a dark room its pretty handy, but when you are out under the noonday sun you can't even tell if its on, just like the Law and Grace, the Law was useful in the dark days of the Old Testament but when the light came into the world, Jesus far out shown the Law for Jesus is better and superior in every aspect compared to the Law, its as if the Law has no glory when compared to the glory of grace}

11 For if that which is done away was glorious {the Law we know was only temporary, it wasn't meant to be permanent but to fade, all it was to do was to point to mankind's need of a Savior, a better way, a better sacrifice, a better remedy for sin, and when Christ came on the scene and completed his work, the Law was no longer needed, for a better way had now been provided, so the Law and its glory is now replaced by something much more glorious}, ***much more that which remaineth is glorious*** {grace is that which remains now and is much more glorious}.

12 Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech: {under the Law we had no hope, only condemnation, but under grace we have hope, hope in the Lord Jesus of whom we are not ashamed to speak of, instead we are bold in our speech, we can speak plainly and to the point for Christ is our hope, our blessed hope... *2Th 2:16 Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, 1Ti 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope;*}

13 And not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished: {Moses had to conceal the fading glory on his face, which represents the future fading of the glory of the Law, for as we have already stated

the Law was a ministry of death, it condemned, it couldn't save, it could not abolish sin, there was truly no hope in the Law for all it did was point to the need of something better, it pointed to the need of a Savior, and once that Savior appeared, the Law was no longer needed in that aspect. For the coming of Jesus and what he done on the cross, by defeating death and the grave to return to life in order to offer to others that same life, the Law was replaced by such grace. But what Moses' veil done was conceal the meaning behind the fading of this glory of the Law from the people of Israel, he could not speak plainly about it, for the truth of the purpose of the Law was veiled/hidden from Israel at this time to await the time it would be revealed in New Testament times. For Israel had just received the glorious Law and were not ready, were not prepared, to see that this was only a temporary system, the Israelites couldn't look to the end of the Law when it would be replaced by something better, something more glorious, so the end of the Law was not made known to them, *Ro 10:4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth*, and so a veil was placed not only upon Moses' face, but on the Jewish people's hearts, and look at the results of that veil...}

14 But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; {the Jew's devotion to the Law and not realizing what the Law really demanded caused them to be blind to their own Messiah, there was a spiritual veil on their minds and hearts so when reading the Old Testament Scriptures they could not and would not see that Jesus was the fulfillment, the end, of such, that he was the one the Law demanded}. **which veil is done away in Christ.** {this veil is only removed by belief in the truth of Jesus}

15 But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. {despite what they read of Moses' writings the Jews are still spiritually blind, they do not see the fading of the Law, the temporariness of the Law, that its glory has faded due to all the corruption they have added to it, and so their heart is veiled to the truth of Christ}

16 Nevertheless when it {heart} shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away. {when a Jew does believe, when their heart turns to the Lord Jesus, the veil upon their heart is removed and they can see how much more glorious Christ is, they can see the glory of the Law and how it pointed to the need of a Savior and then they can see that God sent that Savior who gave his life for them so they could be saved, and how much more glorious is that, how much more glorious is life vs death, liberty vs condemnation, Jesus vs Law, there is no comparison!}

17 Now the Lord is that Spirit {Paul boldly states that Jesus is that gift of grace}: **and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.** {no condemnation but freedom, not death but life}

18 But we all, with open face {Now Paul addresses us all, that if we with an open face, with unveiled, uncovered eyes, with spiritual sight} **beholding** {looking upon} **as in a glass** {as in a mirror, and what is a mirror symbolic of in Scripture? the Word of God. For we see who we really are when we get into God's word and we find out just how lowly and wicked and sinful and in need of hope and mercy and grace we are, how much we need a Savior, but the good thing is when we look into God's Word that's who we find, not only ourselves as a sinner, but we find the sinless Savior, we see the Lord Jesus Christ, we behold, what do we behold? We behold with unveiled eyes...} **the glory of the Lord** {the better way, the better covenant, the better ministry, the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ; and when we see/behold such and we accept Christ as our Savior by receiving God's grace thru faith in His Son, what happens? We begin a journey to grow ever more like our Savior, to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, we spiritually mature and grow and change into the very image of God, we ...}, **are changed into the same image from glory to glory** {changed from the glory of the Law to the ever better glory of the grace of God, the Lord Jesus Christ}, **even as by the Spirit of the Lord** {changed all by the Holy Spirit indwelling us, working in us and working thru us to make us more like the Lord}.

So we see the Law, as glorious as it was, was only temporary, it would fade, just as the glow upon Moses' face faded, and it would be replaced by something much more glorious: God's grace, the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And because we as believers are now partakers of this new glory, the more glorious covenant of Christ, we are not to be as Moses and put a veil upon ourselves to hide that glory, we are to instead let all see that glory, we are to be evidence, to be witnesses, to be testimonies of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ to this lost and dying world. For if we are changed from glory to glory, from a glory that condemned one to death to the glory of grace, the glory of everlasting life, the glory of the wonderful Savior, (*Job 1:17 For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.*) then we should let that glory shine forth, to not place a veil upon it, but to reveal it, for the glory of the Lord Jesus is better, it will never diminish, His glory is eternal, it is not temporary, it is forever, his is a **glory that does not fade**.

Why do you think the veil in the temple was rent at the death of Jesus, the veil was torn and anyone could look into the holy of holies, anyone was now allowed to see where the glory of God dwelled, when before it was just Moses or the High Priest who was privileged to see that, but after the veil was torn none saw God's glory in the temple, for with the veil torn away one could see the glory had faded, that the ceremonial rituals and that the Law was no more, but now an even better replacement was given by God, His very own Son, whose glory outshines all others and may be experienced by whosoever will believe in him. Christ's is a glory that is to be unveiled, to be revealed to every living soul. His glory is not to be reflected like Moses' face, but the Lord's glory is to be received within one's heart and then radiated from the inside out. We are not to cover up his glory that shines thru us but we are to let his light shine, for we are now his lights to this world. For we read in *Mt 4:16 The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.* That was us, sitting in darkness, but the light of Christ shined unto us, we believed and were saved, and his light, the light of life, sprung up in us. And now we are to do and be what the Lord Jesus commands. And what does he command? *Mt 5:14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. 15 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. 16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.* We are to show others the glory of Christ, who he is and what he can do in one's life, we are to be beacons of the new covenant of grace, by being a candle in this dark and evil world. *Eph 5:8 For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: {if God is Light and He is the Father of lights as James 1:17 states, we are now his children, His children of light, and we are to act accordingly}*

Why do you think that when John saw his vision of Christ in his resurrected glorified state in the book of Revelation that he saw the Lord walking in the midst of seven golden candlesticks? It's because those candlesticks are representative of the church, down thru the church age, thru the dispensation of grace, and during this time the church (that's us) is to be a light to the world, a candle, a lamp, a lighthouse on a hill to guide men to Jesus. That's why we are to let our light shine before men, to be the example we should be of Christ, to say the right things, do the right things, to honor and glorify our Father in heaven, to reveal the glory of Jesus Christ to others so they too might be saved. *Pr 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.* We are not to veil it but we are to reveal it!

But if we do not do this and we instead veil such glory like Moses did, the Apostle Paul tells us what in fact we are really doing if we do not let our light shine... **2Co 4:3** *But if our gospel (the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ) be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: 4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. 5 For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. 6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the **face** of Jesus Christ.* Notice it says the face of Jesus, for just like Moses

who glowed with God's glory, one can truly find & know the grace and glory of God in the face of Jesus, our Savior, all you have to do is look to Him. His is a glory that does not fade so we are to let our light, the light we have in the Lord Jesus shine forth to all men. For one day Peter tells us in *1Pe 5:4* *And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.*

So my question to you is, are you letting the light of Christ's glory shine thru you or are you covering up, putting a veil, over that light?

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