

REVELATION

Written by the Apostle John.

Revelation – Greek “*apokalypsis*” an unveiling; to show or to expose to view.

The unveiling of Jesus Christ

There are four primary views concerning Revelation as to when the events described by John have taken or will be taking place.

1. Preterist View is in terms of first century setting. This view considers most of the events in Revelation to have already happened. Considers the content of the book as describing the struggle between imperial Rome and the church so that everything was fulfilled at that time. Holders of this view believe all was fulfilled at the fall of Jerusalem and the old Roman Empire.
2. Historical View considers Revelation to be describing the long chain of events from Patmos to the end of history.
3. Idealist View regards the book of Revelation as reflecting the ageless struggle between God and the forces of evil. There is no particular historical reference. The book is viewed as symbolic pictures of such timeless truths as the victory of good over evil.
4. Futurist View interprets the first three chapters as historical, with the remainder awaiting fulfillment during the “Great Tribulation” and the establishment of the everlasting kingdom.

There is a chronological sequence which prevails throughout the book of Revelation.

Ultimately, all prophecies of both the Old Testament and the New Testament are fulfilled.

Millennium – 1,000 years.

There are three views as how the Millennium will fit into the time schedule of God concerning the end times.

1. Postmillennialist View – the triumph of the Gospel inaugurates the millennium. The 1,000 years is regarded by some as literal and by some as figurative.
2. Amillennial View – spiritualizes Revelation. Those with this view believe the binding of Satan occurred with the death and resurrection of Christ and that the 1,000 years as a literal period is non-existent.
3. Premillennial View – Maintains that Christ at His return will initiate the 1,000 year period that extends beyond the final rebellion as the everlasting kingdom.

Some important facts concerning Revelation and how it came to us are:

1. John was exiled on Isle of Patmos.
2. Revelation reveals God's completion of some very significant unfinished business.
3. God is working to remedy the fall and reclaim all that He lost when man broke fellowship with Him.
4. The book of Revelation is about God's completion of the project of redemption.
5. Revelation is not the end, but a rearranging, a being made new, a new beginning.

Rev 21:

Even lost go to another world; no one just ceases to exist.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction - Verses 1 – 8

V1 Revelation of Jesus Christ

1. given to Jesus by God
2. He sent it by His angel
3. to John to churches

V2 Revelation is John's record of all he saw and heard.

V3 Those who study Revelation and obey the things in it will be blessed.

The time is at hand means in fullness of God's timing He was ready to reveal His plans to His church (es).

V4 Seven churches in Asia

Grace is the Greek method of greeting; peace is the Hebrew of greeting.

One's relationship to God determines his possession of grace and peace.

Without a relationship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ, there can be no grace or peace.

Ezekiel 7:25

John 16:12-13

Seven is number of completion.

Seven churches

Seven angels

Seven spirits

Seven titles of Holy Spirit

Hebrews 9:14

John 14:17

Ephesians 1:13

Romans 8:2

Romans 1:4

Hebrews 10:29

1 Peter 4:14

Seven churches in Asia:

Ephesus

Smyrna

Pergamos

Thyatira

Sardis

Philadelphia

Laodicea

V5 Revelation from Jesus Christ

Faithful witness

First begotten of dead (resurrection)

1 Corinthians 15:23

1. However, they all died natural deaths later.
2. Christ is the first one to be resurrected in His glorified body, an event that also guarantees our ultimate resurrection.
3. Jesus is in control of the world even though he is allowing men a certain amount of latitude.
4. His control of the world rulers of this day is evident in the fact that He ultimately permits men to be put down.
5. The ultimate of Revelation is the day when Christ comes to reign physically as King of Kings and Lord of Lord on this earth.

There is also the present work of Christ to be considered in studying Revelation.

Jesus gave Himself to save us from our sins.

“He that loveth us,” indicates continual action.

Not only did He give Himself for us, but today He continues to love us with an everlasting love.

Jesus is the Prince of the kings of the earth

Upon His resurrection He made us a kingdom of priests unto God and His Father.

We may not look like kings or priests, but a day is coming when we will rule and reign with Him.

Colossians 1:13-14

Matthew 27:51-53

This signify that Jesus had entered into the Holy of Holies to place His own blood on altar before God the Father. The death and shedding of blood of Jesus gave us the right to become priest who have every right to enter into the presence of God.

Even though we are not physically in His presence as our bodies are concerned, we no longer need an intermediary to go into temple and offer sacrifices, prayers, or anything else in our place. We are priests.

V6 All believers are kings and priests.

If you are a believer you are a high priest of God and you will reign with Jesus when He returns to set up His eternal kingdom.

1 Peter 2:5-10

V7 When Jesus returns to the earth, He will be seen by everyone. All those who ridiculed, made fun of, took part in His crucifixion, everyone who has rejected Christ will see Him as He really is. There will be great wailing over all the earth when lost recognize they have rejected the only hope they ever had of eternity and there is no way to go back and undo what has been done. Most will be unable to live with reality of what they have done.

Matthew 13:41-43

Luke 23:28-30

Does this mean all or just the lost who will see Him?

Christ is coming again.

Acts 1:11

Jesus will come visibly to the earth.

This will be His coming at the end of the tribulation to set up His millennial kingdom.

V8 There is only one God.

God is the eternal God from eternity beginning to eternity future. There is no end, no beginning. “In the beginning-God.”

Alpha – A

Omega – Z

Matthew 4:21

John 19:26-27

Mark 3:14-17

V9 John introduced himself.

John was on the Isle of Patmos.

He had been exiled to the island because of his work as Apostle.

He was there because of the Word of God and for the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The early church was not bothered by ecclesiasticism.

The deadly teaching of ecclesiasticism has created a division between “clergy” and “laity”

As the oldest living Apostle, John was probable esteemed as the most revered saint of the day.

But, instead of attracting attention to himself, he immediately identified himself with the people.

V10 He said he was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day. There are several things we can see in this statement.

First of all, John was in right frame of mind to worship God.

First day of week (Sunday) is the Lord’s Day.

Tim LaHaye - Some say “the Lord’s day” is a reference to the fact that by the power of the Holy Spirit John was lifted in prophetic vision beyond the church age to “the day of the Lord.”

This specifically refers not only to the glorious appearing of Christ to the earth, but also incorporated the many events of the Tribulation Period, including the Rapture of the Church and the seven years of tribulation, culminating with the glorious appearing of Christ and the establishment of His millennial kingdom.

John heard a verse behind him as Jesus spoke to him.

V11 Jesus repeated that He was the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.

He told John to write what he saw and heard and send it to the seven churches in Asia.

Ephesus Smyrna Pergamos Thyatira Sardis Philadelphia Laodicea

These were obviously literal churches that were in existence in John’s day.

The study of church history shows that the church has gone through seven specific phases.

Even though the seven phases have been completed as a whole, there are still churches which exhibit one of the seven stages today.

The different phases carry over into the other phases so there may be no clear cut distinction between the end of one phase and the beginning of the next one.

These seven churches also represent seven methods of attack Satan can use today on the church or individual Christians within the church.

It is very important for us to be alert to the ways of Satan and make all preparation for the spiritual warfare we are in with him.

Ephesians 6:10-18

V12 Seven golden candlesticks – 7 is number of completion, Godly number

Jesus is in middle of the seven golden candlesticks

He is wearing the robe of righteousness.

The vision of Christ is descriptive, not only of Christ in His glory, but of His relationship to the churches of His day and the churches of all ages.

Ten characteristics of Christ envisioned by John

When John turned to see who had spoken to him, he saw seven golden lamp stands and a person in their midst.

He lists ten very descriptive details of the person in verses 12-20:

1. “... one like the Son of man” indicates the person was not some unusual or grotesque being but a normal man in His appearance.

2. "...clothed with a garment down to the foot." This was typical of the long robes of the high priests as they ministered in the Holy Place in the temple.
3. "...girded about the breasts with a golden girdle" refers to a symbol of strength and authority common in the ancient world. The average working man wore a short tunic of loose-fitting clothes. Only those in authority wore a girdle.
4. "His head and his hair were white like wool, as white as snow" conveys the thought of antiquity and reminds us of the vision of Daniel 7:9-13.

Daniel 7:8-13

The whiteness, of course, also speaks of the righteousness of God, who is from everlasting to everlasting.

5. "...his eyes were like a flame of fire." The Greek construction is literally "His eyes shot fire," which indicates that Christ was indignant over something. As we progress into the vision, we find that He was indignant over the indifference, in some cases, of the apostate churches. Whenever the church of Jesus Christ is not what it should be, we can be sure it arouses the indignation of Christ.
6. "...his feet like fine bronze." The bronze speaks to us of judgment. It reminds us of the brazen altar of the tabernacle, where sin was judged.
7. "...his voice like the sound of many waters." This simile can best be illustrated by Niagara Falls. When you come to the edge of the great falls, all other sounds are eliminated from your hearing as you are engulfed by the deafening roar of the turbulent waters. This figure seems to indicate the attitude of the Son of God as He comes on the Lord's day in judgment.
8. "And he had in his right hand seven stars." The Lord Himself interpreted the meaning of the seven stars in verse 20, "the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches." Greek for angel means literally "messenger." Most believe this is addressed to the pastors of the churches. We should take the message to heart and consider to our churches today. Remember, we said that there are today churches in each of the seven different phases that are represented by these seven churches and the pastors.
Tim LaHaye said he likes to think that these were angels watching over each of the churches. He said that with all the enemies armed against the church, both the natural and supernatural, I like to think that we have a specially assigned angel working for us. Certainly we need one!
9. "...out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword." Eph 6 refers to Word of God as "the sword of the Spirit." Heb 4:12 says the Word of God is "sharper than any two-edged sword." The spoken Word of Christ will go forth as a sharp sword against which there will be no defense in the day of judgment.
10. "...his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." This speaks of the divine nature of Christ and reminds us of the event on the Mount of Transfiguration. For just a moment Peter, James, and John saw Jesus in His divine glory, as John saw Him here in Revelation.

Verses 13 – 15 reveal the glorified Christ

Matthew 16:27

Daniel 7:13

Isaiah 61:10

Isaiah 11:3-5

V13 Jesus is in the middle of the seven candlesticks.

Matthew 5:14

Ex 25:31-37

V14 Pure white of white of righteousness of Jesus

His eyes were flames of fire – purifying, penetrating fire.

Romans 5:18

Hebrews 1:7-8

Numbers 9:15-16

Numbers 11:1

Deuteronomy 4:24

Mal 3:2-3

Hebrews 12:29

V15 Fine brass is representative of strength.

Dan 10:6

The voice of God is often given with different related sounds.

John 10:4

V16 Seven stars and two-edged sword

Hebrews 4:12-13

Eph 6:13-17

The sun represents strength.

V17 This is a repetition of “Alpha and Omega” the beginning and the end.

Christ is so exalted beyond us that even in our glorified state we will willingly worship at his feet.

This John who prostrated himself at feet of Jesus is same John who was familiar enough with Jesus to lay his head on His breast. Anyone truly in touch with the Spirit of God instinctively bows in adoration to Jesus Christ. (Any spirit that motivates one in defiance of Christ is not the Holy Spirit.)

V18 “that liveth” – as man

“that died” – as man

“resurrected” – alive ever more as man.

He has the keys of hell and of death

Term “keys” is mentioned only twice in Bible, here and in Matthew 16:19.

In Matthew 16:18-19 the keys of the kingdom of heaven are given to the church.

Matt 16:18-19

In Revelation 20:13- we see what will be done with the keys of hell and of death

They are to unlock hell and death in order to place all those who’s final place of abode will be there, including the devil himself.

Rev 20:13-21:1

V19 Jesus told John to write three things

1. things he had seen (past)
2. things which are (present)
3. things which shall be hereafter (future)

V20

The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches in Asia which were already mentioned earlier in the chapter. They represent the seven pastors of the seven churches and the seven candlesticks are the seven churches.

Christian Fear

Cold, naked fear is gripping the hearts of men everywhere today because of the chaotic world conditions. Even the conditions in the U.S. are cause to worry. But this should never be the case in a child of God.

2 Timothy 1:7

Jesus was repeating what He had told His apostles from the beginning that He was with them always.

2 Timothy 1:7

Four reasons that Christians should not fear are:

- 1 "I am the first and the last" speaks of Christ's eternity. He is before all things; and after all things are through, He will still be in control.
- 2 "I am he that liveth, and was dead." Speaks of His sacrificial death for our sins and His resurrection. It also reinforces the fact that we worship a risen, living Christ. No other religion in world can attest to fact that the subject of their worship is risen and alive today.
- 3 "...I am alive forevermore." The Scripture tells us that Christ died "once for sin." He will not die again. Men must realize that the decision of accepting or rejecting Christ as an eternal decision. Just as He is able to save "forevermore" He is able to damn forevermore those who reject Him.
- 4 "...and have the keys of hades and of death." John said Jesus held the keys of hades and death." These keys were purchased with His own blood.

Hebrews 2:14-15

Rev 20:14

The only time there is fear in a person when studying Revelation or any other part of the Bible is when our heart is not right with God and we are not in right standing with Him. I think need to stop right now and have prayer. We need to be sure we are where we need to be in our relationship with Jesus and in our daily walk with Him.

There may be someone here who does not know for sure that you are saved and belong to Jesus. You must realize that the fear that you may have is because you do not know the one who casts out all fear. Once you meet Him, there will no longer be any fear for "perfect love casts out all fear" and Jesus loves us with a perfect love.

CHAPTER 2

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

The Church at Ephesus

The church of Jesus Christ was founded on the testimony of His personal deity.

Matthew 16:18

Verses 2-6 are Christ's commendation to the church at Ephesus.

Revelation 2:2-6

Condemnation – "thou hast left thy first love."

Counsel – "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent."

Challenge – "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."

Ephesus was probably one of the finest and largest churches of NT times.

It was begun by Paul on his second missionary journey.

The Ephesian church located in a wicked city given over to the worship of the goddess Diana, exhibited a spiritual vitality that carried over from Paul's habit of going "from house to house warning men with tears."

Ephesus was considered to the gateway to Asia.

It was also the center of worship for the goddess Diana.

(Acts 18-20 gives good description of Ephesian church.)

1. Ephesian or Apostolic Period

Ephesian church is the only one of the seven churches in ch. 2 and 3 that reference is made to the Apostles. This can be an indication that the address was not to one single church, but also to the church of the first century.

The early church is usually called the "early church" or the "Apostolic church".

The period covered is from day of Pentecost (about A.D. 30) to A.D. 100.

Ephesus means "desired one."

Ephesus was the most desirable of all the churches or church ages.

It was characterized by **fervent evangelism**.

One of the main reasons for this was the large percentage of Jewish converts that made up the church.

The Church owes much to the Jew, through whom we have the Bible and our Savior, Jesus Christ.

The success of the early church was due largely to a preponderance of Jewish leadership.

Preached Gospel

There is strong scriptural indication that the early church preached the gospel around the world.

Romans 10:18

This would agree with message that the address was to the entire early church or the Apostolic church rather than just to the one church at Ephesus.

Romans 16:26

Colossians 1:6

The Holy Spirit asserts through Paul that Gospel had come to you (Ephesus) just as it has to all the rest of the world.

Colossians 1:23

We find that before the canon of Scripture had been put together, early church had accomplished wide spread preaching of gospel through the ministry of the Jewish Christians than has been done since; especially since the church has been under the Gentiles.

Even with our modern means of communication and jet travel today, we are not able to equal their evangelistic success.

It is interesting to note that apostasy and indifference were characteristic of the Church under the administration of Gentiles, but evangelism was a characteristic of Jewish leadership.

This fact is highlighted by truth in Rev. 7 that the only other time the Gospel will be proclaimed around the world will again be under Jewish leadership when the 144,000 Jewish Christian witnesses go forth to reach “a great multitude, which no man could number.” (Rev. 7:9)

1. Christ’s Commendation to the church at Ephesus

A Working Church

Christ’s walking among the seven golden lampstands shows that He has always been available to the church. He is therefore fulfilling His words to the apostles in Matthew 28:20.

Matthew 28:20

“I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience.”

Christ commended the early church for its faithful works of Christian service.

It is a joyful labor of love for a Christian who is “abiding in Christ,” but it is nonetheless a labor.

Christ knows and records all faithful service.

Matthew 10:42

No act of service is too small to escape the notice of Jesus, or too insignificant for Him to honor.

Matthew 10:19

Every Christian should have a thorough understanding of Ephesians 2:8-10.

Ephesians 2:8-10

We are all familiar with the principle of salvation by grace through faith stated in verse 8.

But few understand that after this transaction we go on “unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

A Separated Church

I...know how thou canst not bear them which are evil.

The word for church in Greek is “ecclesia” literally meaning “called-out ones.

A true church is a church in the world but not of the world.

One of the things that characterized the early church, but some of the other churches, was the refusal to fraternize with loose Christians.

The early church heeded the warning of the Holy Spirit to in Romans 16:17.

Romans 16:17

Church discipline is almost unheard of today. The early church practiced it, and the truly separated church that is filled with the Spirit today will still practice it.

Early disciples had those among them who were “tares” sown by devil. These were those found to be liars (V. 2).

God is faithful and those churches who looked to Him and “tried the spirits” were not deceived.

We must be alert today that the church remains consistent with and is faithful to Word of God.

If any teachings are not consistent with the Word of God, those teaching should be rejected and put out.

Enduring Church

V. 3 – The church at Ephesus was a consistent church which endured with a faithful spreading of gospel, not faint-hearted, but presenting gospel with courage.

The entire commendation is a tribute to the faithfulness to the godly church at Ephesus.

We can take it to mean that faithful church of today or any age is included in this particular commendation.

Autonomous Church

Followers of Nicolai had serious heretical views.

They practiced sensuality by completely separating the spiritual and physical natures, giving themselves license to sin.

This is heresy known as nicolaitanism.

There evidently was an effort to set up church hierarchy in effort to become religion.

There is great danger of local church being caught in control of handful of men and lose sight of Jesus as only way.

Christ’s Condemnation

V4 – They had left their first love, which was Jesus Christ.

They had lost the sparkle of their love for Jesus. They had moved through the honeymoon period and had settled into routine which was going through the motions instead of having freshness of love of Jesus in all they did. We must guard our new-found conversion and experience with Jesus by submission to Holy Spirit throughout our walk.

Most Christians' lives develops into a routine walk of having left our first love.

This is same thing that happens in most churches today; they have left their first love and are in everyday routine.

God's Counsel

There are three things (v 4) we must do to prevent this happening or to get back where we need to be:

1. Remember from where we have fallen.
2. Repent
3. Do the first works

John 14:15

V 7 – God's challenge to us is to hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

We must be able to take what He is saying and be able to apply it to us as individuals and as a church, the body of Christ.

1 John 5:4-5

Smyrna

Rev 2:8-11

Church at Smyrna was greatly persecuted in wealthy city with little time for Christians.

Smyrna was the commercial center of Asia Minor, on direct trade route from India and Persia to Rome.

Jewish population of Smyrna seemed to be mostly irreligious and neglectful of spiritual things.

Commendation

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.

Condemnation

Not one word!

Counsel

Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer:

Challenge

He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

Church at Smyrna probably was under greatest period of persecution Church has ever known.

Because of its faithful teaching of Gospel it had become serious threat to his worldwide godless empire.

Jesus said not one word of condemnation to the church which had stood faithfully in face of depravity of Satan before and around it.

This age of persecution ended with the easing of the persecution.

Satan turned to another weapon to weaken the church, that of indulgence or endorsement.

A Thriving Church

The church reached its greatest numbers in proportion to world population during this period of persecution.

Not only were many churches establishment in many parts of world, but this church distinguished itself by production of many hand-copied manuscripts of early Scriptures and the translation of Scripture into many languages.

However, the easing of persecution of church was master stroke by Satan and led to great tragedy for the church.

Message of Christ to Smyrna

V 8 - Christ introduced each message to churches by going back to vision in ch. 1.

To Smyrna He emphasized His eternal nature – “the first and the last” “who was dead, and is now alive”

Commendation of Christ

Message to Smyrna was shortest of any to seven churches.

It is, however, the greatest commendation because He does not condemn it.

His commendation highlights three characteristics of the church:

- Tribulation
- Poverty
- affliction.

A Persecuted Church

“I know thy works, and tribulation.” V. 9

A Poor Church

“I know thy...poverty (buy thou art rich).”

Evidently, as well as their persecution, church at Smyrna had gone through severe period of severe financial persecution.

Guilds, much like unions today, would boycott or cut off employment to those who took stand for Jesus.

Christians which were rich in worldly goods went bankrupt.

The church enjoyed little monetary wealth even into the second and third centuries.

The churches of the first three centuries were marked by material poverty and spiritual power; while churches of today are marked by material wealth and spiritual weakness.

The closer we are to Jesus today, the richer we are. The further we are from Him, the poorer we are.

On this basis, as Christians, how much are we worth today?

An Afflicted Church

“I know the blasphemy of them who say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.”

They were afflicted by teachers who had claimed to be Jews but really were not.

Romans 2:29

To obey the teachings of the Word legalistically is never enough.

Submission of the heart to God, not adherence to a prescribed set of rules, is His desire for men.

Synagogue of Satan

Satan has his own religious faith. He has his churches called the synagogues of Satan.

Any church that teaches a gospel other than the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a synagogue of Satan, regardless of what it is called.

Two Basic Heresies

Two basic heresies from synagogue of Satan in the name of Christianity were:

1. false doctrine of Christ
2. mixing law and grace.

The mixing of law and grace was the work of the Judaizers condemned by Jesus in verse 10.

Almost every false religious system and cult coming out of Christianity can be traced to one of these two heresies.

- They are either confused about the personal deity of Jesus, suggesting that he was only a good man and not the virgin-born Son of God who lived a sinless life, died a sacrificial death, rose bodily from the grave, ascended physically into heaven, and promised to return physically to this earth some day.’
- Or they add to salvation “by grace through faith,” saying that in addition to believing on Jesus, we should also keep the Sabbath, observe certain rites and ceremonies, eat or not eat certain kinds of meat, etc.
- The church of the first three centuries in large measure successfully withstood these two teachings that are deceiving many people today in one cult or another.

The Counsel of Christ

Jesus counseled the church of Smyrna to “fear nothing” and “be faithful unto death.”

Jesus also told them what to come. V. 10

Some say the 10 days refers to the 10 periods of persecution previously referred to or to the last ten years of the age, 303-312 corresponding to Smyrna.

“Fear not.”

One who has Christ has enough, regardless of the intensity of the persecution we may endure.

When grace is needed, grace will be supplied.

Philippians 4:19

“Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”

Future riches are involved in this promise to the church.

Matt 6:20

See **2 Corinthians 3:9-20** and **Luke 19:11-27**.

The Challenge of Christ

V. 11 The challenge of Christ comes to those who have spiritual ears to hear.

Our spiritual ears to hear depends on our personal faith in Jesus.

The second death will never be able to touch a child of God.

Revelation 20:14

Revelation 20:15

Pergamos

Revelation 2:13-18

Pergamus, the capital city of Asia until the end of the first century, was a city given over to the worship of many Greek idols.

Roman rulership demanded the cooperation of all groups.

V 13 referred to the city twice as Satan's throne or where Satan dwelled.

The Indulged Church

13 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.

Condemnation

V. 14

Counsel

V. 16

Challenge

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.

The Indulged Church Age

When Constantine became emperor of Rome, he became a self-styled “protector of the Christian faith.”

He gave money to churches and many pagan temples were taken over by Christians.

To please the emperor, many church leaders adopted customs that were parallel to pagan practices.

One compromise will lead to another and what seemed like a great blessing ended up a great curse.

This is twice we have seen prosperity lead to the downfall of the church.

As paganism too over church it began to cover itself in mysticism and pagan ritualism.

A list of the changes in original teachings of Christianity taking place between 300 and 600 AD were:

1. prayers for the dead
2. making sign of the cross
3. worship of saints and angels
4. mass first instituted worship of Mary begun
5. priest began dressing differently than laymen
6. extreme unction
7. doctrine of purgatory introduced
8. worship services conducted in Latin
9. prayers directed to Mary.

From 312 AD forward the church became much more Roman and much less Christian.

The church became married to the governmental authority and elevated to a place of acceptance.

As it did so, it declined in spiritual blessing and power.

Christ's Commendation to Pergamos

V. 13

Satan's attack changed from that of attacking Christians to one of indulgence and elevation.

The doctrine of the church and the church age are doctrinally pure and no criticism can be thrown at them.

The sin came when the church took in the ceremonies of the pagans.

(Today's church – What are some things we have adopted from secular world around us in the guise of improving our situation and helping our church operate better? How much good or bad have we done to the church and our ability to carry out the work of Christ?)

Condemnation

V. 14

Although their theological doctrine was correct, their practical doctrines were radically evil. There were two main categories of false doctrines:

1. The Doctrine of Balaam (Numbers 22-31)

Balaam and Balak led Israel to form pacts with the Moabites and ended in causing them to stumble.

The church at Pergamos were faithful to Christ and held the faith concerning doctrine, but they failed to remain to be separated from the world around them.

The only time we have unlimited power of Holy Spirit available is when we are obedient to the will of God'

When we disobey by making alliances with the world, we lose that power.

2. The Doctrine of the Nicolaitans

V.15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

The doctrine of the Nicolaitans is that of a strong ecclesiastical hierarchy ruling over the laity.

This type of hierarchy has never allowed a strong spiritual condition in the church.

The laymen have no strong voice in the church and the clergy gradually gravitate to an ivory tower type of existence separated more and more from the people.

Jesus said this doctrine which he hated.

Counsel

Jesus' counsel to the Nicolaitans was simple, "Repent or be destroyed."

The church that continued to follow the doctrines of the Nicolaitans would end up fighting against God.

Christ's Challenge

V. 17

1 John 5:4 The hidden manna symbolizes the spiritual food provided by God. It is an individual feeding, not a church function.

No matter what the circumstances, we must always look only to God for our provision.

Philippians 4:19

"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

Future riches are involved in this promise to the church.

The white stone is a message of assurance.

White refers to the righteousness of God.

Good reference is in old method of voting, especially while voting on matters concerning a person.

Have you ever heard term "black balling"?

We have received the white stone of acquittal with Christ's name on it.

Thyatira

This period is from around 600 AD until 1520 when the Dark Ages started.

The city of Thyatira was probably founded by Alexander about 300 years before Christ.

It was a wealthy city of Macedonia, noted for its outstanding color dyes.

The main characteristic of the church seemed to be its "works" toward men rather than doctrinal belief.

Jesus' indictment against them was that they allowed a false teacher to spread her heresy.

The name "Thyatira" comes from the words meaning "sacrifice" and "continual".

The church at Rome during this period denied the finished work of Christ and believed in a continuing sacrifice which produced things such as sacraments and praying for the dead, burning candles, etc.

They placed emphasis on continual sacrifice and denied the finished work of Christ.

This concept cause man to try to earn his own salvation by works, penance, indulgences, or other satanically originated ideas which substituted for the shed blood of Christ as our only means of salvation.

Many of the beliefs of the period were rooted in, or at least similar to, many pagan rituals. (I believe this is because they all originate in Satan and, therefore, are similar because of their common origin. We must remember, that Satan is not able to create anything and, so, he can come up with nothing original.)

Commendation

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

Jesus commended the church at Thyatira for six things:

1. works – though Rome’s history they had been faithfully serving Christ as result of their receiving.
2. Love – the church was characterized by a love for mankind
3. Service – this means their ministry
4. Faith - the faith of the church was not given the prominence of works and love, it nevertheless is a characteristic of the a age and church with the main exception of their allowing the false prophet to come in.
5. Patience – the church had endurance and had lasted for a long time
6. Works – the good works of the church at Rome were commendable.

Although the majority of the church had been kept in ignorance and dark during this period in the history of the church, some such as John Wycliffe, John Huss, Savonarola, and others were martyred because they refused to give up their adherence to the Word and to Jesus Christ by following the heresies and edicts of the “church”.

Condemnation

20 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.

Christ’s condemnation of Thyatira took two forms:

1. He condemned her for permitting a false teacher to enslave or to lead astray His servants
2. He condemned her for not repenting when she had opportunity

When name of a woman is used in Bible to convey a religious teaching, she always represents a false religion.

Matthew 13:33-35

This is a prophetic glimpse of what took place during the false teaching of this particular period of church history. The leaven represents false doctrine which is introduced and which will corrupt the whole church if it is allowed to be introduced.

The false teachings took two different forms:

1. “to seduce (and lead into false teaching) my servants to commit fornication,” which is a symbol of the idolatry brought in during the period.
(The going after idols or false gods is considered to be fornication against God.)
2. “to eat things sacrificed to idols” a symbol of the union of the church with the world.

Though it was contrary to the teachings of Jesus, they seriously attempted to make their kingdom of this world.

John 18:36

V. 21 And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.

They had plenty of time and were given opportunity to repent and yet they did not.

Nothing was left except the judgment will come on all who reject Jesus Christ.

All who would be faithful followers of Jesus must be careful to measure everything according to the stated Word of God, and, if need be, to stand alone.

Counsel

Jesus’ counsel to Thyatira was apparently directed to the faithful individuals within that church who rejected the false doctrines.

V. 25 But that which ye have already hold fast till I come.

This refers to the fact that many during the Tribulation will refuse to knuckle under to the false religious system, called “the harlot” in Revelation 17.

Challenge

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.

There are two aspects to the charge Jesus is giving to the individual who is able to overcome in this period:

1. He will give him a position of leadership and authority during the millennial age if he is faithful in this age.
2. “Morning star is clearly understood in light of Jesus’s word in Revelation 22:16.

Revelation 22:16

Jesus is the bright and morning star who will come and abide in us if we overcome.

1 John 5:1-4

The Lord Jesus Christ Who lives inside of every Christian is the only one or the only thing that will overcome the world, the devil, and everything that he has to come against us with.

There is no other way to heaven and there is no other way to overcome whatever we may have to face in the world in which we live today or in what is to come upon us in the future.

I believe there is a period of great persecution of the church and of individual Christians which is greater than any of us could begin to imagine. And, I mean right here in the U. S.

I don’t know how much you listen to WFCA or to news about world events, but it is unbelievable how much persecution of the church and Christians is going in other countries. But I believe we are just beginning to see a glimpse of what is in store for the church in the U. S. unless there is a great revival and the people get on their knees and return to God. That is the only salvation for the U. S. or for any church which exists today.

Sardis

Revelation 3:1-6

There is nothing worse than a dead church.

Like a man dying of thirst in the desert who sees a well off in the distance, only to find when he arrive that it is dry.

Many thirsty souls stumble through desert of this world and then finally see what they think is hope in the forma of a church.

When they enter the church they find out that it is completely dead.

This is the picture of the church at Sardis and the age it represents – the Reformation.

Sardis, the capital city of Lydia, was prominent in Asia Minor.

It was noted for its carpet industry and was a wealthy city that was finally destroyed by an earthquake.

The church there had an acceptable name among some, but was really dead.

This is tragic view of the life that is usually characteristic of the born-again Christian.

Jesus said, “I am come that yea might have life, and that yea might have it more abundantly.”

There were, however, a handful of believers in Sardis who refused to “defile their garments.”

The dead church, 1520 to the Tribulation

Commendation

v. 1 - “I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest...”

Condemnation

“...[thou] are dead... I have not found thy works perfect before God.”

Counsel

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

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.

Challenge

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.

The Dead Church Age

Sardis means “escaping ones” or those who “come out.”

This name, along with God’s condemnation of the church, provides a perfect description of the Reformation churches.

The Protestant Reformation was the result of the continued emphasis by the Roman church on pagan doctrines rather than adherence to scriptural principles.

The basic emphasis of the Reformation churches originally was Martin Luther’s watchword, taken from Scripture, “The just shall live by faith.”

They had recoiled from trying to make salvation the result of works and sparked a resurgence of interest in studying the Scriptures.

The tragedy of the Reformation churches that earned them the condemnation by God of being “dead” was two-fold.

1. They became state churches. Luther, for example, sought the approval of the political leaders, and eventually the Lutheran Church became the state church of Germany, as did others throughout Europe. The danger of this is that the church then includes the entire population, thus eliminating the need for personal acceptance of Jesus Christ and an emphasis on the individual’s relationship to God.
2. The Reformation churches did not sufficiently change many customs and teachings of the Roman church. Infant baptism was continued, in spite of the fact that there is no scriptural verification for it. Sprinkling was also continued, and ritualism, including some elements of the sacraments, was perpetuated. Ritual and formality, characteristic of pagan forms of worship, are not conducive to genuine worship, for they appeal to the sensuous nature of man. The Bible teaches that God must be worshipped in spirit and in truth. Ritual and formality, characteristic of pagan forms of worship, are not conducive to genuine worship, for they appeal to

the sensuous nature of man. The Bible teaches that God must be worshiped in spirit and in truth. Ritual that comes from paganism cannot be of the Holy Spirit and does not convey truth. The main purpose of a church is the propagation of the Gospel. This should be done in song and word. **If people leave a church with the mysterious feeling of “worship” but have not been brought face to face with Jesus in a personal way, they have been worshipping in a dead church.**

Christ's nature revealed to Sardis

The aspect of Christ's nature revealed to Sardis is most instructive.

God selected two characteristics – seven spirits and seven stars.

V. 3:1 - These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars;

Seven spirits refer to the Holy Spirit, who Jesus said is truth.

The seven stars are the angels of the churches.

The churches had ample opportunity to know the truth and obey God if they only heeded His warning.

Natural explanation is that they **trusted the state** in time of economic need more than they trusted God.

If Luther and other reformers had depended solely on Holy Spirit instead of the government there would have been a greater spiritual experience for millions more.

Christ's Commendation

Sardis received shortest commendation from Jesus of any of seven churches.

Some Bible scholars do even include commendation but count it as a condemnation because of its ending.

“I know thy works.” Jesus knew what they had done in His name in standing firm and in spreading Gospel.

“That thou has a name” means they probably had a reputation as being faithful to Christ.

“That thou livest” indicates there was some life in the church.

We know that those who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ are “alive.”

But the act of placing your trust in Jesus and receiving His salvation does not guarantee consistent obedience to the Holy Spirit.

Steadfast obedience is a result of a day-by-day submission to the will of God.

Christ's Condemnation

The condemnation to the church is, according to the line of thinking of historical periods, aimed at the church during the Reformation which began in 1520.

“Thou . . . art dead.” Ritual and ceremony of the church often crowded out the true life underneath and made the church powerless and ineffective in the hand of God.

Jesus said, “for I have not found thy works perfect before God.”

The Greek work for perfect means “complete.”

Col 2:10

The leaders began well, but they did not go on to complete the works to bring the church to scriptural standards.

Christ's Counsel

Jesus counseled the church of Sardis to do five things which, had they obeyed, would have made them acceptable to Him.

1. “Be watchful” points up a serious deficiency in the teaching of the Reformation leaders. The word “watch” is used by Jesus in other Scriptures to indicate the attitude of life that should characterize Christians in view of His promised return. The most serious deficiency in the Reformation teachings was that they lacked instruction in Bible prophecy and separation. Prophetically instructed Christians than those who are not aware of the promises of our Lord's second coming.
2. “. . . and strengthen the things which remain.” This evidently refers to the need for strengthening the good doctrinal teachings of the early days of the Reformation, which were limited to salvation by faith, the total depravity of man, and the authority of the Word of God.
3. “Remember therefore how thou hast received and hear” indicates the need to return to the days of blessing as a result of searching the Scriptures and depending upon God rather than on the state church and ritual
4. “Hold fast” is a warning to hold fast to the doctrines clearly taught in the Scriptures they presently had. It was bad enough that they did not press far enough in the development of scriptural truth then, but it is even worse

that the church of Sardis represents some of the denominations swept along in the advancing tide of neo-orthodoxy today, giving up or compromising the orthodox position that characterized the reformers.

5. "...and repent." Repentance involves not only an act of turning toward God, but a submissive heart. The Reformation involves not only an act of turning back to Christ, seeking His will and His Spirit's teaching, rather than to accept their own preconceived ideas about the interpretation of truth. Had they been willing to repent, doubtless the Holy Spirit would have guided them "into all truth."

Christ's Warning to Sardis

V. 3

Because Reformation churches have not heeded God's warning, they will be taken unawares when Jesus comes. One of many evidences of this prophetic ignorance on part of Reformation churches was that they were members of the World Council of Churches' ecumenical program.

Purpose of the organization is to unite all Protestants, all Catholics, and eventually all religions.

We must realize that this only aids and abets the antichrist in his ultimate goal of a combined church during the first 3 ½ years of the tribulation. (Rev 17)

Some Faithful Saints in Sardis

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

As in all church ages, Sardis (Reformation) had some individuals who were faithful to Jesus.

They saw through pageantry and ritual and came to the personal acceptance of Christ as Savior and Lord.

Because of their faith in Him and obedience to His Word, they refused to "defile their garments," to compromise with the attitude and conduct of the world, and rather chose to live a separated and godly life.

God has promised that all who are faithful to Him during persecution will "walk with me in white; for they are worthy."

The story is told of young Armenian in refuge camp established by U. S. to help them. She sat and waited outside her tent for medical attention. Her dark eyes showed deep pain she was in. When asked if she was hurt, she said she was bearing the cross of Jesus. They did not understand but when the nurse helped into her tent and helped her remove her dress, she saw a cross had been branded across one of her shoulders. She said "I am bearing the cross of Jesus. Now I know how He suffered." The wound was swollen and burning up with infection. She explained, "Every day they would say to me, 'Mohammed or Christ? When I said 'Christ' on the last day, they branded my shoulder with this cross. Now al long as I live I will bear this cross, and someday when I see Jesus I will be glad. Most of us who have never tasted the sting of persecution for the cause of Jesus will stand aside and be thrilled at the Judgment Seat of Christ when those who have endured are rewarded.

Christ's Challenge to Sardis

Jesus' challenge to church at Sardis, as to all the others, is directed to the individual.

"He that overcometh" is a direct reference to those who have been born again by faith in Christ

1 John 5:4.

2 Corinthians 5:21

V. 6 This indicates the security in which a believer is held against the day of judgment described in Rev. 20:11-15.

The Book of Life is that book which contains the names of all living individuals.

It is possible to have one's name blotted out of that book for three reasons:

- (1) for sinning against God

Exodus 32:33 For not being an overcomer, which is synonymous with being born again or putting one's trust in Jesus

- (2) for taking away from the words of the prophecy of Revelation 22:19

Rev 22:19 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.

In short, then, anyone who has sinned against God has his name blotted out of the Book of Life when he dies.

Jesus concluded by saying, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

Whether or not a person has heard is determined by whether or not they have heeded His warning to be born again.

The way to guarantee that your name will never be blotted out of the Book of Life is to get on your knees and ask God right now to cleanse your sin and save you.

Philadelphia

Revelation 3:7-13

It is refreshing to see Philadelphia after last two churches we have just studied.

It is throwback to first two, Ephesus and Smyrna, in first three centuries.

Church at Philadelphia was located in a center of Greek civilization.

Founded only 189 years before Christ, the city had a surprising influence on that area of the ancient world.

Philadelphia was must have been very vital, because Philadelphia remained an independent Christian city until the close of the 14th century, when it was conquered by the Turks.

The Church Christ Loved, 1750 to the Rapture

Commendation

V. 8

Condemnation

Not one word.

Counsel

V. 11

Challenge

V. 12 - 13

The Philadelphia Age of Church History

The name Philadelphia literally means “brotherly love.”

Jesus selected that church to describe the kind of church age that was initiated around 1750 and will continue to the Tribulation.

Just as Sardis came out of Thyatira, so the Philadelphia age came out of Sardis.

The Reformation church, as we saw earlier, became dead and cold as a state church.

Philadelphia, however, was marked by a vitality of life.

In this church age, God worked in a thrilling manner that produced revivals in Europe and the British Isles, spreading even to America.

These revivals in turn produced what is know today as the modern missionary movement.

Movement of H. S. on part of His people caused an English shoe cobbler, William Carey, to become so burdened for souls of lost that he became the first foreign missionary in 1793, going to India.

He was followed by other young people whom H. S. touched and the present-day “Faith Missionary Movement: was begun.

Jesus said “I will set before thee an open door.”

1 Cor 16:9

2 Cor 2:12

Col 4:3

This open door found such men as Adoniram Judson, David Livingston, Jonathan Go forth, and thousands of other people going to Africa, China, Japan, Korea, India, South America, and throughout the world.

What is message to us today? How do we find relevance in what we are reading here?

Two Reasons for the Missionary Movement

One thing leading to the great missionary movement was the printing of the Bible in the language of the people and the natural tendency of the ordinary individual to take the Bible literally.

When young men like William Carey read ‘Go yea into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” hew was inclined to obey it.

Second factor that contributed to this missionary movement was the increased interest in the study of the doctrine of the second coming of Jesus.

Around 1800 the doctrine of the premillennial return of Christ, which had been all but dead since the end of the third century, was revived.

This teaching contributed to a consecrated and separated church.
In preparation for Jesus' return, the church was willing to do whatever He commanded.

Christ's Nature Revealed

Four aspects of Christ's character are revealed to Philadelphia in v. 7, two of which are not found in John's vision in ch. 1.

1. "Holy." Jesus reminds this church of His holiness. It is good to be reminded at this point that He also said, "Be yea holy: for I am holy: (1 Pet. 1:16). This aspect of His nature may have been singled out to signify the practice of the church of Philadelphia in being separated from the world unto holiness.
2. "True." In several passages Jesus is referred to as Truth.

John 14:6

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

Dr. J. Vernon McGee offers this interesting suggestion: "True" means genuine with an added not of perfection and completeness. Moses did not give the 'true bread.' Christ is the 'true bread.'"

John 6:32-35

3. "[Thou]" hast kept my word." This indicated that this church not only believed the Word of God, but obeyed it. The Reformation churches, past and present, believe the Word of God but are not characterized by obedience to it. The church of Philadelphia, a fitting contrast to this practice, is characterized by obedience to His Word.
4. "... and hast not denied my name." Satan always tries to counter an effective work of God. It is interesting to notice that the greatest increase in false Christs and false religions in the world's history began during this same period of time. One characteristic of this church age is that it refuses to deny the name of the Lord, thereby offering a challenge that needs to be presented to every faithful Christian as he approaches the end of the age.

Christ's Promise to a Commendable Church

This rather unique promise of Christ, resulting from the commendable attitude of this church, falls into two basic divisions: vindication and preservation.

1. Vindication:

V. 9

Christ promised that all the false religionists (religious imposters and false teachers) who claimed to be Jews, but were not, would some day be subdued before them. These heretics will realize that, in persecuting the faithful Church of Christ, they have turned their backs on Him.

2. Preservation:

V. 10

The world has never known a universal period of tribulation. This passage is an obvious reference to the Tribulation Period of seven years that will be covered extensively in our study of Revelation 6 through 18. This promise, however, is to the church of Philadelphia: she will be raptured before that Tribulation begins. It seems difficult to understand why some false teachers suggest that the church must go through the Tribulation in view of this clear-cut statement of Jesus.

Christ's Counsel

V. 11

Jesus' counsel to the church of Philadelphia is based on the promise of His second coming.

It is interesting to note that the challenge is made on the basis that the church of Philadelphia will be in existence at His coming.

It is clear from history that this church age, almost 300 years old, is one of the shorter periods of church history. Christ's counsel to them is to hold fast to what they have already been doing and to continue faithfully until the end. The church of Philadelphia is characterized by a spirit of revival that promoted evangelism and a missionary-minded church.

Dr. Oswald Smith suggested two basic essentials for building a spiritual church: evangelism and missions. His great ministry as pastor of the People's Church of Toronto, is a fitting witness to this formula.

A third point which also contributed to his success and should characterize a faithful church is Bible teaching. These three characteristics must be maintained by the churches of Philadelphia until Jesus returns. The churches that are following this formula today will enjoy unprecedented growth. This is in sharp contrast to the Sardis or Laodicean churches, which have a hard time maintaining the status quo. The trouble is that they have not “kept his word” and they have “denied his name.” This is great, though sad, description of most of our churches today. We have seen and are continuing to see a great decline in church attendance and other of the important spiritual gauges of a church’s effective and witness in lost and dying world. The emptiness of our Western civilization because of its atheistic humanistic philosophy has given the Philadelphia churches their greatest opportunity in their almost three-hundred history to harvest the souls of men. For the first time in centuries man is not only philosophically empty but also aware of his emptiness. Faithful churches with a Bible-teaching, evangelistic, missionary-minded ministry are leading many out of their philosophical desert into the abundant life Christ came to offer all mankind.

Christ’s Challenge

The challenge of Jesus to overcomers (those that are born again) is threefold:

1. V. 12a Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out:
A pillar speaks of stability. A Christian has stability in this life only in Christ. He is often buffeted and rejected for his faith; however, in the life to come he will not be an outsider, but will be on the “in” with relation to Christ.
2. V. 12b 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:
The writing of the names of God is indicative of the fact that the believer is identified with Christ by the seal of the name of God, which entitles him to have entrance into the city of God. Christ promised to prepare a new Jerusalem that would come down to the new earth, as described in
Revelation 21:9-22:6
3. V. 12c and I will write upon him my new name.
Believers of the church of Philadelphia will have not only the name of God, which entitles them to entrance into the city of God, but also at the name of Christ, which according to Rev 22:3-4 entitles them to be “his servants... and they shall see his face.” One of the blessed promises in the Word of God to His children is that one day we will see the one who is the object of our affection, the Lord Jesus Christ, whom we have worshipped in spirit and in truth through the Word of God. That is, we shall see Him fact to face. This is an exclusive experience for all those who are overcomers. Those who are just hearers of the Word of God are not justified before God, but they who have received Jesus and accordingly are prepared to meet Him at His coming are justified before God.

Laodicea

The last of the seven churches is the most disappointing one.

Jesus compared it to nauseating experience of drinking anything lukewarm.

In this sense it is graphic prophecy of the modern-day apostate church.

Laodicea was a wealthy inland city about forty miles from Ephesus.

It was a thriving center of industry steeped in Greek culture and learning.

The local church must have been wealthy, as evidenced by the fact that among present day ruins are three churches dating back to the early days of Christianity.

In spite of all its wealth, nothing is none about the ministry of the church in preaching the Gospel throughout the region around it as was the characteristic of the church of Ephesus.

The apostate Church or the People's Church, 1900 to the Tribulation

Commendation

Not one word!

Condemnation

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:

Counsel

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

Challenge

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.

The Laodicean Church Age

It should be kept in mind that the first three church ages differ from the last four in that each of the former stopped at the beginning of the next church.

Ephesus was replaced by Smyrna, Smyrna by Pergamum, and Pergamum by Thyatira.

See on chart we have that Thyatira, Sardis, and Philadelphia are still with us at the present time. (Those types.)

The Laodicean church arose out of the three preceding it.

The Laodicean church age began around 1900 and is increasing in intensity at a breathtaking pace.

Laodicea could well be called the apostate ecumenical church that is gathering momentum at this very hour.

The characteristics of the Laodicean church age can best be seen by a detailed examination of Christ's condemnation upon her.

Christ's Description of Himself to Laodicea

Only one of the three titles Jesus used to describe His nature to Laodicea is found in John's vision in ch. 1. It is the first.

1. "Amen" is a Hebrew word which means "true" and carries with it the meaning of finality. In this sense, Christ is the final truth. That is, all God's revelations to man about Himself are found in the person of Jesus Christ.

If you want to know about God, all you have to do is study the life of Jesus Christ.

Dr. Merrill C. Tenney very beautifully stated, "Christ is the seal of God's revealed truth, the finality of all that the Father has spoken. Beyond Him, God has nothing more to say to man."

2. "...the faithful and true witness..." The Lord Jesus is truth and the faithful witness of Truth. Because He knows the end from the beginning, His Word can be accepted as absolute authority for two reasons. He is God, and "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him. (John 3:34).

3. "...the beginning of the creation of God." This title does not teach, a some false cults would have us believe, that Jesus is the first of God's creation. On the contrary, when considered in the light of the Word and parallel passages (Col 1:15), this could well be translated, "the beginner of the creation of God."

Colossians 1:15 - Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:

It is obvious that all things are created through His power when we consider:

- a. John 1:3
- b. Colossians 1:16-17

Taken in reverse order, the three titles here selected by our Lord present Him as the beginner of creation, the faithful witness of everything which emanates from God, and the final authority (as He certainly will be at His second coming).

Christ's commendation of Laodicea

The church of Laodicea has the distinction of being the only one whose conduct was so reprehensible that even the Christ of Glory, who know all about her, could not find one thing upon which to commend her. This is a tragic indictment, indeed, on so-called Christianity in this twentieth century.

Christ's Condemnation of Laodicea

Jesus' condemnation of Laodicea is twofold:

1. They are sickeningly lukewarm.

V. 15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

Jesus makes clear that He is fully aware of the neutral condition of the church in the last days.

It was not "hot," meaning "zealous of good works," nor was it "cold," meaning "lifeless." Instead, it was "lukewarm" or indifferent.

What a description of the modern-day church!

All kinds of organizations, programs, committees, activities, but no power.

The Holy Spirit warned through Paul in 2 Timothy 3:5 that in the last days many would be characterized as "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof; from such turn away."

2 Timothy 3:5

This lukewarm church that claims to represent Jesus Christ never sees the transformation of a soul from darkness to life, but instead deceives many because they do not have the power of the Gospel of Christ. These churches are usually more interested in social action than Gospel action, more interested in reformation than transformation, more interested in planning than praying.

Consequently, they are sickening to the Lord.

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

This statement indicates that the Lord Jesus Christ does not claim this church even though she may make broad her claim on Him.

2. They are deceived about themselves.

V. 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:

All deception is evil, but the most devastating deception is self-deception. The Laodicean church and the age she represents are deceived about themselves. This fact can easily be seen by a simple comparison of

Laodicea's description of herself and the Lord's description of her.

Laodicea Description of Herself

Laodicea said of herself, "I am rich, and increased with good, and have need of nothing."

Material abundance is not conducive to spiritual vitality.

The Laodicean church of today is "rich."

Her churches are the finest. She has fabulous architecture, million-dollar buildings, fundraising organizations, and a large but unconsecrated church membership.

In saying, "I have need of nothing," she does not realize her poverty-stricken state.

In John 15:5, Jesus said, "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."

Man can build. Man can promote. Man can preach. Man can teach.

But only the Spirit of God can convict the souls of men.

Only the Spirit of God can transform the lives of men.

Only the Spirit of God can glorify Jesus Christ, who said of the Holy Spirit,

John 16:14

This offers a good test of any work claiming to be performed in the name of Jesus Christ. If it glorifies man, it is not the work of the Spirit!

The unique test of the Spirit is : Does it glorify Jesus Christ?

The church age does not.

The plight of the Laodicean church when she stands before Jesus Christ in the judgment will be the same as that of the group of religionists described by Jesus in Matt 7:22-23.

Matthew 7:22-23

The true state of the Laodicean church can be seen by noting in detail what Christ saw in this church. To Him she was:

1. "Wretched and miserable." Even though she gave herself lessons on positive thinking and read books on how to have peace, inwardly her people were an unhappy, wretched lot, for riches never satisfy the hungry heart of man.
2. "Poor." Even though rich in material things, they were poor because they knew not Christ. This is in accord with Jesus' statement in Mark 8:36.

Mark 8:36

"Blind." Although they thought they knew and understood through their sophisticated education and appropriation of "wisdom," they did not understand the ways of God.

This blindness is illustrated in 20th century Christendom's invasion of civil rights.

The pulpits of churches are being used today as sounding boards for racial agitation, which depicts the blindness of churches because they are striving to solve man's racial problems externally or by means of education.

That is impossible! Man's nature must be changed internally, and only Jesus Christ can do that!

The more man tries to solve these problems without Christ, the more confused the problem will become.

3. "Naked." This 20th century Laodicean church is clothed with religion. She wraps her religious robes about her, burns her candles, waves her symbols, offers her chants, and reads her creeds; but Jesus sees her as "naked," for she is not clothed by faith with the garments of righteousness. Oh, that this church age could realize that the name of Christ which she uses, but does not believe in as the divine Son of God, has been excluded from her midst and that without Him she is nothing.

Christ's Counsel to Laodicea

Jesus counseled the church of Laodicea to do four things, all of which are part of the salvation experience, indicating that this was not a born-again church.

1. V. 18 - I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich;...
Eternal riches are not appropriated by material possessions.
Instead, they have been appropriated by the blood of Jesus and are available by faith.

1 Peter 1:7

It is interesting to note that the Laodicean church, labeled "poor" is asked to buy something.

How is this to be understood?

In Isaiah 55:1 we see God's invitation to come and buy what they need "without money and without price."

Isaiah 55:1

Salvation is not purchased through man's efforts

It has been purchased for man by the death of Christ on Calvary's cross.

Therefore, the poorest of the poor can pay the price, which is to humble oneself, calling upon the name of the Lord and believing by faith.

2. "I counsel thee to buy of me...white raiment."

This indicates the righteousness required to come into God's presence (referred to in 3:5).

He knew their nakedness and their need for the "white raiment" that represents righteousness.

Isaiah 61:10

We see God's provision of "garments of salvation" and the "robe of righteousness" as a bride or groom would wear.

Righteousness is imputed to men when they call upon the name of the Lord and are saved.

3. "...anoint thine eyes wit salve, that thou mayest see."

This is an indication of man's need for spiritual illumination.

No matter how brilliant he is in the flesh, unless he is indwelt by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, he will never understand the ways of the God.

1 Corinthians 2:14

4. "Be zealous, therefore, and repent." This lukewarm, indifferent, materialistic church was challenged by our Lord, on the basis of His love for them even in that lost state, to repent of their sins and turn to Him.

Christ's Counsel to Individuals

Christ's message to Laodicea contains a most interesting counsel that is specifically directed to the individuals of this church.

Although the church has excluded Him, those who are willing to receive Him are given this special invitation which is also applicable to individuals of all church ages:

Revelation 3:20 - Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

This verse has been beautifully described by one saint of God as "the simplest explanation of the plan of salvation encompassed in so brief a statement within the lids of God's Word."

The door referred to here is obviously the door to man's heart or the center of his being.

The Bible says, in Proverbs 4:23 - Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.

Consequently, we find Christ knocking at the door of this emotional center called the heart, asking entrance.

He does not force His way, but patiently knocks.

"...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.

For almost 2000 years Jesus has faithfully, patiently, wonderfully knocked on the door of man's heart.

How does He knock?

In many ways, four of which I would like to share with you.

1. Through His Word. Jesus said in John 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.

Man must hear Jesus' Word to be saved.

Many a man has felt the gentle knock of the Savior at the door of his heart as he read some portion of the Word of God.

Sometimes this knocking evidences itself by violent reaction and rejection, but that does not minimize the fact that Christ has knocked.

2. Through His people. Another method Jesus uses to knock at the door of men's hearts is through His children. Rom 10:14 says "...and how shall they hear without a preacher?"

We usually think of the great preachers of the church as men like D. L. Moody, Billy Sunday, Harry Ironside, and others, but if the truth were known, and it will be when we stand before the judgment seat of Christ, Jesus knocks through the ordinary, everyday, often obscure people.

The late Dr. Lee Scarborough, the great preacher from Texas, told of the conversion of a well-to-do businessman who came forward at the close of a service.

The pastor asked who it was that God used to speak to him about Christ.

He had heard the preaching of D. L. Moody, Truett, and many other outstanding ministers, but said, "None of those great preachers moved me.

About eight years ago God saved my wife.

I have watched her now these eight years as she has been faithful to Jesus in poverty and in riches.

Night after night I've watched her kneel beside our bed to pray.

I've watched her as she went faithfully to prayer meeting and church services, putting Jesus first in every area of her life.

Last night as we retired, when she kneeled to pray, I began to think of the difference between her life and mine. As I lay there, I thought of my life as a little molehill of nothing and her life as a great mountain for God and righteousness.

I got up out of bed and for the first time in eight years asked her to pray for my soul.

Last night, by my bedside, I was led to Jesus – not by Moody or Truett, but by my wife.”

Yes, there is no question about. Jesus knocks on the door of men’s hearts through His people.

3. Through His Holy Spirit. Jesus made it clear in John 14 that He sent the Holy Spirit to convict the heart of man of “sin, righteousness, and judgment.”

Many a man who thought he had escaped the preacher and Word of God has been awakened in the middle of the night to toss restlessly on his bed at the conviction of God’s Spirit, which is the gentle knocking of Jesus at his heart’s door.

4. Through providence. Word providence is often misused as a rather impersonal reference to God.

We are using it in this sense to mean God’s gentle alignment of the affairs of a man’s life that continually point him to his need of inviting Jesus into his heart.

Many a man who has felt the hot breath of death upon him recognizes that he was saved by the providence of God.

He may not have recognized that this was the gentle knock of Jesus at his heart’s door, but it was just the same. Years ago in a small town in Texas, a German merchant and his entire family came forward at the close of a service to receive Christ as Savior and Lord.

When the pastor asked him to tell his experience, this is what he said: “Yesterday I closed my store early and went for a ride with my family. We were crossing the railroad tracks when a train struck the back of our car. We went home and got out, all frightened. There was just one member of our family, little Mary, a member of your church, who was not frightened. We talked about and Mary said, Daddy, if we had been one second later in crossing that track, all the family would have been in hell now but me. As soon as Mary said that I called the family to prayer and asked Mary to lead us to heaven.”

It may be that you have heard Jesus knock at your heart’s door in all of these ways: through His Word, His people, His Holy Spirit, His providence.

The key question is, Have you opened the door and accepted His promise?

Revelation 3:20

Christ’s Challenge to Laodicea

The challenge of Christ to Laodicea, like His six other challenges, is to “overcomers” or born-again believers.”

The challenge is simply to promise to share His throne as He shares the Father’s throne.

This is a promise that we will rule and reign with Christ in His coming kingdom.

The ultimate victory of the Christian, not seen in this life but in the life to come, is a challenge to faithfulness.

Rev 3:22

The message of Christ to Laodicea indicates that as this age draws to a close, apostasy, deadness, and indifference will increase.

It is no wonder Jesus asked of this age:

Luke 18:8

We should not expect to see revival as in the days of Moody, Finney, and others, but an apostasy on the part of the Laodicean church.

And who can deny that the ecumenical movings of this day clearly fulfill this prediction?

As we have come to the close of the messages of Christ to the seven churches, it is the burden of my heart that individuals will heed the Savior’s invitation to open the door of their heart.

The picture of Christ knocking at the heart’s door is not only the picture of what He has been doing these past two thousand years but the picture of all He is going to do in this age to bring men to Him.

If man refuses to voluntarily open the door of his heart, he rejects Jesus Christ!

The Throne of God

Revelation 4 & 5

Revelation 4:1-2

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.

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

Somewhere, high in the heavens, out in the universe, is the throne of God.

The throne described here gives us a brief glimpse of the heaven of God.

Bible teaches us that there are three heavens:

1. The atmospheric heaven where the “prince of the power of the air” rules. He will one day be destroyed.
2. The stellar heaven, known to us as the universe.
3. The third heaven, into which John was caught up here in ch. 4.

Behind the North Star is blank space without any stars.

Some have suggested that this may be where the third heaven, the heaven of God, where His throne sits, may be.

John Raptured

The first thing after the close of the church age was the call to John to “come up here,” or be caught up into heaven.

This is one of the reasons we have for believing in a pre-tribulation rapture.

There are four reasons to believe the rapture will take place before the tribulation:

1. The location of this event with John is right for the rapture. Ch. 2 & 3 deal with the seven successive periods of church history. Ch. 4 & 5 present a vision in heaven, and ch. 6 introduces the Tribulation Period. John, one of the first true members of the church of Jesus Christ, is a fitting symbol of the church being taken out of the world just before the Tribulation begins, as Jesus promised in Rev. 3:10.

Revelation 3:10

2. The absence of any mention of the church indicates that it is not on the earth during the Tribulation. There are 16 references to the church in the first three chapters of Revelation, whereas ch. 6-18, which cover the Tribulation, do not mention the church once. The natural conclusion drawn from this is that the church will be absent during the events of the Tribulation.

3. The extensive use of OT language and symbols in ch. 4-18 is an indication of Israel, not the church. This is understandable since the church age is the time of the Gentiles, whereas the Tribulation is the time of Jacob's trouble or the seventieth week of Daniel, determined by God for His dealing with Israel. Some of these OT symbols are the tabernacle, the Ark of the Covenant, the altar, elders, censers, cherubim, seals, trumpets, plagues.

4. There is much similarity between the events of Rev. 4:1-2 and other scriptural teaching on the Rapture, such as 1 Thess 4:13-18.

None of the above four reasons is sufficient in itself to insist that Rev 4:1-2 refers to the Rapture of the church.

When, however, all of them are considered, we are inclined to believe that this inference could rightly be made.

The rapture of the church is not explicitly taught in Rev. 4 but definitely appears here chronologically at the end of the church age and before the Tribulation. We'll look at some other passages to see what the Bible teaches.

Rapture – What Does It Mean?

Main Bible passage on the Rapture is 1 Thess 4:13-18

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

V. 17 says 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.

“Caught up” is a translation of the Greek word, from which literally means to seize as a robber seizes a prize. The Latin word, from which we get the word “rapture,” is *raptus*, meaning to seize by force. Thus we have the meaning of rapture that one day Christ is coming to rob the world of His jewels (His redeemed ones) to take them into heaven with Him. Therefore, when we refer to the Rapture of the church, we mean it is a sudden snatching out

of this world of the believers. We should remember that it is not limited to certain denominations or religious groups but includes all those who have voluntarily invited Jesus into their life.

We need to understand one basic principle. Whenever the Bible describes heaven to human beings, it has the problem of conveying the unfamiliar things of heaven to men. The difficulty of this can be seen when one considers the problem a native from a primitive tribe of Indians would have in writing to his tribesmen after being brought out to civilization. What words would he use to convey to people refrigerators, TV sets, and ice cream cones? It is equally difficult to convey to human beings the marvels of heaven. For this reason, may understand or deduce when one keeps in mind the background and understanding of the people to whom they are written. Most of the symbols in Rev depicting heaven have a counterpart in the OT.

1 Cor 13:10

1 Cor 13:12

The Throne of God

The central object of heaven is the throne of God, referred to eight times in the first six verses of ch. 4 and 18 times in ch. 4 & 5.

It seems to be a fixed point, with everything else in heaven located in relationship to it.

We find such expressions as “about the throne,” “out of the throne,” “before the throne,” and “in the midst of the throne.”

The throne of God has been considered the fixed center of the universe, the immovable point of reference.

Just as the North Star has been the ancient navigators’ positional guide because of its fixed position among the stars, so is the throne of God the place of authority and the center of God’s rulership for the activities of heaven.

Seven Things Around the Throne of God

1. The Triune God

Revelation 4:2-3

These two verses reveal all three members of the triune God. When John said “immediately I was in the Spirit,” he was referring to the Holy Spirit. This refers to the thought that John was filled with the person of the Holy Spirit. God the Father is sitting on the throne. Also in verse 3 we see the Son of God there also.

V. 3 describes Jesus. We know from several scriptures that God the Father can not be seen.

John 1:18

John 6:46

1 Timothy 6:16

The one John looked on was the only member of the Trinity which we can see physically.

Jesus is described in two different ways:

1. First, He is our High Priest. John’s description of the one he looked upon “like as jasper and a sardius stone” is most illuminating. Dr. Harry Ironside, in his book on Revelation, says:

The jasper here is not the opaque stone we know by that name. It is probably the diamond, the most brilliant of the precious jewels. The other stone is blood red and may be called the ruby. The two together therefore give the idea of glory and sacrifice. The Jews who heard this would also instantly know that the two stones were the first and the last stones in the breastplate of the High Priest. (Exodus 28:17-21) As the twelve stones in the breastplate bore the names of the 12 tribes of Israel, arranged according to the births of the 12 patriarchs, the one would suggest at once the name of Reuben “behold a son,” and the other Benjamin “son of my right hand.” It is Christ enthroned; the Son about to reign in power Who was before John’s vision.

Exodus 28:17-21

Why is it that the first thing we notice about Christ here presents Him in His priestly role?

The answer is seen in the location of this description.

Coming right after the church age and before the Tribulation, it represents the first time Christ has had His entire priesthood together at one time.

The priesthood of believers began at the day of Pentecost.

Every member of the body of Christ is a member of the priesthood of believers; actually we are called in 1 Peter 2:9 “a royal priesthood.”

1 Peter 2:9

The church of Jesus Christ, made of “the royal priesthood,” is now in the presence of Christ, at least in its entirety.

Only after the Rapture of the church, when the dead in Christ are raised and we are changed, will the entire priesthood of Christ be united at one time.

Therefore, the sardius and jasper stones are used to depict Christ as our High Priest.

Second, Christ is the Eternal One.

Another phase of the description of Christ seen by John is “a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like an emerald.”

This is not an ordinary rainbow but a perfectly circular rainbow.

We only see half of the rainbow on earth, but in heaven we will see a perfectly circular rainbow, which, like a green emerald, presents the eternal nature of Christ.

Truly He is the Eternal One.

As we examine these two descriptions of Christ, the first to greet the Christian after the Rapture, they remind us that we are in heaven not because of anything we have done, but because Christ, our faithful High Priest, has given us a royal priesthood, freely, by His grace.

And similarly, He has imparted of His eternal nature to us, entitling us to share His everlasting life.

When we take this into consideration, certainly it should not be difficult for us to offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually.”

Hebrews 13:15

One of the most commonly neglected Bible subjects among Christians today is the priesthood of the believer – that is, that we today are priests of God.

As His priests, we should be faithful in exercising our privileges and responsibilities.

What are our responsibilities? Basically they are twofold: intercession and sacrifice.

Intercessory prayer should occupy much of the life of the believer.

1 Timothy 2:1

If we really understood that non-believers cannot pray and that Christians out of fellowship with God cannot pray, then we would be very burdened to pray for our brothers in Christ and for the unsaved.

The course of history could well have been changed had we Christians been faithful in intercession.

Another work of the priest in the O.T. was to sacrifice.

The N. T. tells us of four sacrifices that can be made by the Christian:

a. **Romans 12:1-2** (your body)

b. **Hebrews 13:15** (the sacrifice of praise [worship])

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.

c. **Hebrews 13:16** (good works)

d. **Hebrews 13:16** (giving)

2. The Twenty-Four Elders

Rev 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.

The next thing we see “round about the throne” are 24 thrones with “elders,” in white raiment and crowns on their heads, sitting on the seats.

The Scripture simply states there were 24 elders on 24 thrones, who had crowns of gold on their heads.

These are heavenly beings.

The most rational interpretation of them is that they are celestial beings of an especially high order who, under God, are assisting in the administration of the universe.

Dr. Ironside says the 24 represent the 12 tribes of Israel and the 12 Apostles.

The word “elder” means leader. It is actually a title of rank.

The word is used of pastors and church leaders to indicate leadership.

3. The Signs of Judgment

Rev 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.

Three things are mentioned here: lightnings, voices, and thunderclaps, all proceeding from the throne of God. Lightning and thunder have long been associated with the concept of judgment; thus we conclude, since they come from the throne of God, that they are a prelude to the judgment that is about to fall upon the earth, as described in ch. 6-19.

It should be remembered that the tribulation judgments come from the throne of God.

They are not due to man's evil against men, but appear as the direct judgment of God.

4. *The Seven Spirits of God*

Rev 4:5

5And 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.

The seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, are defined as the "seven spirits of God."

We have already seen this description in Rev 1:4, where John was apparently referring to the sevenfold characteristics of the Holy Spirit.

Isaiah 11:2

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;

These seven characteristics do not refer to role of Holy Spirit in any one particular portion of history, but to His eternal part of the Godhead.

Therefore, when we are filled with the Holy Spirit, in addition to the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22, we should expect to manifest these characteristics also – wisdom, understanding, council, might, knowledge, and reverence for the Lord.

5. *The Sea of Glass*

Rev 4:6

6And 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.

Two suggestions for the sea of glass are

- a. The church at rest
- b. The Word of God.

A sea in Scripture usually refers to people, and this would be in accord with what we find in Rev 15, where the tribulation saints that have been martyred by the Antichrist stand on the sea of glass.

The sea of glass seems to represent the sure foundation, the Word of God, our means of cleansing.

The stability speaks of the completed sanctification and security of the believer.

One of the things that shakes our confidence or our feeling of security is sin.

The strife that goes on in the life of the believer between his old nature and his new nature causes him to yearn for ultimate sanctification, when he will no longer be tossed about by the winds of life.

Here we see the tribulation believers after the Rapture standing on a solid, untroubled foundation, the sea of glass.

6. *The Four Living Creatures*

Rev 4:6

6And 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.

Word beast comes from Greek "zoa" from which we get our word "zoology" which means a study of living creatures or animals.

These four living creatures are seraphim as described by Isaiah in his vision of the throne of God

Isaiah 6:1-3

There are only four seraphims and they are engaged in the worship of God constantly, but their form would indicate that they also have other duties to perform.

Because of their characteristics, it may well be that they are leaders of the realm they depict.

7. *The Heavenly Worship of Christ.*

Rev 4:9

9 And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever,

This describes the fact that Jesus is the object of worship in heaven.

He is the one who sits on the throne, the object of their affections.

The cause for this worship could well be linked to the fact that the Church will be raptured at this point, and for the first time they will be gathered together before the throne in resurrected bodies, thus bringing to fulfillment the purpose of Christ's incarnation.

Only Jesus could have left the glories of heaven to take on the form of a man, identify himself with man, become his sin, and thus pay the penalty for his sin, as He did on Calvary's cross.

As mighty as these celestial beings of the angelic order are, none of them could have qualified to redeem men from their sin.

The blood of any created being could never have cleansed us from our sin.

However, the blood of God's own Son could – and did!

These beasts (or created beings) seem to be responsible to God for mankind and were no doubt frustrated because Satan had perverted himself and subverted God's plan by bringing sin into the world.

They stood by helplessly while generation after generation of men fell into sin and lost fellowship with God.

This act of worship seems to be their expression of devotion and adoration to Jesus for redeeming from the earth what they could not redeem.

Rev 4:11

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.

The song being sung by the 24 elders is a song of glory and honor to God because He is the Creator of all things.

This, of course, on the basis of John 1:3, is another evidence that it is Jesus who is being worshipped.

John 1:3

The Seven-Sealed Scroll

Revelation 5

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

The word “and” means whatever is said should be joined with chapter that precedes it.

Word *book* means a scroll. The scroll has three characteristics:

1. It was in the right hand of God
 2. It was written “within’ and on the “back”
 3. It was closed by seven seals.
 4. The seven-sealed book contains the secret of ch. 5 and is the key which opens the entire book of Revelation.
- The events which follow should remove any doubt about the importance of the scroll.

The Cause of John’s Weeping

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

3 And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. The scroll is related to man for none of the angels could open it.

Evidently the scroll has something to do with mankind and his relationship to the earth, the home of man.

In spite of that fact, no redeemed man in heaven, no man on earth, nor any man under the earth is worthy to open the book.

The importance of the book is shown when John wept when it was discovered that no man was worthy to open and read the scroll.

The prophet Jeremiah warned Israel that if they did not repent of their sin and turn to God, they would go down into captivity for seventy years.

Because they refused to heed the warning of God, their judgment was imminent.

Through the same prophet of judgment, God promised that they would go down into captivity for seventy years but would one day return to the land.

To prove to them that they would return, God told Jeremiah to do a strange thing.

He had Jeremiah’s buy a piece of ground from his cousin, Hanamel, that he knew would soon be worthless.

Jeremiah 32:9-12

Jeremiah instructed his secretary, Baruch, to place the sealed scroll in an earthen jar to preserve it for his heirs.

It was placed with the other papers, verifying the legal owners of property.

The prophet then instructed his secretary, Baruch, to place the sealed scroll in an earthen jar, to preserve it for his heirs.

It was placed with the other papers, verifying the legal owners of the property.

Although Jeremiah would not live to see day Israel went back into the land, his legal heir one day went before the proper authorities and, on the basis of his kinship to Jeremiah, proved that he was “worthy to open the book” and to won the property.

Essentially that is the scene in which we are now seeing.

For all intents and purposes the seven-sealed scroll is the title deed to the earth.

This title deed was given by God to Adam, who lost it through sin to Satan; for that reason Satan is in control of the world from the time of Adam until the glorious appearing of Christ.

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

John wept because he knew that this scroll represented the title deed to the earth and that as long as it was left sealed, Satan would remain control of the earth.

The Lion-Lamb is Worthy

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

6And 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.

As John looked, he saw a Lamb that appeared as if it had been sacrificed already, possessing seven horns, seven eyes and seven spirits.

This gives us five characteristics of the Lord.

1. "...the Lion of the tribe of Judah."

The names of Jesus are never given by accident, but all convey a part of His nature.

Since the lion is the king of beasts and since Judah is the ruling tribe of Israel, this indicates that Christ is to come as King to reign over the affairs of men

2. "...the Root of David."

This, of course, refers to Jesus' incarnation or His first birth with His roots in the family of David.

3. "...a Lamb as though it had been slain."

When Christ completed the work of redemption, He earned the title deed to the earth; as by Adam came sin, by Christ came redemption.

It is a beautiful picture that we see here!

Even though the angel refers to Jesus in His glory as a Lion, indicating His power and might, John sees Him as a sacrificial Lamb, for John sees Him through eyes of faith.

Men who reject Christ will see Him as a Lion when He comes to judge and to reign over them.

Men who believe in Him will see Him as their sacrificial Lamb.

4. "...having seven horns."

This indicates that the Lamb was not weak.

A horn in Scripture indicates power.

Zechariah 1:18

Dan 7:7-8

Jesus said Himself, "All authority is given unto me in heaven and in earth." (Matt. 28:18)

When He came the first time, as a Lamb, though He displayed certain powers, He did not manifest all of His power.

When He comes the next time, as a Lion, at His glorious appearing, it will be in the manifestation of His omnipotence, His all-consuming power.

5. "...having...seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth."

These eyes speak of the judgment of our Lord, including the seven characteristics of the Holy Spirit that rests upon Him without measure.

John 3:34

When Jesus comes, He will know all that men have ever thought or done.

Every deed will be brought into judgment.

We need to remember that seven is God's number of perfection; therefore when Christ, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, comes to judge the world at the end of the Tribulation, it will be as the perfect judge who has all power and who knows all about mankind.

It should also be remembered that He was the sacrificial Lamb, but men rejected Him.

The unsaved man rarely contemplates that the one who will judge him in eternity is the very one he spurns by his rejection of Jesus as Savior today.

Revelation 5:7-8

The moment Christ takes the seven-sealed scroll, all the angelic beings in heaven fall down before Him: the four living creatures and the four and twenty elders.

Almost as a footnote, they are mentioned as having two things in their hands: (1) harps, indicating the music of heaven and (2) golden bowls filled with the prayers of the saints.

Although it is impossible to be dogmatic about these prayers, one is almost led to believe that they are unanswered prayers that will be answered at the appearing of Christ.

Many a Christian has gone out into eternity with the prayer of the Apostle John, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus,” still unanswered; this prayer will be answered in that day.

Many a Christian has prayed as our Lord taught us to pray, “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

This will not be accomplished until Christ comes to set up His millennial rule.

This is another indication that all prayer is answered; though we may not receive the answer in our lifetime.

A new song is sung by the heavenly singers that is not clear in the King James Version.

The American Standard says:

Revelation 5:9-10

9And they sing a new song, saying, Worthy art thou to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou was slain, and didst purchase unto God with thy blood (men) of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation,

10and madest them (to be) unto our God a kingdom and priests; and they reign upon earth. (ASV)

We saw in our study about the identity of the 24 elders that the elders are not singing about themselves, but about the worthy one who has redeemed men on the earth.

We must keep in perspective the dramatic scene in heaven.

When John sees the book and discovers what it represents, the title deed to the earth, he sorrows because no one is worthy to open the book.

Suddenly he finds that “the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world” is worthy to open the book on the basis of what He has done for men.

The angels’ song indicates that He is worthy for three reasons:

1. “For thou was slain.”

This refers to Christ’s mediatorial work on Calvary’s cross.

2. “...and didst purchase unto God with thy blood men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation.”

Since someone from every tribe and nation and tongue will be included in redemption, the 270 million people in the world today that do not have the Bible in their mother tongue will hear about the Savior and His love.

3. “...and madest them to be unto our God a kingdom and priests; and they reign upon the earth.”

This refers to the fact that we are members of God’s spiritual kingdom into which we are born when we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

It bears repeating that we are His priests, doing their work of priests, conveying to men the Gospel in this age.

When Christ comes again in His glory, we believers will be with Him “to rule and reign with him.”

The Description of Christ by Angels

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.

In a day when humanistic men are unwilling to acknowledge Jesus as more than a good man or a model example, we should hear what the angels of heaven, who know Him best, say of Him.

They proclaim Him worthy to receive seven things – power, riches, wisdom, strength, honor, glory, and blessing – which far outshadows any obeisance due to mortal men.

Obeisance – a movement of the body made in token of respect or submission.

The description by the angels can be accepted as the only authentic portrait of Christ.

The Universal Worship of Christ

13 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.

These two verses, which almost seem like the second stanza of the song of the heavenly hosts, carry John beyond the Tribulation, beyond the glorious appearing, to the end of the millennium, to the time of the Great White Throne Judgment, when every living creature will worship Christ.

We need to look at Phil 2:9-11 along with this passage.

The Tribulation Period

We are about to get to the very heart of Book of Revelation.

As John beholds Jesus represented by a lamb, breaking the first seal, we see the first of a long series of events that begin in heaven and are consummated on earth.

A seal is broken in heaven and a horseman appears on earth.

Each seal broken in heaven introduces a tragedy on earth.

With the breaking of the seal and the appearance of the horseman the dreaded period of time known as the Tribulation begins.

This seven-year span is graphically described in Rev. 6:1 – 19:21 and will be the darkest time the world has ever known.

To understand the Tribulation as it is described in Rev., we need to understand that it is a very special day in the plan of God for His nation, Israel.

To see this clearly, we need to turn to Daniel and look at Daniel's 70 weeks of years.

Daniel 9:22-27

The Seventy Weeks of Daniel

Dan. 9 reveals that after Israel had been in captivity about 68 years, Daniel was diligently studying prophetic word of God.

He saw in **Jer 25:11-2** that Israel would serve the king of Babylon for 70 years.

Jeremiah 25:11-12

Daniel 9:2

After the Chaldeans had conquered the Babylonians had been 68 years.

At this point Daniel began to pray, confessing his sins the sins of Israel.

After that God sent Gabriel with a special message to Daniel, according to v. 22-23.

Daniel 9:22-23

Seventy Weeks Means Seventy Years

It is very important to remember the time element involved.

The Hebrew word for "week" actually means a unit of seven rather than seven days and only the context reveals how much time is involved.

The word should literally be translated "sevens" or "heptads."

It is easy to see, however, that Daniel and Revelation 12 both are talking of weeks of years or heptads of years.

That means that Daniel's 70 weeks are literally 70 units of 7 years, or 490 years.

The Three Divisions of the Seventy Weeks of Years

Daniel 9:25

According to Dan 9:25, 490 years are divided into 3 groups which we need to understand.

1. Seven weeks of years equals 49 years.

This refers to 7 heptads or 49 years.

A study of Jewish history reveals that from the going forth of the decree of Cyrus, it took the Jews under Ezra and Nehemiah 49 years to complete the building of the walls of Jerusalem.

Therefore we have the first unit predicted.

2. 62 weeks of years equals 434 years.

These next 434 years, described as 62 heptads, were predicted to be "troublesome times," which is certainly accurate.

It was a period of silence from God until John the Baptist came on the scene.

It was a time of weakness in Israel, culminating in Roman domination at the time of Christ.

This period was predicted to end when "Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself..."

This second period of time extended from the rebuilding of the temple to the crucifixion of Christ, a total of 434 years.

Verification of the exact dates is impossible, since the Meso-Persians were notoriously poor historians.

The best evidence we have is fulfilled prophecy.

Since all other prophecies about Christ have been fulfilled without deviation, we can assume the fulfillment of this one.

3. One week equals 7 years. V. 27 predicts that he (the prince that shall come, or the Antichrist, who will obviously be a Roman, since he will be of the people that were to destroy Jerusalem) will make a covenant with Israel for one week.

That covenant, which will cover seven years, has not been made since the crucifixion of Christ but is a covenant that will be made in the days of the Antichrist.

Even though he will break the covenant in the midst of the 7 years, it will still be part of the period of time that Gabriel predicted would be “determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city” (Dan 9:25).

The first two periods of these 70 units of years total 483 years.

Look at the chart of 70 weeks of Daniel. (*Chart 1*)

From the going forth of the decree of Cyrus to the crucifixion of Christ was 483 years. Thus all but one “week,” or heptad, of Israel’s prophetically determined history has been accomplished.

The final period of time will be such a time in history that the people of God are referred to as “the desolate.”

The latter part of v. 26 indicates that there will be a predicted time of interruption in this prophetic calendar: “unto the end of the war desolations are determined.”

This corresponds with Isaiah’s reference to “the year of Jehovah’s favor” (Isa. 61:2), which is the Christian dispensation, the year of God’s grace to the Gentiles.

This, however, culminates in Isaiah 61:2 with “the day of vengeance of our God,” which is the resumption of God’s prophetic calendar for Israel, called the seventieth week of Daniel or the Tribulation Week.

Man Will Never Destroy the World

We hear a great deal of speculation as to whether or not man will ever destroy the world.

That this could never happen is seen by the fact that God projects seven years in the future, destined for His people Israel, that will be consummated in the physical coming of Christ to the earth to set up His millennial kingdom.

Everything God determines and predicts in His Word will happen.

Therefore we can say without reservation that man will not destroy the world.

The Chronology of Revelation

Rev. 6 introduces the Tribulation, we must examine the book carefully for the chronology, or sequence of events.

To assume that Rev is intended to unfold step by step is to prepare oneself for hopeless confusion.

Because of the variety of subjects dealt with, there must be some overlapping, but because the first 6 chapters fall into a natural sequence, some readers are inclined to assume that this is true of the entire book.

Ch. 6, 8, 9, & 16 Are the Keys

Ch. 6 introduces the seal judgments, which make up the first quarter of the Tribulation.

The 7 seal then introduces the seven trumpets, which indicates that we are carried into the second quarter of the Tribulation, as described in ch. 8 & 9.

The seventh trumpet, in turn, introduces the seven bowl judgments, which comprise the last half of the Tribulation.

Everything else between ch. 7 & 8 must be placed within the consecutive events of these three judgments.

An illustration often used by the late Dr. David L. Cooper, will explain this.

He suggested that in a fireworks display, bright objects will scatter through the heavens in proper sequence and then suddenly one will explode into several others.

Then, just when they are almost gone, one of them bursts into several more.

John saw the seven seals broken one at a time; then the seventh one introduced the seven trumpets, and finally the seventh trumpet introduced the seven bowls.

Each of these judgments, whether breaking a seal, blowing a trumpet, or pouring out a bowl, is a symbolic announcement in heaven of an event that actually takes place on earth.

By examining the chart (Chart 2) we can see that these judgments take place consecutively.

The Purpose of the Tribulation

Having pointed out the fact of the seven-year Tribulation which will yet come upon this earth, we should examine God’s purpose in sending it.

We are not left to conjecture, for it was revealed to Daniel at the same time he received the prediction of the “seventy weeks.”

Daniel 9:24

God never does anything without a purpose, and here we find that He had six things in mind.

1. “To finish the transgression.”

This time of suffering will finish the transgression of Israel, which is the rejection of her Messiah.

During the Tribulation, the people of Israel will turn to Christ in great revival and will become witnesses who will go forth and preach the Gospel around the world, as we will see in ch. 7

Actually, the Tribulation will help cause a great revival in Israel.

2. “To make an end of sins.”

The words “make an end” literally mean “to seal up.”

This period of time will end with the binding of Satan, which will “seal up” sin.

Man’s cup of iniquity is filled to overflowing, and God brings judgment upon the earth for man’s rejection of His Son.

3. “To make reconciliation for iniquity.”

Again, this is a reference to the revival of Israel, when they will be reconciled to God through Him whom they rejected and whom they asked Pilate to crucify.

4. “To bring in everlasting righteousness.”

When Israel experiences her revival, the age of righteousness or the millennial kingdom of Christ will be ushered in.

Though there will be a brief insurrection at the end, it will be so short-lived as not to interrupt this final period of everlasting righteousness that will lead into the new era of the future, described in Rev 21 & 22.

5. “To seal up the vision and prophecy.”

When Israel has turned to Christ, there will no longer be a need for prophets; visions and prophecy.

6. “To anoint the most Holy.”

This could refer to the holy place on Mt. Moriah where Solomon’s Temple was built over the place where Abraham had prepared to offer Isaac as a sacrifice, symbolically preparing the way for Israel to have her sins cleansed through the anticipation of the eventual death of Christ on the cross.

It could also refer to the millennial kingdom that will consummate the Tribulation and usher in that age of righteousness that all Christians yearn for, the only answer to the heartaches and problems of this world.

What Begins the Tribulation

Some Christians have the erroneous idea that the rapture of the church will occur at the end of the Tribulation.

There is no Scripture to support this view other than the slight suggestion of 1 Thess 4:16 that accompanying Christ, who will shout from heaven, will be the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, indicating that as Christ comes to take His church, possibly the angel Michael will come back to the earth to again lead the children of Israel as he did in OT days.

1 Thess 4:16

The actual event inaugurating the Tribulation is found in Dan 9:27.

Daniel 9:27

The Antichrist will make a covenant with Israel for seven years.

Even though he will break the covenant, his signing will trigger the prophetic clock of God, and from that moment on only seven years will be left for man on the earth.

One of the reasons we know Christ is coming before the Tribulation to rapture His church is because the rapture is a secret thing.

The glorious appearing will not be secret but well known, for exactly seven years will elapse from the signing of the covenant to the glorious appearing of Christ on the earth.

It may be that when Christ raptures the church, the Antichrist will make a covenant with Israel the next day, the next week, or who knows how much later.

There are sufficient signs existing today to indicate that this even could take place soon: for example, Israel’s return into the land of Palestine to become a nation, with whom the Antichrist will deal; the one-world church that

will dominate the first half of the Tribulation; and the craze for one-world government, already in existence and continuing to gather momentum until it culminates in the signing of the covenant between the Antichrist and Israel. From that point God's prophetic clock will begin to tick and man will have only seven years left.

Who Will BE in the Tribulation

Since it seems evident that the coming of Christ is close at hand, men living today are keenly interested in whether or not they will have to live under the Antichrist during the Tribulation.

In all probability most of the present generation will go into the Tribulation.

The great exception to that is the church of Jesus Christ.

If you are a member of the body of Christ- that is, if you have personally invited Christ into your heart – you will not go into the Tribulation.

1 Thessalonians 1:10

This refers to the Tribulation.

Revelation 3:10

This clarifies that the church of Philadelphia, which is the present-day church of true believers, will be delivered from the Tribulation.

In the final analysis, you decide whether or not you will go into the Tribulation.

Your acceptance or rejection of Jesus determines your relation to that time of great misery and heartache.

If you accept Jesus, you will be raptured out before it begins.

If you have rejected Him, then according to all that the Bible teaches you will be one of those unfortunate individuals who will live at the time of the greatest misery in all the history of mankind.

The Seal Judgments

The earth has seen cruel times of famine, catastrophe, dictatorship, and many other causes of suffering. But Rev 6 introduces the most awesome period of time the world will ever know. This 7-year period decreed by God is for the primary of shaking man loose from a false sense of security. Then he may call on the name of the Lord just before the end of the age. How well God achieves this purpose will be seen in our study of ch. 7.

The first of the three chronological judgments – seals, trumpets, and bowls – is set for the in ch. 6. Some suggest that the three will run concurrently. Certainly they tend to build up intensity as they get to the last ones. The problem with this thinking is that it completely overlooks the fact that the opening of the seventh seal introduces the trumpet judgments of ch. 8 & 9 and the blowing of the seventh trumpet introduces the seven bowls of ch. 16. Therefore, we may conclude that the three judgments run chronologically and represent periods of the Tribulation. The seal judgments cover approximately the first quarter of the Tribulation or the first 22 months.

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

The first four seals reveal horses and riders in the form of striking imagery. An examination of the context indicates that it is clearly a dramatic presentation of literal facts. It is not God's intent to convey individual personality through these horsemen but world conditions. That they all do not refer to specific people can readily be seen by noting that the fourth horseman is called death, and death is not a person.

The four horsemen present the picture of man's inhumanity to man. They seem to be a divine prediction of the affairs of man which will cause much human suffering. This is not new, for man in control of the affairs of this world has a history of causing his fellow creatures much suffering, with false hopes of peace followed by wars, famines, and death.

The First Seal – the Rider on the White Horse

Revelation 6:1-2

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.

Immediately after the Lamb opens one of the seals, the first of the prophetically well-known "Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse" appears.

Since there are three more horses and riders to follow with the successive breaking of the other seals, it is important that we identify this first rider, as a key to understanding the three that follow him.

The Antichrist

The Antichrist and his kingdom are obviously what is symbolized by the rider on the white horse. Emperors such as Napoleon, Alexander the Great, and many other would-be conquerors ride on horses. The purpose of this rider is clearly stated: "conquering and to conquer." This is none other than "the little horn," that "willful king" that Bible students have been anticipating for many years. One interesting characteristic of his coming is that he has a bow in his hand, symbolic of aggressive warfare, but no arrow, indicating that he will conquer by diplomacy rather than by war. Ushering in a false peace, he will be the superman who promises to solve all the world's problems.

That he will be ultimately victorious is seen by the fact that he has a crown upon his head.

The Second Seal – the Rider on the Red Horse

Revelation 6:3-4

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.

The red horse is obviously a symbol of war, for he has the ability to “take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another.”

This is also evidenced by the fact that a great sword is given to him.

Obviously, in the Antichrist’s takeover of the world, some dissatisfied nations will have waited too long to make their play to avoid his domination.

Yet, rather than remain slaves, they will revolt, thus inaugurating a world war.

Although their attempt to throw off the shackles of the Antichrist will be unsuccessful, it is evident from the opening of the next seals that this will be a widespread and bloody war.

The Third Seal – the Rider on the Black Horse

Revelation 6:5-6

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.

The black horse is an evident symbol of famine.

Black is used to depict famine in other portions of Scripture, and famine often follows war as it did after WWI.

Jeremiah 4:28

Lamentations 4:8-9

Inflation also tends to grip the world right after a world war.

Such will be the case during the Tribulation.

The balances in the hand of the rider on the black horse indicate the scarcity of food.

In fact, a penny is the biblical reference to the equivalent of a man’s wage for one day.

Matthew 20:2, 9

Three measures of barley are about a pint, a minimum daily sustenance diet.

This, then, indicates that a man will have to work for a whole day just to earn enough money to live, which will leave nothing for his family or the elderly.

On this basis we can predict that all Social Security and other means of “preparing for our old age” will come to an untimely and unsuccessful end.

The rich, however, are not so injured, as indicated by the fact that the rider on the black horse was instructed not to “hurt the oil and the wine,” which are traditionally foods of the rich.

As in the case of all war and resulting famine, this famine will take a heavy toll on the common people.

The Fourth Seal – the Rider on the Pale Horse

Revelation 6:7-8

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.

The pale horse is literally livid or corpse-like, signifying death.

The death rate of the first 21 months of the Tribulation will be tremendously high as a result of war, famine, and inflation.

In fact, ¼ of all the world's population will die.

Some will be killed by the edge of the sword, some by hunger, and some by "wild beasts of the earth."

This could mean literally a revolt against man on the part of the animal kingdom, or it could be a symbolic use of the term "beasts,:" relating to governments of men.

In the book of Daniel, we find that kingdoms of men are pictured by God as beasts.

Also in Rev 13, the beast that comes up out of the sea symbolizes the Antichrist and his government.

In any event, ¼ of the world's population will be wiped out as a result of the Antichrist's greedy confiscation of world power.

The fact that hades follows the pale horse of death indicates that these are unsaved dead.

A believer who receives Christ during the Tribulation will not go to hades, which is a place reserved for unbelievers as they await the Great White Throne Judgment.

Individuals who receive the mark of the beast in Rev. 13 will be those who die during this period.

The Fifth Seal – the Martyred Tribulation Saints

Revelation 6:9-11

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.

Ch 7 will introduce the fact that at the beginning of the Tribulation there will be a great soul harvest throughout the world.

The opening of this fifth seal clearly teaches that after this has begun, there will be a time of great personal persecution for the children of God.

These, then, are tribulation saints, individuals who had not received Christ at the time of the Rapture, before the Tribulation began, but did receive Him as a result of the faithful witness who are depicted in ch 7.

They will be martyred "for the word of God and for the testimony which they held."

The world despises a clear-cut testimony based on the Word of God, and that hatred will be given free reign during the Tribulation, resulting in an agonizing time of persecution for God's people.

Even though these saints inquire of the Lord, "How long, O Lord..." others will be killed for their testimony.

Their prayer will not deter persecution, because it is a time that must be "fulfilled."

We know that these are believers, for v 11 indicates that they are clothed in "white robe."

It is comforting to know that although this time must be "fulfilled," it is also "yet for a little season."

This will probably be the greatest period of cruelty to Christians the world has ever known.

Many of the believers referred to in Rev 7:9 as "a great multitude, which no man could number," probably will be slain.

The Sixth Seal – Catastrophe on Earth

Revelation 6:12

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

When the sixth seal is opened, the earth is violently shaken by a giant earthquake, indicating that it is the great day of God's wrath.

Following the persecution of His saints, He will show His displeasure on the earth for this persecution.

Although there is some conjecture to the contrary, this would seem to be a description of a physical shaking of the earth caused by earthquakes and volcanic eruptions.

Such things have happened before.

Earthquakes in Northern Peru in 1970 took almost 67,000 lives.

A professor once stated that in the last 4,000 years earthquakes have taken 13 million lives, and he claimed the most awful earthquake is yet to come.

In 1983 the eruption of Karakatau on an island in the Dutch East Indies was heard in South America, 3,000 miles away.

As a result of the earthquake, the sun was blotted out and the moon appeared red.

Tidal waves were caused as far away as Cape Horn, over 7,000 miles away and 36,000 people were killed.

Revelation 6:13

13 And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.

V 13 indicates that meteors will fall to the ground and hit as hard, unripe things.

Revelation 6:14

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 catastrophe will apparently bring about fantastic changes on the physical earth.

Revelation 6:15

15 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;

Great fear will grip the hearts of men, but because of their stubborn, willful, rebellious ways, instead of turning to God in the hour of peril they will hide in the rocks and the dens of the earth.

The cataclysm will be so gigantic in proportions that even the great men of the earth will have no place to hide.

Who knows what will happen to the poor?

Revelation 6:16-17

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?

It seems evident from these verses that the world will know that this is a judgment from the Lord, for they refer to Him as the Lamb.

They are also fully aware that they are in the Tribulation.

The fact that the fifth seal delineates the large scale persecution of Christians during the Tribulation prepares us for the opening of the sixth seal.

That is followed suddenly by this great catastrophe, which in turn leads the world to recognize that this is the judgment of God because they have enough sense to recognize that they are being judged and will be conscious that there is no place to hide.

Oh, that men in that day will have enough sense to recognize that the Lord is their defense, as did the people in Nahum's day in a similar experience.

Nahum 1:5-7

These sixth-seal catastrophes are only an introduction to the great cataclysms that will come upon the earth during the remainder of the Tribulation.

The first 21 months of the Tribulation consist of horrifying events.

After the Antichrist assumes world-wide control, world war, famine, inflation, and the death of 25% of the world's population will follow.

Then will occur a great persecution of God's people, followed by the catastrophic judgment of God.

If this passage of Scripture teaches anything, it instructs us that the Tribulation is a period no man should enter.

The wonderful thing is, you don't have to!

If you have received the Lord Jesus as your Savior, you will never go into the Tribulation.

The 144,000 Servants of God

Revelation 7

Rev. 7:1

And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.

Every spiritually minded Christian is interested in revival.

One frequent question is whether there will ever be great worldwide revival.

Yes, there will be; but not until after the rapture.

Bible teaches that there will great falling away until the time of the Rapture of the church.

This apostasy or falling away will be so great a decline in the moving of the Spirit that Jesus said of those days:

Luke 18:8

All we have to do is to look at the U. S. today to see this prophesy in progress.

The greatest revival the world has ever known is yet to come.

It will occur during the Tribulation.

This worldwide revival is described here in Rev 7, appearing right after the seal judgments to indicate that it will take place during the first 21 months of the Tribulation.

Evidently, while the Antichrist is making his political advance, the H. S. will move in the hearts of millions of people, leading them to a saving knowledge of Christ.

The Work of Angels

According to the book of Revelation, angels are special ministers of God, administering His plans for the earth.

In ch. 2 & 3 they are seen as messengers assigned to the individual churches.

In ch. 8 they are seen presenting the trumpet judgments.

Here we see that they control the forces of nature.

Actually, in ch. 7 they angels supervise the administration of two things:

1. They control the wind from the four corners of the earth.

Revelation 7:1

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

2. They seal the servants of God, the 144,000 tribulation witnesses.

Since the sixth seal takes place toward the end of the first quarter of the Tribulation, we find that the destroying angel is ordered to wait until the works of sealing are finished.

This would indicate that at the beginning of the Tribulation, the 144,000 servants of God will be sealed and begin their ministry of preaching the Gospel, attended by a mighty worldwide soul harvest which will culminate in a severe time of persecution for believers, inspired by the Antichrist.

This would be in conjunction with the breaking of the fifth seal; at this time the sealing angel will have finished his working and the destroying angel will be permitted to hurt the earth and the sea, ushering in the sixth seal.

The 144,000 Servants of God

Few passages of the Bible are more misunderstood or been so distorted than Rev 7:4.

Revelation 7:2-4

According to Dr. Harry A. Ironside:

Seventh-Day Adventists believe these are the faithful of their communion, who will be found observing the Jewish Sabbath at the Lord's return.

They suppose they will be raptured when the Lord descends, and judgment poured out upon the rest of the church.

Jehovah's Witnesses believe the 144,000 include only the "overcomers" of their persuasion who continue faithful to the end, following the teaching of the system commonly called "Millennial Dawnism."

The absurd and weird cult known as "The Flying Roll" makes claim to the same thing; only with them, the 144,000 are those who will have their blood so cleansed that they cannot die, but will have immortal life on this earth.

Many other groups claim the 144,000 will be their own peculiar followers to the exclusion of all others.

They all overlook one simple fact that the 144,000 are made up of 12,000 from each of the tribes of Israel. There is not a single Gentile among them.

Who are the 144,000

Due to widespread confusion in regard to the 144,000, we need to examine the subject.

John specifically states in v. 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.

It simplifies the Bible interpretation greatly if we accept God's Word at face value and do not try to force upon it any other meaning than that which it naturally conveys.

There will be 12,000 Jews from each of the 12 tribes of Israel, making a total of 144,000.

The word "servants" from the Greek word *doulos*, is the same word employed by Paul and by James when referring to themselves as the "servants" or bond-slaves of Jesus.

The chief function of a servant of Jesus, no matter what his occupation or dispensation, is to communicate the Gospel of the grace of God.

That these "servants of God" will be faithful in communication His message is seen from the fact that they experience such fantastic results, as will be described in v. 9.

They will be inspired by the fact that they will understand the book of Revelation, which is given of God "to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass" (Rev 1:1).

Although they will go through a great time of persecution, they will have the comfort of knowing the duration of the Tribulation and can actually anticipate the astounding events that will take place through a study of this last book in God's revealed plan for man.

God's Seal on Their Foreheads

In some manner, these servants will have the seal of God in the foreheads. V. 3

We don not know of what the seal will consist, but the text suggests it will be visible.

It is interesting to note that during this same period of time, men will be forced to receive the mark of the beast in their foreheads (Rev. 13:14-18).

It may be that believers will have the mark of God on their foreheads, whereas unbelievers will feature the mark of the Antichrist.

LaHaye believes that both marks are final.

Once a man receives the Antichrist as his master, he will have made his decision for eternity.

The same will be true when one believes on the Lord Jesus Christ.

The evangelization of the 144,000 will proceed among those who have not yet had the opportunity to succumb to the "lying wonders and deceitfulness" of the Antichrist.

This suggests that there could well be vigorous campaigning on the part of the followers of the Antichrist and the 144,000 to get men to voluntarily submit to the mark of their master during the early days of the Tribulation.

After the Antichrist instigates a wave of persecution against all Christians (the fifth seal), and after he sets himself up as God in the midst of the Tribulation Period, there will be few on the earth who are uncommitted, one way or the other.

That there will be some is seen in the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 25.

Matthew 25:31-46

These individuals referred to as "sheep" will have befriended the Jews during the Tribulation at the risk of their own lives, thus earning the right to enter the millennial kingdom in the flesh.

They will be the ones who populate the millennial earth.

The Holy Spirit and the 144,000

A good deal of confusion exists among many Christians relative to the ministry of the Holy Spirit during the Tribulation Period.

According to LaHaye, the restrainer in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 is not the Holy Spirit, but rather but is a reference to three of the kings of the revived Roman Empire who will restrain the Antichrist during the first 3 ½ years of the Tribulation.

When the Antichrist finally subdues them, he will gain complete control of the world.

That will take place during the second half of the Tribulation.

The Holy Spirit will assuredly be here to empower the ministry of the 144,000. The prophet Joel foresaw this ministry of the Spirit of God in Joel 2:28-29.

Joel 2:28-29

This passage makes it clear that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit experienced on the day of Pentecost will be the type of outpouring experienced by the 144,000 witnesses of the Tribulation.

Although it did occur on the day of Pentecost, as Peter said, the primary teaching of Joel 2:28-29 concerns the work of God on the earth during the Tribulation.

“And it shall come to pass afterward” is a direct reference to the Tribulation.

Jews Everywhere

One can scarcely imagine a country in the world where Jews are not scattered throughout the leading cities and, in many cases, hold prominent positions of leadership.

The 144,000 witnesses will not have to learn the language of the people to whom they communicate the Gospel message, for they will already be citizens of those countries and will suddenly leave all to follow Jesus Christ.

No mission boards with missionaries scattered abroad will be needed, for these Jews will immediately put everything else aside in their spontaneous desire to preach.

It will be like having 144,000 Apostle Pauls proclaiming the Gospel of Christ.

What Message Will the 14,000 Preach?

There has been confusion concerning the message the 144,000 will preach.

Some have suggested they will preach “the Gospel of the kingdom,” meaning they will revert to the same message John the Baptist preached.

This cannot be so, for since Jesus died on Calvary and rose again, there has only been one way and one person of salvation.

Some have tried to imply that several gospels are referred to in the Scriptures:

1. The gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24)
2. My gospel (Rom 2:16)
3. The gospel of God (Rom 15:16)
4. The gospel of peace (Eph 6:15)
5. The gospel of Christ (Rom 1:16)
6. The everlasting gospel (Rev 14:6)

The terms used in these passages are interchangeable and refer consistently to one Gospel.

Acts 28:30-31

The kingdom of God which Paul was preaching was the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Acts 4:12

If the terms for the Gospel were not interchangeable, then Paul would be guilty of his own indictment in Galatians 1:8-9.

Galatians 1:8-9

It is apparent from this that the 144,000 witnesses will be preaching the same message that Paul or Peter preached, the same message that we preach.

The sophisticated society we will live in must bear in mind that the church of Jesus Christ dare not alter its Gospel one iota nor try to adapt it to the traditions of men.

Like the 144,000 witnesses, we will one day stand before God to give an account of how we have preached the Gospel.

The great need of the ministry and the laity today is to say with Paul:

1 Cor 9:16!

The Great Soul Harvest of the Tribulation

9 Rev 7:9

Uppermost in the mind of God is the salvation of souls.

2 Peter 3:9

The same principle is found in other Bible passages such as Matt 18:14

Matthew 18:14

As a special climax to God's ministry of salvation, V 9 indicates that during the first part of tribulation the greatest soul harvest in all history will take place.

It is Tim LaHaye's belief that more people will accept Christ during the early months of the tribulation, before the Antichrist really has a chance to consolidate his one-world government and set up his one-world religion of self-worship (Rev. 13:5-7), than have been converted in the entire 1900+ years of the church age.

To assert that a soul harvest of such gigantic proportions is scheduled to take place in the future is admittedly to controvert the thinking of most prophetic students.

It is nevertheless exciting to think that more people will be saved during that time that responded under the preaching of the apostles, the early church fathers, the reformation preachers, modern missions, fragmented denominationalism, radio and television preaching, and even the present day, when Bible-teaching local churches seem to be gathering in such a large number of souls.

This concept is more than an optimistic dream, for it is a reasonable conclusion of a number of prophetic realities, all climaxing with the text of Rev 7:9, "a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues..."

Very infrequently can a prophetic concept be reduced to an equation, but the charted formula on the enclosed sheet shows the soul harvest during the tribulation will exceed in number all the conversions of the almost two millenniums of church history.

Let's look at the chart and see if we agree with his conclusion.

The effects of the Rapture on the World

The Antichrist and his followers will be delighted that the church has been taken out of this world. But many thoughtful individuals will be seriously impressed by the mysterious evacuation of millions of people. I am sure the rapture will leave its mark on mankind.

Think about what results will be, say, of airplane with 100s aboard suddenly left without a pilot.

Think of train engineers, bus drivers, and automobile drivers on highway.

Suddenly people from all walks of life are snatched from wherever they are, whatever they are doing.

There won't be anyone making sure someone is available to take over before we go up into heaven.

Christians are in all walks of life and in every type of profession, so there will be no area which is untouched.

There will probably be most chaotic and disruptive consequences that have ever been created by a single event.

You can be sure the world will be fully aware of the supernatural aspect of the rapture of millions from all over the world.

Many will soon discover that the only common denominator of those raptured is their personal faith in Christ.

The impact of the strange events surrounding the rapture will soon be forgotten by the majority of those living in the tribulation due to the lies and deceit of the Antichrist.

He will sign a covenant with Israel and start his diplomatic conquest of world government.

But many reflective, perceptive individuals will not forge the effects created by the strange rapture.

It will doubtless stir a revival of interest in prophetic studies among them.

Such a mental climate will provide fertile ground for the 144,000 Jewish evangelists.

The 144,000 Apostle Pauls

We have already examined the identity of the 144,000 Jewish witnesses who go out in the first few months of the tribulation.

Their zeal to serve God can only be compared to that of the Apostle Paul who was such a successful harvester of souls.

As a result of their preaching, an innumerable multitude will respond from "all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues." (V. 9)

To appreciate the impact of these 144,000 Spirit-filled preachers on the earth, one need only compare them with the approximately 25,000 or so Spirit-filled missionaries in the world today.

This does not include the number of others who will be saved out of the Tribulation and will be preaching.

I believe anyone who is saved out of the tribulation will immediately set forth on a mission to spread word.

There will be an urgency never before experienced in history, for they will know the time is limited to seven years.

A Return of the Day of Pentecost

I have some disagreement with LaHaye about the Holy Spirit and what will happen at the rapture.

I know that when church is raptured, there will be no one left who is indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

We know that God is omnipresent, so He will still be present in the world at that time.

But, without His people through whom He can work, the world effectively will be without the Holy Spirit.

As people are saved out of the Tribulation and ministry of those 144,000 and others start, Spirit will again be at work.

Joel 2:28-32

Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.

Acts 2:14-21

The prophecy from Joel which Peter repeated here will be fulfilled during the Tribulation.

Even though the day of Pentecost was like what Joel said, there was no evidence of "wonders in the heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke."

Joel prophesied, V 30-31

Pentecost did not experience these phenomena – but the tribulation period will culminate with these events.

Matthew 24:29

We see that the soul harvest of the day of Pentecost was only a type or first installment of what God has scheduled for the tribulation period.

Chaotic World Conditions

The main purpose of the Tribulation is to compress into seven years of trauma, conditions that will be conducive to bringing every man to a decision about Jesus Christ or Antichrist.

We will see in subsequent that the majority of men will accept the mark of the beast as followers of Antichrist.

But in the early days of the tribulation period many other millions will decide for Christ.

The sixth seal judgment which we studied in the last chapter, contains the description of the conditions designed by God to shake man from his false sense of security that the earth is a permanent structure, so he will be more prone to look to God for help.

As long as man can stand on “terra firma”, solid earth, he maintains a self-sufficient attitude toward God.

But when a great earthquake occurs, stars fall from heaven, the sky rolls back like a scroll, and every mountain and island are moved out of their places (Rev 6:12-14), many terrified men will to God for help.

LaHaye said he addressed a Lions Club in San Diego some years ago and there was suddenly an earthquake.

When the quake got through he said he had the undivided attention of those attending the meeting.

Can you imagine what will happen when the worldwide catastrophic events of the Tribulation begin to occur?

You can see how when all the great occurrences of the Tribulation occur together that the ideal mental climate will be created in the minds of millions by the Rapture.

Add to that the 144,000 Apostle Paul types, plus an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, as in the day of Pentecost, and chaotic conditions designed by God to shake man from his false sense of security.

This will certainly produce conversions double or possibly triple the percentage of those who have accepted Christ throughout the history of the church.

By multiplying all this by the unprecedented population that will exist at that time, we can easily conceive of a greater ingathering of souls than have been won to Christ during the entire church age.

Unprecedented Population

Most people are acquainted with the effects of today’s population explosion, but few have applied it to the spread of the gospel in the end time.

The Chart “World Population Projection” is based on accepted population statistics, past, present, and future. (NOTE: Population of world is currently believed to be approximately 6 billion.)

By studying it, you discover that there are probable more people living in the world today than have lived from the time of Christ to the generation before this present generation.

If the spiritual conditions during the first half of the tribulation lead to more than double the percentage of people won to Christ during that period, due to the enormous population, there will be more souls harvested to Christ than have been saved during the entire history of the church.

Revelation 7:9-10, 14

The Redeemed Multitude

V. 9 gives us a small picture of the vast crowd of people who will be saved during the Tribulation.

It will be a crowd so great that it is described as “a great multitude, which no man could number.”

This mighty soul harvest shows the power of the Holy Spirit working through dedicated vessels who are already scattered around the world.

The people will be from “all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues.” (Rev 7:9)

This indicates that the extent of the revival will approximate the first-century moving of the Spirit, when “every creature that is under heaven” heard the Gospel.

Colossians 1:23

The Multitude Before the Throne

The fact that the multitude stands before the throne and before the Lamb clothed in white robes shows that they are redeemed ones from the earth who now are in the presence of the Lord.

The palm branches indicate their victory in Christ.

Their song, “Salvation to our God who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb: (V. 10) indicates that they are the recipients of personal salvation.

Angels Rejoice When Men Are Saved

We often hear it said, “The angels of heaven rejoice when one sinner comes to repentance.”

Note the attitude of these angels as they look upon the redeemed from the earth while praising God.

Revelation 7:11-12

Identity of the Multitude

Revelation 7:13-14

The exact identity of this multitude is carefully spelled out.

The elder asked the question as to the identity of the multitude.

John did not recognize them, indicating that if they had been members of the church or of the OT, he could have identified them.

Since they were redeemed from the Tribulation, however, he did not know them.

These tribulation saints constitute a distinctive category, just as the church and Israel or OT saints form a special company.

Each group has its own relationship to Christ, depending on the period of time in which these individuals were converted.

That these are believers is unquestionable in view of the fact that they have “washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”

Eternal Rewards for This Multitude

Eternal rewards are to be given this multitude.

Revelation 7:15

1. “Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple:”

These people, like the Apostle Paul, are “absent from the body, and present with the Lord.”

They are not on the earth, but in heaven; in order to be there, they had to die.

Their position before the throne makes it clear that they have just as much eternal blessing as the believer of the other periods.

2. “....: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.”

This is the same promise given to us in 1 Thess 4:17

1 Thessalonians 4:17

3. Their every need will be supplied.

Revelation 7:16-17

These verses suggest that the tribulation saints will sustain much personal suffering and human deprivation. They evidently will hunger and thirst during the Tribulation and will undergo excruciating exposure to the elements, but they will endure “to the end” and thus be “delivered” by the Savior.

4. V. 7:17b - “.... and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”

This promise to “wipe all tears from their eyes,” offered to His children in the life to come, is similarly extended to the church after the Great White Throne Judgment in Revelation 21:4.

Rev. 21:4

Although it is impossible to say exactly what is meant by “wiping away all tears,” I am inclined to believe it relates to removing our capacity to recall unpleasant things, including those eternally lost.

If we could remember our loved ones suffering the torments of the damned in hell, the joy of heaven would be extinguished unless God in His marvelous grace removed the capacity for such suffering.

And this further points out the seriousness of man’s need salvation and the blessings God has prepared for them that love Him.

The Great Multitude Individually Saved

One consistent principle throughout the Scriptures is graphically illustrated in regard to this multitude that no man can number: men must choose individually to accept or reject Jesus Christ.

Regardless of the period of time in which a man lives, he must make his own decision.

In the Lord Jesus’ day, John wrote:

John 1:10-12

The same is true during the present period of God’s working with men, and it will continue in the Tribulation.

The multitude is not merely composed of people from every tongue and kindred and nation, but those, as stated in V. 14, who “have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”

That they stand before God appears in V. 15

Revelation 7:14-15

They are permitted to stand before the throne of God because they did voluntarily “wash their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”

This expression offers a beautiful picture of our personal acceptance of salvation. When man is willing to come to God by the blood of His Son, acknowledging his personal sin, then his filthy rags are cleansed by the blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ, and he is made white as snow.

The Seven Trumpet Judgments

Rev 8:1

“Silence is golden,” people tell us.

But there will be a silence in heaven so ominous that its very nature foreshadows enormous difficulties that are about to come upon the earth.

The significance of this silence is twofold:

- 1 It is entirely opposite the usual sound pattern of heaven, and
- 2 It is the result of the revelation by Jesus Christ to the angelic hosts concerning what is about to fall upon the earth.

The usual sound pattern of heaven, as we have seen in ch 4 & 5, is one of great joy and worship.

John heard “a voice as of a trumpet speaking,” thunder, celestial beings crying out continually, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God, Almighty,” and the twenty-four elders crying out, “Thou are worthy, o Lord.”

He heard over a billion angels join in songs of praise to the “Lamb of God,” the Lord Jesus Christ, saying, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.”

Suddenly, amid all this crescendo of sound, there comes universal silence.

This may aptly be described as “the lull before the storm.”

Opening the Seventh Seal

We have already seen that the seven-sealed scroll represents the title deed to the earth.

But it also contains the awful future that awaits those who reject the Lamb of God who came to take away the sin of the world.

The opening of the first five seals reveals the activities of man, bringing about great misery on the earth.

The opening of the sixth seal seems to be God’s reaction against the people for their cruel persecution of His saints.

The opening of the seventh seal introduces the seven trumpet judgments, which are all judgments of God sent upon the earth.

In these judgments, God is exclusively the sender and man is exclusively the receiver.

These judgments are so terrible that the angels stand breathless in wonder.

Would to God that men today who so easily reject Jesus would stand still and heed the voice of God.

They, too, would be “silent” if they just knew the horrible doom of judgment that is coming upon this earth because men are rejecting God’s Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Seven Angels

As the seventh seal is broken, the seven angels receive trumpets.

Since the covenant between the Antichrist and Israel will start the Tribulation and the first seal is the Antichrist, the first six seals cover the first 21 months of the Tribulation.

The breaking of the seventh seal may very well occur at the close of the 21st month; it introduces the second quarter, or the seven trumpets.

Revelation 8:2

The reading of this text indicates that the opening of the seventh seal does not make the seven angels stand before God.

Apparently they are always there, awaiting a special assignment from their Creator.

The opening of the seal results in each one being given a trumpet that will be blown in proper sequence, introducing a future form of judgment.

One of these seven angels is the angel Gabriel.

We learn this from Luke 1:19.

Luke 1:19

Again, we find this angel, Gabriel, sent by God to bring a message to Daniel.

Daniel 9:21

Since Gabriel has been named as one of the seven angels who stand before God, carrying out His bidding to man, it could be that the other six serve the same purpose, though we do not have any Scripture to identify them.

Worship in Heaven

Revelation 8:3-5

This description of another angel taking the golden censer to make incense and “offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar” presents to us a beautiful picture that the prayers of God’s people continually go up before Him.

These prayers, like the prayers of the saints under the altar in Rev. 6:9, are probably the prayers that have been kept in heaven awaiting this very day.

For 2000 years, God’s people have been praying that God would avenge Himself on those who blaspheme against Him, revile His Son, and abuse His people.

The fact that this censer is filled with fire from the altar (which stands before the throne) and is cast into the earth indicates that these prayers of vengeance are about to be answered.

The action takes place in heaven but causes a response on earth of “voices, and thunderclaps, and lightnings, and an earthquake.”

All of this signifies that mankind is about to feel the hot blast of the wrath of God.

Who is this Angel?

There is some disagreement among Bible scholars concerning the identity of this angel.

Some say that the other angel of V 3 is the Lord Jesus Christ, for only He is worthy to receive the prayers of saints. Since He is the only “mediator between God and men” no one else would be qualified to receive the prayers of the saints.

1 Timothy 2:5

Actually, all are agreed that Christ is the only mediator to God and that prayer should be made directly to God, through Jesus Christ the Son.

However, Rev 5:8 indicates that the four living creatures and the four and twenty elders have “golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints, indicating that prayers are directed to angels until the time for their answer, at which time they are used in the worship of heaven.

Rev 5:8

Although it is impossible to be dogmatic, it is doubtful that this “other angel” is the Lord Jesus Christ, even though He is our great High Priest.

This is not an act of redemption or propitiation, and nothing is said here about blood being sprinkled on the mercy seat.

Instead, I would suggest two reasons why this is not a reference to Jesus:

1. Jesus, when appearing in the OT to the children of God, was never referred to as “an angel.” Instead, he was always introduced as “the Angel of Jehovah” or “the Angel of God.”
2. We have no record of Jesus appearing on earth as an angel after the incarnation and ascension to heaven. Here we view Him in heaven, where He is seen as a member of the triune God. Though He appears as “the Son of man,” the “Lamb that was slain,” He is also uniquely, with the other two members of the Trinity, “in the midst of the throne of God.”

It is more likely that this “other angel” is one more of the angels (in addition to the seven_ that lead in the worship of God before His throne and that help administer His universe.

“The smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints” is a beautiful symbol that expresses the fact that our prayers are always heard by God.

From our point of view, sometimes we think the heavens are as brass and that we are not getting through; but from God’s viewpoint, our prayers always come before “Him that sitteth upon the throne.”

Rev 8:5

The voices, and thunderclaps, and lightnings, and earthquake are the result of the fire from the altar, indicating that the action of heaven initiates a responsive action on earth.

As the prayers of the saints for vengeance are taken from the altar, there are frightening sounds, flashes of light, and an earthquake on the earth, introducing the fact that the seven angels are about to sound their trumpets.

Are the Trumpet Judgments Literal Judgments?

The best way to decide whether the trumpet judgments are literal or symbolic is to study them in connection with the plagues of Egypt, in Ex 1 – 11.

There we see Moses performing the symbolic act of blowing a trumpet.

Why should the result on earth be less physical than the event in Moses' day?

Likewise, Aaron put out his rod and smote the dust of the ground as a result of that symbolic act, physical lice appeared.

Why should it be different when these angels perform their symbolic act of blowing the trumpet?

Note also that five of the plagues of Egypt are repeated in the Revelation.

No one suggests that what happened in Egypt was not literal in its form of judgment on the rebellious Egyptians.

We can conclude that same thing applies during the Tribulation period and that the trumpet judgments introduce physical judgment upon the earth.

The only exception is those trumpets that introduce events beyond human understanding, and even they affect men physically.

The First Trumpet

Revelation 8:7

The hail and fire are literal judgments that fall upon one-third of the earth's surface, burning up all the vegetation they light upon.

It should not strike us as strange that this is a literal cataclysm, for such things have happened before.

God rained down fire and brimstone on Sodom and Gomorrah.

In fact, just such a disaster was predicted for the earth just before the "day of the Lord".

Joel 2:30-31

The Second Trumpet

Revelation 8:8-9

A biblical allusion on "the sea" usually has reference to the sea that was prominent to the land of Palestine, the Mediterranean Sea.

What appeared to John as "a great mountain" is probably a giant burning meteorite which falls into the Mediterranean Sea, killing one-third of the living creatures and destroying one-third of the ships. The result of the death and the chemical composition of the meteorite turn the water into blood.

There certainly would be an ample supply of ships in the Mediterranean Sea, since that is the permanent home of the U. S. Sixth Fleet, plus representative fleets from many other countries of the world.

Since Rev 18 indicates that Babylon will be rebuilt and become the commercial center of the world, there will no doubt be several hundred ships on the "sea" when the meteorite falls, adding further devastating details to the time of Tribulation.

The Third Trumpet

Revelation 8:10-11

The third trumpet judgment introduces us to a shining "torch" (ASV) that visibly falls from heaven, indicating it is another meteorite and must bury itself so deep at just the right spot that it pollutes the water supply of three rivers. Evidently there is a place in the earth where the headwaters of three great rivers come together.

When the "Wormwood" meteorite strikes that place, it will embitter three great rivers, and those dependent on them will die.

The Fourth Trumpet

Revelation 8:12

The fourth trumpet deals with the luminous bodies as they affect this earth.

It is rather interesting that on the fourth day of creation God said, "Let there be light, and there was light."

The same God that created light in the first place is able to diminish it to one-third.

Actually, day and night will seem to be reversed, for there will be sixteen hours of darkness and eight hours of daylight.

This corresponds to the ninth plague of Egypt as seen in Ex 10 and the prediction of Jesus in Luke 21:25-26.

Luke 21:25-26

Our finite minds can hardly fathom the tremendous forces that will be unleashed upon this earth as a result of the blowing of this fourth trumpet.

The Warning Angel

Revelation 8:13

This verse introduces the three woes of Revelation, which in turn inform us that as horrible as the first four trumpets have been, they will be surpassed in misery by that which is to follow.

Man's rebellion against God strangely enough gets progressively worse.

Aware that he has sinned against God and is in the midst of judgments placed upon him by the Lamb, he knows he cannot stand in the "great day of his wrath" (Rev 6:17), yet he persists in his stubborn self-will against God.

This clearly answers the question often asked by people, "Will there be a second chance after death?"

My answer is always the same, "What good would that do? Men would make the same decision a second time."

The warning of V 13, sounded by a special angel, threatens that worse things are yet to come.

The three woes of the Tribulation are actually the fifth, sixth, and seventh trumpet judgments.

The seventh trumpet introduces the last half of the tribulation, or the bowl judgments.

The seventh trumpet and the third woe, then are synonymous.

The first woe or fifth trumpet (for they are the same) covers five months.

The second woe or sixth trumpet may cover a similar period.

Even a casual reading of the fifth, sixth, and seventh trumpet judgments will acquaint the reader with the fact that they are distinguished from the previous judgments since they predict such an increase in the destructive powers to be unleashed upon men.

Someone has aptly described this period as "hell let loose on earth."

The Fifth Trumpet

Revelation 9:1

Whenever possible, we seek to interpret words in Revelation literally.

However, the use of the word "star" in Rev 9:1 is obviously intended figuratively rather than literally, for the "star" is referred to as "him," thus clearly possessing personality.

A "key to the bottomless pit" could not be given to a thing or object, but to a person.

The word "star" parallels our customary reference to a "baseball star" or some other well-known individual.

It indicates an angel to whom is give, at this point in the Tribulation, "the key to the bottomless pit."

This usage coincides with that in Revelation 20:1.

Revelation 20:1

This verse indicates that the angel retains the key during the Tribulation and that the awful spiritual forces about to be unleashed from the "pit of the abyss" are controlled by the angel.

This must be a good angel to whom God can entrust such grave responsibility.

His location in heaven would further indicate that he is a good angel, for fallen angels do not reside in heaven.

The Bottomless Pit

The bottomless pit is literally, in the Greek, "the pit of the abyss," not hell or hades.

It has been suggested that it may be at the bottom of the great gulf fixed in hades which separates the place of torment and the place of comfort, described as that abode of the dead by Jesus in Luke 16:19-31.

A study of Scripture indicates two kinds of demons:

1. Those that are free, living in a spiritual realm and seeking to indwell the bodies of men and
2. Those that are confined "into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment."

2 Peter 2:4

Free Evil Spirits

The free spirits were described by Jesus in Matthew 12:43-45.

Matthew 12:43-45

If a man who has such spirits gets rid of them, he must exercise great caution that they do not return at a later time and even bring their friends with them.

Evidently they travel in groups, and more than one unclean spirit can abide in a man at a time. Apparently over a thousand unclean spirits possessed the wild man of Gerasa of Luke 8, for they said, “We are Legion.”

This may indicate that one unclean spirit is not sufficient to dominate a man’s behavior.

A number of spirits, however, can affect behavior, giving rise to irritable or irrational behavior on certain occasions.

It would seem that the more numerous the unclean spirits in a man, the more control they can exercise over his body for evil.

Where did these unclean spirits come from?

The best suggestion is that they are the angels who fell with Satan in his original rebellion against God, described in Ezekiel 28:11-19 and Isaiah 14:12-15, 19-20.

Ezekiel 28:11-19

Isaiah 14:12-15, 19-20

We will see more about these in Rev 12.

These fallen angels, sometimes referred to as “disembodied spirits,” make up the kingdom of Satan and under his leadership go about seeking to lead men in the defiance of the will of God, just as Satan tempted Adam and Eve in the garden.

The success or failure of their objective is dependent on the number of spirits in a man’s body and whether or not he flees for deliverance to Jesus, man’s only defense against the attacks of Satan

Christians need not fear these unclean spirits, although they should be warned about them

John said of those who possess Jesus, “Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.”

If Jesus is resident within us, we don not have to fear anything that man or Satan can hurl against us.

He is our adequate defense!

Many Christians seem to have a phobia about demon possession and a great fear of being controlled by evil spirits.

This should not be our main concern, for if we remain in an abiding relationship with Jesus, according to John 15:1-11 we never need fear being indwelt or oppressed by evil spirits.

John 15:1-11

Ephesians 6:10-12

Those who have traveled to pagan countries can tell of supernatural phenomena taking place that can only be accounted for by an evil spiritual force.

Much of the superstitious fear generated in the many religions of the world can be basically traced back to the work of demons.

According to 2 Thess 2:9-12 we can expect a great increase in the expression of this evil spiritual effect on the affairs of men as we get closer to the Tribulation.

2 Thessalonians 2:9-12

As the Antichrist comes on the world scene, he will be able to work “signs and lying wonders, with all power and with all deceitfulness of unrighteousness.”

This power is given to him by the free evil spirits.

It is probable that some of the increasing tendencies toward spirit phenomena these days may indicate that we are getting closer to the end time.

Imprisoned Evil Spirits

Jude 6 tells us, “And the angels who 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.”

It seems evident from this verse that there are imprisoned angels now kept in darkness, which could well be the “pit of the abyss,” until the day of the Lord.

These angels are probably those that violated the laws of God in that they came in unto the daughters of men and cohabited with them, producing a strange mixtured race that had to be destroyed by the flood (Gen 6).

This is further confirmed by 2 Peter which refers to the fact that God “spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell (*tartaros*), and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment.”

Tartaros could be the “pit of the abyss” or the bottomless pit referred to here, which could well be at the bottom of “the great gulf fixed.”

Evil-spirit angels, already having manifested their evil tendencies and capabilities by almost destroying a race of men are chained there.

They will be unleashed on the earth for a time of spirit persecution, the like of which the world has never know. The description of this even is seen in the fifth and sixth trumpet judgments or, as they are also called, the first two woes.

The First Woe

Revelation 9:2-3

When the bottomless pit was opened, smoke arose out of the pit until the air became saturated with a smog-like condition worse than anything Los Angeles or any other city has ever experienced.

Out of this smog will come locust-like scorpion creatures that have no counterpart in all history.

They have been aptly called “infernal cherubim.”

Shaped like locusts, and like unto horses they have faces like men, hair like women, and teeth as lions; they have breastplates of iron, their wings are as a sound of “chariots of many horses, running to battle,” and they possess stings in their tails as scorpions.

Years ago someone suggested that these are B-29s because they are well-protected but have the capacity to sting from the tail.

These evidently fulfill the locust-type judgment God predicted would come upon the earth during the Tribulation in Joel 1 – 2.

Apollyon – “Destroyer”

Revelation 9:11

The leading angel of these evil spirits from out of the pit of the abyss is, in Hebrew, *Abaddon*, and in the Greek, *Apollyon*, meaning “destroyer.”

This is a special angelic being of a fallen state who assists Satan in his evil spirit kingdom.

It is probably not Satan himself, since he is not today confined in chains of darkness in the pit of the abyss.

He is probably comparable in Satan’s kingdom to the archangel Michael of the heavenly hosts. His actual name is destroyer, typical of the followers of Satan: they do not build or construct, but ever work to destroy.

Torment Five Months

Unlike any kind of locusts that have existed before them, these are not going to harm vegetation but men.

They will not be able to kill them, but they will torment them five months.

This torment is described as “the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man: (9:5).

It has been said that the sting of a scorpion, though seldom fatal, is one of the most painful stings known.

The venom seems to set the veins and nervous system on fire, and the effects last for several days.

By contrast, the effects of this sting will extend five months.

V 6 speaks of pain so intense that “men [shall] seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.”

These creatures will cause such physical pain that men will seek death, but death will be removed from them.

This is a description of almost imaginable suffering.

Believes Exempt From This Judgment

The power of god over the spirit world will protect believers from these evil-spirit creatures.

V 4 tells us that they have power to hurt “only those men who have *not* the seal of god in their foreheads.”

Just as God protected the children of Israel in the land of Goshen from the plagues of Egypt, so He will protect His children during the Tribulation.

As Jesus said, in Matthew 24:13:

Matthew 24:13

God will preserve believers from the Tribulation judgments inflicting the earth.

So far the only means by which Christians will die is martyrdom.

Revelation 6:9

This further confirms the faithfulness of our God, who will give dying grace to His children in that hour and grant them the crown of life which will give them great position in the millennium

Revelation 2:10

James 1:12

The fact that these terrible spirit beings have power to hurt “only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads” (Rev 9:4) may serve as a clue to part of God’s purpose in this fifth trumpet judgment.

It may serve in the hand of God to help some uncommitted individuals during the Tribulation realize the power of God and turn in faith to receive the Messiah.

If this seems like a terrible way for God to bring men to repentance, one should remember the seriousness of being eternally lost.

Matthew 10:28

It would be an act of mercy on God’s part to permit a man to be tormented five months in an effort to bring him to Christ so that he might avoid the torments of the damned for eternity.

Revelation 9:12

V 12 indicates that although one woe is past, “there come two woes more hereafter.”

As terrible as this judgment that will come upon the earth, lasting five months, it will be eclipsed by the terror of the sixth trumpet judgment, which introduces the second woe.

The sixth trumpet judgment reveals another army of evil spirit beings to be unleashed upon men from the “pit of the abyss.”

This time the judgment is far more severe to the inhabitants of the earth because the spirits are not only able to inflict pain on men but also physical death.

The Sixth Trumpet

The Second Woe

Revelation 9:13-15

At the blowing of the sixth trumpet, John heard a voice from the horns of the golden altar which is before God, saying, “Loose the four angels who are bound in the great river, Euphrates.”

This is our first introduction to these four bound angels.

That they are evil angels seems obvious because they are bound.

Evidently they are anxious to bring havoc upon mankind but have been bound by God, prohibiting the fulfillment of their intent.

Why they hate man we are not told; perhaps it is because man is the special object of God’s love.

John 3:16

There is a day coming, however, when God will permit these awful creatures to come forth, indicating that He has a yet unfulfilled purpose and plan that will be unveiled according to His good pleasure.

For it states that they had been “prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, to slay the third part of men.”

Those that will be slain are no doubt incorrigibles that would never accept Christ and would only serve as a hindrance to “undecided: people (those who have neither the mark of the Father nor the mark of the beast.)

The Euphrates River in Scripture

There is no need to spiritualize “the great river Euphrates,” considered by Bible scholars to be the greatest river of boundaries in the Bible.

No doubt the most prominent river referred to in the Scriptures, it formed one of the boundaries of the Garden of Eden.

It was also a boundary for Israel, the easternmost boundary of Egypt, and the boundary of the Persian Empire.

Genesis 15:18

It is used in Scripture as a symbol of Israel’s enemies.

That these four evil angels are today bound in that area of the world is no accident, for it seems that some of the world’s greatest events took place near the Euphrates River.

Since it was a boundary for the Garden of Eden, near this river man’s first sin was committed.

It was evidently near here that the first murder was committed, the first war fought, and the tower of Babel erected in defiance against God.

It was near the river Euphrates that Nimrod built the city of Babylon, where idolatry received its origin and surged through the world.

It was to Babylon that the children of Israel were taken captive, and it will be in this area of the world that the final sin of man will culminate.

Here, according to Rev 18, the city of Babylon will be rebuilt and become the headquarters of the commercial, religious, and military activities of the world under the Antichrist's rule.

An Evil Army of 200 Million

Revelation 9:16

An army of 200 million men would be an awesome host to confront mankind.

This will be an evil army of 200 million horse-like creatures with riders on their backs called "horsemen."

The four angels bound at the Euphrates River seem to be leaders of these evil spirits, riding on horse-like creatures, having heads of lions and emitting fire, smoke, and brimstone.

They have tails like serpents, from which their power is sent forth.

It is quite obvious that these are not to be taken as humans, for horsemen do not wear "breastplates of jacinth and brimstone," nor do horses have mouths that emit "fire and smoke and brimstone."

Instead, this is a literal description of unnatural, demon-like evil spirits that come out of the abyss, advancing under the leadership of the four bound angels.

One-third of Men Killed

By the power of their tail and the "brimstone and fire and smoke" which proceeds out of their mouths, the horsemen will kill one-third of the world's population.

We have already seen that 25 percent of the population will be killed by the fourth horsemen of the Apocalypse (Rev 6:8) as a result of the Tribulation.

According to today's population figures, that would be 1 ½ billion people, depending on when the Tribulation takes place.

This one-third would again involve a similar number of people, approximately 1 ½ billion people.

Only Unrepentant Killed by This Judgment

Revelation 9:20

We can assume from this verse that the men killed by the evil spirits will be men who have received the mark of the beast during the Tribulation, having rejected Christ and accepted the Antichrist to rule over them.

This is not clearly stated, therefore we say it is assumed.

However, we know that unrepentant men are so killed.

Thus it is those with the mark of the beast, or possibly the undecided, who will be killed.

Once again we find that believers are exempt from the awful judgment that awaits the earth.

It would seem that the purpose of this judgment, like the preceding one, is to rid the world of the incorrigibles in the Tribulation who reject Jesus and salvation through Him.

Since this trumpet judgment brings us close to the middle of the Tribulation, we find that about 50% of the world's unregenerate population will have died.

It would seem, then, that God is ridding the earth of those who will never receive Him.

These people could not possibly populate the millennial kingdom and therefore must be purged from the earth.

God's judgment is seen here to be unchanged from His acts of judgment in the OT.

God's love is expressed in the gift of His Son as the means of redemption, but if man rejects this love gift, he falls under the judgment of God.

This points out once again the need of man to receive Christ.

The Unregeneracy of the Human Heart

The Bible tells us that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" (Jer 17:9)

Rev. certainly answers the oft-stated suggestion of individuals that "what man needs is a second chance after death."

During the Tribulation man will have unprecedented opportunity to see the omnipotent hand of God working in the affairs of men, yet he will stubbornly persist in his rebellion against God and his rejection of Jesus.

That is seen by the fact that, in spite of the destruction of half of the world's population and one-third of the world's vegetation, light, and water supply, man will not repent of his stubborn heart and sinful practices.

He refuses to make the decision of Moses, who chose not to "enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season" (He 11:25) but chose to believe in the Lord and suffer with His people.

The tribulation population instead will embrace the pleasures of sin for a season and damn their immortal souls in the process.

Sins That Keep Men From Repentance

Instead of turning to God during the Tribulation, man will turn in rebellion away from God.

What are the sins that keep men from coming in repentance to a saving knowledge of Jesus?

The same sins that keep men from coming to Him today!

1. Idolatry.

Revelation 9:20

Man has a built-in desire for God.

He will never be happy unless he has communion with God.

Because of this, the devil, the master of deceit, has used idolatry to deceive men ever since the days of Nimrod. Not that men have always worshipped that which they have made with their hands, but they use the images to worship the spirits that they think will indwell the images.

Sometimes men have worshiped trees, but in reality it is the spirit in the tree that they worship.

This leads to demon oppression and activity producing mystical phenomena, which in turn causes men to be superstitious and fraught with fear.

If they had only turned to God, believing, in faith they could have enjoyed peace; instead they turned to idolatry and reaped its consequent fear.

2. Murder.

Someone has said, "Wherever the influence of the Gospel is unknown, human life is cheap."

This is certainly the case in Buddhist and Hindu countries of the world, not to mention unreached tribes in remote jungle areas.

That is one of the reasons it is hard for the Western mind to understand the attitude of pagans toward human life.

Pagans have no compunction about taking another man's life if it serves their purpose.

Thus violent murders will be a common practice during the Tribulation. (abortion, euthanasia)

3. Sorcery.

As already mentioned, superstition is a product of idolatry.

Another meaning of this word, sorcery, also indicates that there will be a widespread use of drugs for evil purposes – drunkenness and drug addiction will be widespread.

No doubt those bitten by the scorpions of the fifth trumpet will seek relief in any conceivable medication, whether from a good or evil source.

In the process, drug addiction will abound.

4. Fornication.

Even during the Tribulation, when life is cheap and the world is in a state of chaos, sexual promiscuity will still be a rampant disease of man.

Who could question the fact that we are observing a wave of lust that is sweeping across the world, preparing man for the day of complete moral breakdown that will reach its culmination during the time of the Tribulation. (At time this was written, AIDS had not become a problem and may not have existed at that time.)

5. Thefts.

The thievery here mentioned substantiates the lawlessness that will abound in this hour of great tribulation upon the earth, when men will get money or things by any means possible.

Revelation teaches that the Tribulation will be a time when man will give in to the fulfillment of the desires and lust of the flesh.

Romans 1:28-32

In his mad quest for peace or contentment, he will turn further and further from God.

Not only will he damn his immortal soul, but he will bring upon himself all the heartache of his misspent life, for it will be just as true in the days of the Tribulation as in our own day, "Whatever a man soweth, that shall he reap." (Gal 6:7)

The Mighty Angel and the Little Scroll

Rev 10

The first nine chapters of Rev have brought us almost to the middle of the Tribulation.

The seven seal judgments covered the first quarter, the seventh seal introduced the next quarter, or the trumpet judgments, and now ch. 10 and 11:1-14 comprise a parenthetical section given to John just before the prophecy concerning the last half of the Tribulation.

Rev. 10:1 – 11:14 is to the trumpet judgments what ch. 7 was to the seal judgments: a description of conditions that existed during the particular period of time covered by the preceding judgments.

The Mighty Angel

The identity of this strong angel is debated by Bible teachers.

Some contend that this is Christ.

Since Christ appeared as the angel of God in the O. T., this would be another occasion in which He appears to the nation of Israel.

Others say it is not Christ but an unidentified angel.

Jesus does not appear in Rev as an angel.

In fact, we will look in vain for a presentation of Him as an angel after the incarnation.

Ever since Jesus took on flesh, died for the sins of men, was crucified, was resurrected, and ascended into heaven, He has always appeared as the Son of God in His essential deity.

Although this angel possesses some God-like characteristics, he is not God.

Part of the problem could well be a failure to understand the nature of angels.

Although far beneath the character of God, they are created beings of an unusually high order.

It is rather interesting to see that angels play a prominent part in Rev.

They are mentioned more than 66 times throughout the book, always in a position of service.

They do not create things, but fulfill the administration of God in the affairs of men.

This is not the first time we have been introduced to a mighty angel, for in ch. 5:2 we find the same word used, though there it is translated "strong."

Don't be deceived by the glorious description of this angel –

Revelation 10:1

Actually in 18:1 we find another angel, pronouncing doom on Babylon, having great power and so much glory that "the earth was made bright with his glory."

Revelation 18:1

Rev 10:8

No seemed pressed to identify this angel as Jesus; consequently we should not think it strange that God could have other mighty angels that could easily fit the description of the one in our text.

This mighty angel has in his hand a little scroll which we will describe in connection with v. 8.

He stands with his right foot in the sea and his left foot on the earth, indication that he has authority over all land and sea surfaces.

He then cries with a "loud voice," the signal for seven thunder-like voices.

Seven Thunder-like Voices

The voices that sounded like seven thunders are a unique feature in the book of Revelation.

John was prepared to write down what these thunder-like voices said when he heard another voice.

Rev 10:4

This is the only proclamation in the entire book of Rev that is sealed up.

These voices could be the voices of other angels that sounded in such mighty volume as to resemble thunder, but since we are not told in the Scripture the exact identity of the voices, it is dangerous to speculate further. Even more important to man's curiosity is what these voices said. There have been many ridiculous guesses and speculations but since John was commanded by the voice to "seal up" their utterances, it is foolish to conjecture any further.

The Mighty Angel Proves He Is Not Jesus

Rev 10:5-6

The unusual situation with his hand raised and swearing indicates that this mighty angel is not Jesus. The angel is making an oath by the only sure guarantee, that is, God Himself.

Hebrews 6:13

The angel swore by someone greater than himself, for he lifted up his hand toward heaven and cried and swore by the Creator, Jesus.

John 1:3

The angel is giving oath on authority of Jesus that "there should be delay no longer."

The Greek word *kronos* has two meanings, "time" and "delay."

It is obvious that time is not the exact meaning, for there *is* time after this event.

In fact, 3 ½ years of tribulation follow the utterance made here, plus the 1000 years of the millennial kingdom.

The American Standard Version correctly translated the word "delay": there will be delay no longer.

Man has been living in the time of God's delay for centuries, but this angel warns mankind that God is about to conclude His patience in the face of man's rebellion against His will, and that soon the final consummation will take place.

This consummation occurs 3 ½ years after the utterance is made, for it is given at approximately the middle of the Tribulation.

The Mystery of God

Rev 10:7

The word "mystery" appears several times in the Bible, meaning that God is going to disclose a truth that is only possible to know in the word of God.

Man's wisdom never has comprehended nor ever will be able to deduce these truths apart from the Word of God. "The mystery of God" here referred to can only mean salvation.

One of the characteristics of salvation involves a mystery that a Holy God could love sinful men sufficiently to send His only Son into the world to die for their sins.

This was made known to the prophets and His servants in the O.T. and also in the N.T.

For all these thousands of years men have been living under the mystery of God, where it is possible for sinful, fallen men to be reinstated into fellowship with God by being born into His family without works but by faith.

That this mystery is soon coming to a close is apparent by the fact that 42 months of the Tribulation have expired when the statement is given, and, as we will see in ch 12, at this point there are only 1,260 days of man's known history left, apart from the kingdom age

Revelation 12:6

Revelation 10:2-

The mighty angel held a little scroll open in his hand.

V 8 tells us that John was to take this scroll from the mighty angel.

Rev 10:8

What Is the Little Scroll?

Rev 10:9 – 11

Some say the little scroll is the seven-sealed scroll taken from the hand of God by the nail-scarred hand of Christ, given to the mighty angel, who in turn gave it to John.

If this is true, the little scroll is the title deed to the earth, with the title description on one side and the seven seal judgments on the other.

Since the seven seals were broken and it was revealed what the seven seals are, it is possible that there was no longer need for this book.

Thus John was told to eat it.

Another suggestion is that the little scroll is the new revelation to John of events from this point on the ch 19 in Rev.

In either case it is the prophecy of God concerning future events.

Since the mighty angel is pictured as standing with one foot in the sea and one foot on the land, John must no longer be in heaven.

He apparently returned to the earth to take the little scroll.

It is a scroll, therefore, that has to do with events that are to come upon the earth.

After John asked the angel for the little scroll, he was told to take it and eat it, though warned that it would be sweet to the taste and bitter to the belly.

Eating a scroll is a symbolic reference in the Scriptures to digesting a scroll.

Jeremiah 15:6

Ezekiel 3:1-3

Here we see the admonition of the Lord to the OT prophet to “eat this scroll,” and it was in his “mouth like honey for sweetness.”

After he had eaten the book, he was told to go speak to the house of Israel.

The obvious meaning of these symbolic references to “eating the word of God” is that before a man can be a spokesman for God, he must digest the Word of God.

He obviously does not eat mechanically, but mentally feeds on the Word of God.

One of the reasons for so much sterility and stagnation in the Church of Jesus Christ today is that in people are not “digesting the word of God.”

If they read, they have a tendency to read more about what men have said concerning the Word of God than to read the Word of God itself.

After John had eaten the scroll, the mighty angel told him to prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings.

Through the written book of Rev, this command to John has been fulfilled, for Rev has been studied by “peoples and nations and tongues and kings.”

The picture of sweetness in the mouth and bitterness in the belly indicates the typical quality of the Word of God, which is sharper than a two-edged sword.

The sweetness comes to John in the predictions concerning Jesus’ return; the bitterness comes to John in being confronted by the fact that judgment is pronounced upon the earth.

The Gospel is much like this.

It is sweet to those who hear and respond, thus being guaranteed eternal salvation as the free gift of God.

It is bitter to men who reject it, however, for the same Gospel that guarantees salvation to those who receive it, guarantees judgment and damnation to those who do not.

Two Super Witnesses

Rev 11 is an integral part of the small parenthesis which began in Revelation 10:1 and continues to 11:14.

Ch 11 has to do with the spiritual life of Israel; ch 12 concerns the coming persecution of Israel.

In ch 11 we find that Israel will revert to the OT form of worship.

They will rebuild the temple apart from the Messiah since they believe He has not come.

Thus they will construct the temple of rejection.

IN addition, this chapter unfolds the revelation that two supernatural witnesses will be recalled from OT days to convey God's message to the Jerusalem area.

IN spite of these witnesses and the 144,000 of ch 7, Israel will basically remain in unbelief until the time of her great persecution described in ch 12.

Before proceeding any further, you should read the entire ch 11.

History of the Jewish Temple

After Israel was established in the land of Palestine, David, the "man after God's own heart," desired to build a great temple for God, but David had bloodied his hands in wars to the degree that it was impossible for God to use him for that purpose.

He was permitted instead to raise much of the money and material that later went into the building of what came to be known as Solomon's Temple.

The temple was built in Jerusalem at God's command, for Jerusalem was to be the city where He would place His name and where His people would come to worship.

The Shekinah Glory of God appeared in the temple and became a symbol of the protecting hand of God upon the nation Israel.

In their apostate days, toward the end of the kingdom era, the nation thought itself impregnable as long as the temple stood.

They were deaf to the cries of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, even after some had been taken away into Babylonian captivity.

Finally, the temple and the city of Jerusalem were destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar.

Seventy years later a decree was given for the rebuilding of the city and eventually the temple.

This temple, under the direction of Zerubbabel and Joshua, the high priest, was much inferior to the Temple of Solomon – so much so that some of the elders that recalled the Temple of Solomon wept when they saw the foundation of the new temple.

This temple served Israel until it was desecrated by Antiochus Epiphanes, one of the Greco-Syrian rulers.

This desecration was a type of the desecration of the temple of by the Antichrist at the end time, or Tribulation.

About forty years before Christ, Herod the Great had this temple destroyed piecemeal and rebuilt.

That temple was known during NT days as Herod's Temple.

John 2:20

Matt 24:2 contains the prediction of the Lord that the temple would be destroyed.

Matthew 24:2

This prophecy was fulfilled during the time of Titus, the Roman general who laid siege to the city of Jerusalem.

Although he gave orders that the Temple should not be destroyed, the Jews burned it rather than allow it to fall into pagan hands.

Jesus' prophecy was fulfilled exactly, for today the site of the old Jewish temple is occupied by the Mohammedans, who built the Moslem mosque called the "dome of the Rock."

One will look in vain for a single stone of the temple of Herod resting upon another that has not been thrown down, for the Dome of the Rock which now occupies that space is made entirely of different material.

Because of the Moslems' present-day hatred of Israel, it is very likely that not one stone has been left upon another.

The Temple to Be Rebuilt

Several passages of Scripture refer to the temple of the end time.

Matthew 24:15

Here Jesus referred to the “abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet,” indicating that at the end time, in the middle of the Tribulation as Daniel predicted, a temple would be desecrated by the Antichrist. In order for this to be fulfilled it first must be rebuilt.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-13

In 2 Thess 2 Paul predicted that the Antichrist, in the middle of the Tribulation, would defy God by sitting in the temple of God and presenting himself to the world as God.

In order for him to do this that temple has to be rebuilt.

Ever since Jews have been returning to the land of Palestine, rumors have circulated concerning the accumulation of materials for the eventual rebuilding of the temple.

The one piece of ground that the Jews want most is the site now occupied by the Dome of the Rock, the second most holy shrine in the Moslem world – second only to Mecca, the birthplace of Mohammed.

Jewish interest has been aroused, because the Dome of the Rock is built right over Mt. Moriah, the place considered to be the site of Abraham’s willingness to offer Isaac as a sacrifice in obedience to God.

It is difficult to substantiate any of the rumors about the planned temple rebuilding.

When the day comes that a call goes out to Jews all over the world for the rebuilding of the temple, you can be sure millions of dollars will pour into Jerusalem immediately.

Rebuilding the Temple Is a Rejection of Christ

Believers in Jesus are not taught to build a temple; on the contrary, we are taught that God does not dwell in temples made with hands, but that the Holy Spirit uses man’s body as a tabernacle or dwelling place.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

The fact that Israel will rebuild the temple indicates that she has not received the Messiah.

Daniel 9:27

Therefore LaHay suggests the following chronology:

- The act that will start the Tribulation is the signing of the covenant with the Antichrist, which will become an ungodly league with an evil power, indicating that Israel at the beginning of the Tribulation will not be predominantly Christian.
- Then 144,000 servants of the Lord will go forth witnessing, reaching a multitude of Gentiles that no man can number; but they represent the remnant, not a major portion of the Jewish nation.
- Instead, the Jews will make this ungodly league with the Antichrist, permitting them to take the city of Jerusalem from the hands of the Arabs.
- They will build the temple and once again institute the sacrificial system, rejecting Christ.

Rev 11

The fact that John was told to measure the temple is an indication that he would find it woefully inadequate as compared with the Temple of Solomon, which was inspired by God.

The work “measure” could well be a reference to the fact that Israel will be severely judged for her rejection of the Messiah in view of the astounding light she has and will have.

This temple, then, will be built at the beginning of the Tribulation, for in the middle of it, as we shall see in v 13:2, the Antichrist will break his league with the Jews and set up his idol in the midst of the temple, indicating that the outer court is to be unmeasured, for it is in the hands of the nations (Gentiles).

Two periods of time are measured here: 42 months and 1260 days.

Since they are identical, they could well refer to the equal division of the Tribulation.

These two measurements of time could refer to the first half of the Tribulation; those mentioned in Rev 12:16 and 13:5 probably refer to the last half, since here again both types of description are used.

The Two Witnesses

Rev 11:3

At this point, colorful and dynamic individuals come on the scene as the special witnesses of God.

God will give power to them.

These two witnesses will have the power to send fire out of their mouths and to kill those that try to persecute them.

They also will have the power to shut up the heavens “that it rain not,” that the earth might be covered with a great drought.

They also will have power over waters to turn them to blood and to smite the earth with all manner of plagues. This power is for the purpose of witnessing the power of God in distinction for the power of the Antichrist.

Who Are These Two Witnesses?

A variety of fanciful suggestions have been offered as to the identity of these two witnesses.

Because God has not chosen to tell us exactly who they are, we can only offer a suggestion.

Some of the most reliable suggestions are Elijah and Enoch; or Elijah and John the Baptist; or Elijah and Moses.

Malachi 4:5-6

This says Elijah will come before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord.

In addition to this, we find that the use of fire in the OT was limited to Elijah, who called down fire to consume the altar in the days of Ahab.

He also withheld rain from the earth for three years.

Therefore it seems more than likely that Elijah is one of the two witnesses.

We do not find that John the Baptist demonstrated the power of Elijah, and he freely admitted he was not Elijah.

Both he and the angel Gabriel made that clear.

Luke 1:17

This does not mean that he would be Elijah.

John was asked by the priests and Levites from Jerusalem, “Art thou Elijah? And he said, “I am not.” (John 1:21)

John wore sackcloth and was a type of Elijah, but he did not minister to the Jewish nation as Elijah did.

There are only two good reasons for suggesting Enoch. First, he did not die, whereas He 9:27 tells us “it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.”

Second, Jude 14-15 states that Enoch prophesied that “the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all.

Although these are good, there are reasons to the contrary sufficient to eliminate Enoch from consideration.

Enoch was a Gentile who lived hundreds of years before Abraham; therefore he is not identified in any way with Israel.

The fact that Enoch and Elijah never died is not sufficient evidence to suggest they will be the two witnesses, for all believers living at the time of the Rapture of the church will be exceptions to He 9:27.

When the Lord comes, we “shall be raised incorruptible.” (1 Corinthians 15:52-58)

At the Rapture, believers will be snatched out of the world and taken to be with the Lord without ever tasting of death (1 Thess 4:13-18).

According to He 11:5 the purpose of Enoch’s translation was “that he should not see death.”

The two witnesses of Rev 11:3-14 do taste death; therefore, it would seem that Enoch could not be one of these witnesses.

Hebrews 11:5

There are three good reasons why Moses is the second witness during the first part of the Tribulation:

1. In Matt 17:1-5, when Jesus was transfigured before His Jewish witnesses – Peter, James, and John – two representatives of the OT were brought before their view.

These men were Moses and Elijah.,

Their purpose was to discuss with Christ His impending death.

2. Moses manifested power to bring plagues on the earth and to turn water into blood during the days of Pharaoh. Elijah did not do these things, but had power to call down fire from heaven and to stop rain.

Therefore it would be reasonable to follow that these two men be given the miraculous powers which they already demonstrated on the earth.

3. Moses is an integral part of Jewish family tradition.

It would seem logical, therefore, that he become one of the witnesses, for Moses and Elijah combined represent the entire OT to the Jewish nation.

When the rich man asked Abraham to send Lazarus back to his father's house to warn his five brethren to repent, Abraham embraced the Jewish concept of the entire OT by saying "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." (Luke 16:27-29)

Moses represents the first five books; Elijah, the outstanding prophet of Israel, represents the prophetic books. "Moses and the prophets: includes almost all those who had a hand in writing the OT.

Thus the two men in Jewish history who most speak of God's dealing with the nation Israel are Moses and Elijah.

The Work of the Two Witnesses

The work of the two witnesses is outlined in our text.

They will primarily be witnesses of God.

This is seen by virtue of the fact that they are likened to the two lampstands and the two olive trees of the book of Zechariah.

Since this OT symbol is used to convey the message of two men proclaiming God's faithfulness, we assume Elijah and Moses will do the same.

They will be on the scene during the first half of the Tribulation to counteract the lying wonders of the Antichrist.

They will also "prophesy," which means they will preach concerning the things to come.

No doubt they will be warning people on the basis of Revelation concerning events and interpreting them as they relate to the people.

Mal 4:6 tells us that Elijah's ministry will be to "turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers." This seems like normal living to us, but we should remember that the Antichrist will be deceiving the people, turning the fathers against the children and the children against the fathers.

Therefore the witness of these two men will be helping those who receive the Lord to return to normal thinking.

It is quite probable that they will be the special witnesses of God to the Holy Land, whereas the 144,000 are witnesses throughout the entire earth.

Revelation 7:9

Rev 11:7

The beast refers to the beast described in Rev 13:1-7.

"The beast" is an expression used here for the first time.

That fact that he will come up out of the abyss is a reference to the time; the fact that he will come up out of the abyss is a reference to the death and resurrection of the Antichrist, as we will see in more detail in ch 13.

The beast or Antichrist, the man of sin, will hate the two witnesses, make war against them, and kill them.

However, it should be noted that he will have no power over them until "they shall have finished their testimony."

In other words, they will be "immortal until their work is done" – which could be said of all God's servants who walk in obedience to his will.

The completely degenerate and inhuman characteristics of people living during the Tribulation can be seen in v. 8

Rev 11:8

The Holy City will be so degenerate spiritually that she will be called Sodom and Egypt, Sodom being a symbol of immorality and Egypt a symbol of materialism.

The lives of the people going back to occupy the Holy Land today are anything but holy.

The seldom even attend synagogues on the Sabbath.

Rev 11:9

Someone has suggested that the modern medium of television makes possible the fulfillment of Rev. 11:9.

The only way in which people all over the world could see two bodies lying in the streets or a city over a three-day period of time would be through the medium of television.

In fact, in recent years it has been possible by the launching of television satellites for many parts of the world to view the same sight at the same time.

This is one more indication that we are coming closer to the end of the age, because it would have been humanly impossible just a few years ago for the entire world to see these two witnesses in the streets at a given moment of time.

Rev 11:10

Not content to look upon them, according to v 10, people throughout the world will enjoy a Christmas-like celebration, giving and receiving gifts because these preachers of righteousness and holiness are now dead.

The Witnesses Resurrected

Rev 11:11-12

As Jesus was crucified, buried, and in three days rose from the dead, these men, after being slain and exposed to the eyes of the world, will hear the voice of God resurrecting them.

A cloud will receive them out of sight in the face of their enemies.

It is no wonder that “great fear fell upon them who saw them.”

The resurrection of these men will be the final confirmation that they were men of God, another illustration that God does not forget His own.

God’s Judgment on Jerusalem

Here we find that as a result of the shocking treatment of these two faithful of God by the inhabitants of the city and of Jerusalem, the Lord will send a great earthquake, destroying a tenth part of the city and slaying seven thousand men.

This cataclysmic judgment of God upon the city of Jerusalem could be the event which triggers the revival that will sweep across Israel during the latter half of the Tribulation, for the passage reads, “and the remnant were terrified, and gave glory to the God of heaven.”

This remnant may refer to the Jewish inhabitants of the city who, after seeing the judging hand of God slay seven thousand of their residents and destroy a tenth part of their city, will turn in faith to embrace the message of the two witnesses so recently resurrected.

All of these events take place before the third woe is sounded in v 14, which identifies these two witnesses who live, preach, die, and are resurrected during the first half of the Tribulation.

In addition to closing this second parenthetical passage, it also sets the stage of the events of the latter half of the Tribulation.

The Seventh Trumpet Judgment

The blowing of the seventh trumpet (which is the third woe) does not initiate anything on the earth.

Instead, it is much like the breaking of the seventh seal of Rev 8:1.

It merely introduces the next series of judgments, the seven bowls.

Occurring exclusively in heaven, the scene introduces activities that project a meaning to the earth to be disclosed later.

In order to comprehend the chronological events of this passage, we need to understand that immediately after this heavenly introduction to the seven bowls, there is another lengthy parenthetical passage which extends from Rev 12:1 – 15:4.

This parenthetical passage conveys details of events that will take place during the entire Tribulation.

These events include the persecution of God's children (ch 12); the Antichrist, or the "beast that came out of the sea," and the "false prophet" (ch 13); also the heavenly vision of ch 14 and the introduction to the last half of the Tribulation (ch 15).

This is a heavenly setting, announcing the great events that will come upon the earth.

Awesome beyond description, it is called "Great Tribulation" because it reveals the most fantastic events the world has ever known.

The First Angelic Chorus

Revelation 11:15

John heard "great voices" singing in heaven, evidently angelic voices in chorus.

They announced two things:

1. "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ."

The KJV introduces these kingdoms in the plural, but the AMS and other recent translations translate it correctly as singular, for John has in view the kingdom of the Antichrist at the time of the glorious appearing (Rev 19:11).

Thus the angels will announce in heaven at the beginning of the last half of the Tribulation that the one-world kingdom of the Antichrist will be conquered by the kingdom of Christ.

2. "And he shall reign forever and ever."

In the Greek language this is the strongest term possible for "ages of ages," indicating that once Christ comes to earth, there will be no interruption of His government.

Rebellion will break out at the end of the millennium when Satan is loosed "for a season," but our glorified Lord will quell it so quickly that it will not interfere with His kingdom.

The Song of the 24 Elders

Rev 11: 16-18

We have already seen that the 24 elders are 24 leading angelic beings that carry out the administration of God's universe.

These representative angelic leaders fall on their faces before God and worship Him, announcing His eternity with the words, "who art, and wast, and art to come."

This is a song of thanksgiving ("We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty").

The elders use the prophetic perfect tense, indicating that they anticipate in heaven the final stage of God's activity on the earth before the coming of Christ, and they rejoice over the eventual consummation of His kingdom ("because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and has reigned").

Christ will not reign until the end of the Tribulation, but He certainly reigns then!

The 24 elders proceed to make three predictions on the basis of the coming of Christ:

1. "The nations were angry, and thy wrath is come" indicates that at the time of His coming the nations will resent His coming and rebel against Him.
2. "And the time of the dead, that they should be judged" refers to the OT saints and tribulation saints who have been slain.

This does not refer to unbelievers, who will be judged a thousand years later at the end of the millennium.

The resurrection of the OT saints and the rapture of tribulation saints will take place at the end of the Tribulation, at the glorious appearing of Jesus.

That subject is described in Psalm 50:6.

Psalms 50:1-6

Here the Lord is seen, not in heaven, but in the air, calling to His OT saints who are still in heaven.

The church will not be in heaven at this point, since they will have been “caught up . . . to meet the Lord in the air” (1 Thess 4:17) before the Tribulation.

This will be a call, then, for the OT saints who are still in heaven to be joined with the tribulation saints in rapture and resurrection.

Just as Jesus Himself has a “shout” for the church at the beginning of the Tribulation, He has a “cry” of the OT saints who will be resurrected and the Tribulation saints who will be raptured: “Gather my saints together unto me.”

3. “And shouldest destroy them who destroy the earth” indicates that Christ will take the Antichrist (the beast_ and the False Prophet alive and throw them into the lake of fire.

Their followers also will be killed (Rev 19:20).

This text teaches that the followers of Antichrist, like all human beings who die without Christ, will go in soul and spirit to the “place of torment” (as did the rich man in Luke 16) until the Great White Throne Judgment, when they will appear for the final judgment and be cast into the lake of fire.

This fact again indicates the eternal seriousness of a rebellious attitude against Almighty God and His divine offer of salvation.

The Temple of God in Heaven

Rev 11:19

We should keep in mind that the subject of this passage is the rapture of Israel and Tribulation saints, who are redeemed because they have entered into a covenant with Him by sacrifice.

Psalms 50:5

The church does not have a temple or tabernacle, but Israel did.

The vision of the Ark of the Covenant could be a reminder to Israel that they are dealing with a covenant-keeping God, and on the basis of His past faithfulness their redemption is guaranteed.

Israel, Christians, and tribulation saints share in common this essential: they enter into a covenant with God by sacrifice, the covenant of a blood sacrifice – Israel temporarily by animal sacrifices; Christians and the tribulation saints through Jesus, who sacrificed Himself “once for all.”

The “lightnings, voices, thunderclaps, earthquake, and great hail” indicate that the scene in heaven is over and events are about to be disclosed that have to do with the affairs of men.

These catastrophes bespeak the mounting confusion and terror that will come upon the earth in the latter half of the tribulation.

In view of the destruction that awaits the earth, any intelligent being is left with only one decision, and that is to avoid that awful period in the world’s future through receiving Jesus as Savior and Lord by personal invitation.

Satan Versus Israel

It should not come as a surprise that so much space is given in Rev to the nation of Israel.

She dominates the pages of the OT because she is God's nation of destiny.

That He is not through with her is seen in the prophetic "time of Jacob's trouble" outlined in ch 13 and described in Daniel 9:24-27.

Daniel 9:24-27

The "seventieth week of Daniel" or Tribulation is covered in Rev 6-18.

It would naturally include an extensive prediction of Israel's part in the time that will "try the whole earth."

So far in our study we have discovered that Israel will make a league or covenant with the Antichrist for seven years (Dan 9:27)

Daniel 9:27

Rev 7 indicates that 144,000 servants of God will go forth to preach the Gospel of Christ.

Because of:

1. The effects of the rapture of the church on men
2. The outpouring of the Spirit as on the day of Pentecost, making them like 144,000 Pauls
3. World conditions of chaos designed by God to lead men to Christ, and
4. The population explosion, placing more people on the earth than ever before in the history of the world, these 144,000 servants might well reach more people for Christ than have been won during her entire Christian dispensation.

Such a host is described in Rev 7:9

Revelation 7:9

It should be kept in mind that the 144,000 Jewish witnesses represent a remnant of Israel, for according to Rev 11 the Jews will rebuild the temple in Jerusalem, indicating that they return to the land in unbelief.

We also have found that God will send two special witnesses with supernatural powers like those of Elijah and Moses to counteract in Palestine the supernatural powers of Antichrist.

2 Thessalonians 2:9-12

Four Key Personages

Ch 12 introduces the fact that in the middle of the Tribulation Israel will be confronted with the worst wave of anti-Semitism the world has ever seen.

Yet "God is faithful" as usual!

Four key personages appear in this chapter.

We shall examine them carefully.

1. The Sun-Clothed Woman

Revelation 12

1 And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:

2 And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.

Many suggestions have been offered to identify this "woman clothed with the sun."

The church of Rome has maintained that she represents the Virgin Mary.

In 1678 the Spanish artist Murillo created his famous painting "Mystery of the Immaculate Conception," a painting of the "woman clothed with the sun."

For some reason, he did not show her standing on the moon with a crown of twelve stars on her head.

Thus the passage has been used to teach Mary's bodily assumption into heaven.

Others have proposed that the sun-clad woman is the church, and still others have tried to use it to define themselves.

The woman is referred to as "a great wonder in heaven" v 1.

The word "wonder," literally translated from the Greek "sign" and appearing for the first time in Rev, indicates that the woman is not to be taken literally as a woman but as a symbolic representation of something.

Furthermore, it is impossible to conceive of Mary giving birth to her child "in heaven," and this woman pictured in heaven.

We will see in Rev 12:5-6 that the man-child is Jesus.

Religions such as Christian Science, or even the church, will not qualify as the mother of Christ.

Instead, this is a reference to the nation of Israel, which begat the Messiah.

From Abraham to the days of Mary, the nation of Israel was preparing to bring forth a man child that would bless the entire world.

The fact that the woman is seen “clothed with the sun, and the moon” is most illuminating.

These objects are light-conveying objects: the moon is a reflector, the sun, a source of light.

They are symbolic of Israel as God’s light-bearer to mankind.

This she was in OT days, for God intended that she propagate His message from the Holy Land to the entire world.

Unfaithful in the dissemination of this message, she has fallen under the judgments of God.

However, she will be God’s light-bearer in the form of the 144,000 witnesses during the Tribulation.

It should be noted from Rev 2 and 3 that today the church, God’s “lampstand” is His torch-bearer to get His message out to this generation.

2. *The Devil*

Rev 12:3

The world today does not believe in a literal devil, accepting merely “an evil principle from without.”

But the Bible teaches an evil *personality* from without called the devil.

This passage alone details several things about him.

Names Used for the devil

V 3 – “a great red dragon.”

He is red because he is the motivating force behind much of the bloodshed in man’s history, beginning with Cain and continuing to the present.

V 9 – “that old serpent.” This refers to the first time the devil is seen in the Bible, in the Garden of Eden.

- “the devil. This is the name used for the devil in the gospels. It means “slanderer” or “accuser.”

- “Satan.” This name means “adversary.” The devil is the adversary of all God’s children.

V 10 – “the accuser of our brethren.” This indicates his work before the throne of God today, seeking to discredit the saints before God.

Satan’s Governmental Operation

Satan is revealed as a “great red dragon” having seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns upon his heads.

More details related to Satan’s governmental operations will be revealed as we study the Antichrist in ch 13, but the seven crowned heads probable refer to the seven stages of the Roman Empire, the embodiment of evil government.

Just because Rome has sunk beneath the sands of time does not mean that Roman government is not in force today. In fact, Roman government or Caesarean imperialism is in its sixth stage (head) and today covers a vast amount of the earth’s population.

Any dictatorial government belongs to this category.

The ten horns refer to the ten kings who will be dominant during the Tribulation, from whom the Antichrist (the seventh head) will receive his power and authority.

Antichrist is the human pawn or tool of Satan himself, for Satan uses the governments of man.

Many modern governments and governmental leaders are his pawns today, which is the main reason for so much chaos in the world!

Nothing has caused more havoc and evil to humanity than government.

Power in the hands of evil men in the form of government has given license to murders, wars, famine, heartache, and suffering beyond human comprehension.

This can be attributed to Satan, who by using world dictators and key leaders has manipulated the affairs of man, all to man’s harm.

The combination of such practices will reach a climax during the Tribulation.

The Fall of Satan

The great red dragon appears as “another wonder in heaven.”

Rev 11:4

V 4 tells us that “his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven and did cast them to the earth.”

This probably refers to the original fall of Satan described in Is 14.

Some have suggested that the glacial age was a period of judgment on the earth long before man ever came into being because of Satan’s pride, which induced rebellion and the casting from heaven of one-third of the angels, those who chose to follow him.

The original casting of Satan out of heaven was not a final overthrow, for although his forces have been limited to the atmospheric heaven around the earth, Satan himself still has access to the throne of God to accuse the brethren. (v 10).

Satan’s Conflict With the Seed of the Woman

The vision of Satan standing before the woman “who was ready to be delivered, to devour her child as soon as it was born” refers to the attitude of Satan ever since Gen 3:15.

Genesis 3:15

This promise was given to humanity, predicting eventual deliverance from the domination of Satan.

God guaranteed deliverance through the “seed of a woman.”

In response, Satan initiated what Bible scholars call “the conflict of the ages,” attempting to stamp out the seed of the woman from the time of Adam and Eve to the Tribulation, from Gen to Rev.

Satan tried to stop the seed by the murder of Abel by Cain (Gen 4); by his effort to pollute the human race (Gen 60); by his attempt to cut off the Hebrew nation in Egypt (Ex 1, 2); and by the decree of Haman (Esth 3:8-15).

Several times during the life of Christ he tried to destroy the “seed of the woman” – Herod’s decree to kill babies, the storm on the Sea of Galilee, and the attempts to throw Christ over the cliff.

During the Christian dispensation the conflict is seen in Satan’s persecution of the church; his propagation of Mohammedanism; the Dark Ages, when the Word of God was kept from men; and false religions that spring up everywhere but offer no remedy for sin.

This conflict will reach its climax during the Tribulation when Satan through the Antichrist will seek to get men to worship him.

*3. The Man Child – Christ***Rev 12:4-6**

The identity of the man child should not be difficult for anyone familiar with the Word, for only Jesus fits this description.

The man child “was to rule all nation with a rod of iron,” referring to the millennial kingdom when Jesus will be the absolute ruler of the world and will “rule with a rod of iron.”

The man child’s identity is further clarified in the statement, “her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne,” which is exactly what happened to Jesus after the resurrection.

He was caught up to heaven, where He is now seated at the right of God; John reveals Him in ch 4 & 5 as at the throne of God.

It should be noted that He is the only one who has “ascended into heaven.”

Rev 12:7-9

The entire picture of the sun-clad woman is best understood when we keep in mind that the Christian dispensation of 2000 years is entirely omitted.

Not even a hint of it is found in our text.

Daniel 9

This parallels the 70 weeks of Daniel, which predicts 483 years until “Messiah the Prince shall be cut off” and then, making no reference to the Gentile church age, goes right on to the Jewish 7-year Tribulation., completing the 70 weeks of years.

Between v. 6 & 7 have occurred 2,000 years of church history.

Just like Daniel 9, they are Gentile in scope, whereas this passage concerns Israel.

Rev 12:6 refers to the Tribulation when it says, “the woman fled into the wilderness” where God had prepared a place for her.

As He provided for the nation Israel for forty years in the wilderness, so He will feed Israel during the Tribulation's 1,260 days.

Ch 11 of Daniel speaks of a world war during the middle of the Tribulation which will affect all the countries of the world except Edom, Moab, and Ammon.

These countries, which now constitute Jordan, may well be the place God has prepared for the nation Israel to hide. In any case, they will flee during the last half of the Tribulation, persecuted by the greatest anti-Semitic campaign that Satan has ever unleashed against them.

God, however, will be faithful to His children during that period and will provide for them.

Isaiah 33:15-16

Is 33:15-16 indicates that during that time He will so supply for them that of Israel it will be said, "Bread shall be given to him; his waters shall be sure."

No matter what the generation, to them that look for Him, God is faithful.

The Archangel Michael

That Satan will make one final attempt to wrest control of the universe from God is suggested by the coming war in heaven between the holy angels, led by the archangel Michael, and the fallen angels, led by Satan.

We need to look at the fourth key person in this passage before we go on into the war in heaven.

The two angels who are named in Scripture are Gabriel and Michael.

Gabriel is the announcing angel and Michael seems to be the "commanding general" of the heavenly hosts.

It is suggested on the basis of Is 14 and Ez 28 that Michael is superior to the majority of the angels, but somewhat lower in created order than Satan himself.

He has had previous confrontations with Satan, as noted in Jude 9, when he contended with the devil and disputed about the body of Moses.

Jude 9

9 Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.

Satan wanted the body of Moses, no doubt to use as a sacred shrine or relic or object of worship to further mislead the children of Israel.

Michael preserved the body of Moses against that eventuality, but even he "dared not bring against him [Satan] a railing accusation, but said, "The Lord rebuke thee."

Michael does not seem able to cope with Satan himself but must rely on the power of God for his defense.

This is an excellent object lesson to Christians!

If the archangel Michael, commander of God's heavenly host, is not adequate to take on Satan in conflict, neither are we!

Our only defense against the devil is to flee to God.

James 4:7

Daniel 10 reveals that Michael was hindered by "the prince of the kingdom of Persia," either a reference to Satan himself or someone on Michael's own level who was in charge of the demonic forces.

Daniel 12:1

We see from this passage that Michael is the angel specially assigned by God to work for the protection of Israel as a nation.

The War in Heaven

It has been suggested by Bible scholars that the war in heaven is not a single battle but a series of battles that culminate in the middle of the expulsion of Satan from the court of God.

2 Thess 4:16-17

Satan and his hosts will battle vigorously with Michael and the heavenly hosts immediately after the Rapture of the church, for when Christ comes for His church "with a shout," He will come with "the voice of the archangel".

The Tribulation, then, will not only be a time of war on the earth, in which men are the participants, but, unseen by men, battles will be fought between the hosts of God and the hosts of Satan.

In a sense, there is will parallel what must have occurred during the days of Christ, for when Satan did his best his best to slay Christ or to tempt Him, Christ was “ministered” to by the angels. (Matt. 4:11)

We cannot but help to wonder if the atmosphere around the cross was charged with conflicting spiritual forces, the holy angels on behalf of Christ conflicting with the demons who exulted in triumph over Him.

The resurrection of Jesus on the third day after His crucifixion was a devastating blow to the plans and aspirations of Satan and his host of demons!

In the middle of the Tribulation the conflicts between Michael and his hosts and Satan and his hosts will reach a climax.

When God gives the order, Michael will cast the great dragon down to the earth, and “his angels were cast out with him.”

We can scarcely imagine the effect this will have on Satan who for all these years has maintained access to the throne of God “day and night” to accuse the brethren.

Suddenly, halfway through the Tribulation, he will be banished to the earth and confined there.

His fury will know no limitations, except the power of God

3½ years later, at the glorious appearing of Christ (Rev 19:1 – 21:3), he will be cast into the bottomless pit for 1,000 years.

The fact that Satan is once and for all cast from the throne of God along with his evil hosts, who will no longer be the “principalities and powers of the air” but beings limited to the earth, will be cause for “great rejoicing” in heaven.

Rev. 12:10

The first giant step toward the eventual establishment of the kingdom of Christ will be the banishment of Satan from heaven.

The fact that Satan no longer can accuse the brethren will be cause for great rejoicing.

V 10 states that Satan’s particular ministry in this age is to appear before the throne of God

“day and night” to accuse the saints of sin or weakness, much the same function as a prosecutor before a judge.

The saints have overcome these accusations by the three sources of victory over the devil. (v 11)

1. “They overcame him – by the blood of the Lamb.”

Whether in casting out demons or victory over sin, the blood of the Lamb of God which takes away the sins of the world is the only true means of victory.

This certainly emphasizes the power of the blood of Jesus.

2. “They overcame him . . . by the word of their testimony.”

Another way to overcome Satan is a decisive testimony for Jesus.

The fact that these people who overcame Satan loved not their lives unto death emphasizes that their supreme desire was to serve Jesus.

Matthew 6:33

Matthew 10:39

Satan would have us reverse the procedure and think more highly of our lives than they really are worth in comparison to our eternal soul.

3. “And they loved not their lives unto death.”

Whenever man tries to save his life, he loses it.

Only a Christian who can assert with Paul that he has “a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better” is ready to “resist the devil.”

Overcomers are more concerned with pleasing their Lord than saving their lives.

Satan’s Final Anti-Semitic Crusade

Rev 12:12-13

Although heaven will rejoice because Satan is out, earth will not share this rejoicing, for he personally will take command of the earth and its operations against his greatest enemy, the nation Israel.

Knowing he has but a short time (3 ½ years), he will be filled with wrath and hatred.

The extent of his activities are sketched for us in the remaining verses of the chapter.

Rev 12:10

The faithfulness of God to the woman is seen in the fact that she is given two wings of a great eagle that she might fly into the wilderness to a place prepared for her (v 6) where for 3 ½ years God will supernaturally protect her. It is hard to establish the identity of this “flood.”

The best three suggestions are as follows:

1. Satan will divert rivers and bodies of water into the wilderness, where Israel will be kept by God, and will try to drown her.
2. He will attempt to flood her with false teachings.
3. Since this passage has already referred to symbols of “the woman” and the “great red dragon,” the word “flood” could be a symbol similar to the one in Is 59:19 which speaks of an army as it invades a country.

Isaiah 59:19

It seems quite likely that the latter is the best definition.

The Antichrist will marshal a great horde of men, arm them, and send them into the wilderness to kill the children of Israel.

Rev 12:10

God will protect Israel supernaturally.

As in the days of the rebellion of Korah (Num 16) out in the wilderness, when the earth opened and swallowed those who were serving Satan and rebelling against the known will of God, so in the Tribulation the earth will swallow up the anti-Semitic armies of the Antichrist.

Whatever the enemy, it is apparent that God will use the earth to preserve Israel supernaturally.

V 17 indicates that even though Satan will be thwarted in his attempt to exterminate the Jews, not until the end of the Tribulation when he is cast into the bottomless it will he stop trying.

A glance at history reveals a fore-glimpse of his consistent hatred and diabolical wrath against God’s chosen people.

It would almost seem that all the animosity and hatred he directs toward God in the last days of his freedom will be hurled against the nation Israel.

That Israel will be saved during the latter half of the Tribulation is clarified by this reference to the “remnant of her seed,” denoting the last generation of the “seed of the woman” living during the Tribulation.

Their faith is seen in that they (1) keep the commandments of God and (2) have the testimony of Jesus.

They will turn to God in complete obedience (something Israel has not done since the days of David), accepting their Messiah, Jesus Christ.

The final act of anti-Semitism on the part of Satan will be used of God to cause a worldwide revival to spread throughout Israel.

Would to God that Israel 2,000 year ago had accepted the offer of her Messiah and started then to “have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

How this would have altered the course of history.

The Antichrist

Rev 13 introduces a personage well known to the student of Bible prophecy.

There are at least 20 names for the Antichrist, but he is most commonly referred to as Antichrist.

In this section we will discuss other Bible passages about Antichrist to help us understand his activities during the Tribulation.

Along with the first part of ch 13, this will give us a comprehensive picture of the work of the Antichrist.

The fact of the Antichrist

Just as Christ is the promised “seed of the woman” of Gen 3:15, the Antichrist is the promised “seed of the serpent.”

Counterfeiting the work of God has always been the work of Satan, the master enemy of the soul of man.

For 6,000 years he has tried to counterfeit everything God has done for man.

The crowning pie of counterfeit will appear when Satan raises up a man to be a substitute for Jesus – a man referred to as the Antichrist.

It should be pointed out that the term which has been universally accepted by fundamental Bible teachers and prophetic students is nowhere in the Bible used in connection with a specific person.

The title is employed by the Apostle John in his first epistle but repeatedly refers to one who opposes Christ, particularly one teaching anything contrary to the deity of Christ.

The Bible repeatedly predicts, however, that one will arise as the embodiment of all anti-Christian attitudes, purposes, and motives that Satan has implanted in his emissaries throughout past centuries.

We call him Antichrist because he is opposed to everything which Christ represents.

Some of the titles given to Antichrist in Bible are:

“king of Babylon”

Isaiah 14:4

“Lucifer”

Isaiah 14:12

“little horn”

Daniel 7:8

Daniel 8:9

“a king of fierce countenance

Daniel 8:23

“the prince that shall come”

Daniel 9:26

“the willful king”

Daniel 11:36

“that man of sin,” “the son of perdition”, “that wicked one”

2 Thessalonians 2:3-8

“antichrist”

1 John 2:18

“a beast”

Revelation 13:1

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.

Of all the titles given to him, the one used by Paul in 2 Thess 2:3, “the man of sin,” is the most descriptive.

As “the man of sin” he will come on the scene in the last days as the embodiment of all the sinful men who have ever lived.

2 Thess 2:4 offers an appropriate description of his conduct.

2 Thessalonians 2:4

A Contrast to Jesus Christ

In his masterful book, *Dispensational Truth*, Dr. Clarence Larkin has listed the following 14 contrasts between the Antichrist and the Christ.

1. Christ came from above – John 6:38
Antichrist will ascent from the pit – Rev 11:7
2. Christ came in His Father's name – John 5:43
Antichrist will come in his own name – John 5:43
3. Christ humbled Himself – Phil 2:8
Antichrist will exalt himself – 2 Thess 2:4
4. Christ was despised – Is 53:3, Luke 23:18
Antichrist will be admired – Rev 13:3-4
5. Christ will be exalted – Phil 2:9
Antichrist will be cast down to hell – Is 14:14, Rev 19:20
6. Christ came to do His Father's will – John 6:38
Antichrist will come to do his own will – Dan 11:36
7. Christ came to save - Luke 19:10
Antichrist will come to destroy – Dan 8:24
8. Christ is the good shepherd – John 10;1-15
Antichrist is the “idol [evil] shepherd” – Zech 11:16-17
9. Christ is the “true vine” – John 15:1
Antichrist is the “vine of the earth” – Rev 14:18
10. Christ is the “truth” – John 14:6
Antichrist is the “lie” – 2 Thess 2:11
11. Christ is the “holy one” – Mark 1:24
Antichrist is the “lawless one” – 2 Thess 2:8
12. Christ is the “man of sorrows” – Is 53:3
Antichrist is the “man of sin” – 2 Thess 2:3
13. Christ is the “Son of God” – Luke 1:35
Antichrist is the “son of perdition” – 2 Thess 2:3
14. Christ is “the mystery of godliness: God...manifest in the flesh”
Antichrist will be “the mystery of iniquity,” Satan manifest in the flesh – 2 Thess 2:7

Nationality of the Antichrist

One of the most frequently asked questions about the Antichrist concerns his nationality.

Rev 13:1 indicates that he “rises up out of the sea,” meaning the sea of peoples around the Mediterranean.

From this we gather that he will be a Gentile.

Dan 8:8-9 suggests that he is the “little horn” that came out of the four Grecian horns, signaling that he will be part Greek.

Daniel 9:26 refers to him as the prince of the people that shall come, meaning that he will be of the royal lineage of the race that destroyed Jerusalem.

Historically this was the Roman Empire; therefore he will be predominantly Roman.

Dan 11:36-37 tells us that he regards not “the God of his fathers.”

Taken in context, this suggests he will be a Jew.

In all probability the Antichrist will appear to be a Gentile and, like Adolph Hitler and others who feared to reveal Jewish blood, will keep his Jewish ancestry a secret.

It may be known only to God, but the Bible teaches that he will be a Roman-Grecian Jew, a composite man representing the peoples of the earth.

This technically qualifies him to be the embodiment of all evil men.

Future Activities of Antichrist

There is ample description of the work of Antichrist in Rev 13 to warn the entire world of this awful personage who will come upon the earth to assume control.

With characteristic biblical inspiration, these principles harmonize with other teachings in the Word concerning this person.

We shall consider these teachings particularly in the light of the following seven events.

1. His rise to Power.

As already seen in Rev 6:2, the Antichrist will come on the scene in the “latter times” and assume power by the stealth of diplomacy.

He will not gain control by war but by tricking the leaders of the world into the idea that he can offer peace and by gaining enough support from each of the ten kings of the earth.

Eventually he will end up with control of all of them.

This subtle method of diplomacy is confirmed by an examination of Dan 8:25.

Daniel 8:25

2. His one-world government.

This one-world government is predicted in the image of Nebuchadnezzar. (Dan 2)

The ten toes of the image represent an amalgamation of the ten kings under the dominance of the Antichrist.

Rev 17:12-15 reveals that the kings of the earth will finally come to the conclusion that they are not capable of governing themselves in peace with other nations of the world; thus the “shall give their power and strength to the beast.”

Revelation 17:12-15

V 13 suggests that for the sake of world peace they will establish a world government that they will consider the solution to the world’s problems.

That we have already entered into a day when man’s political concept of government is one world in scope can scarcely be doubted.

The monstrosity of Manhattan Island known as the United Nations, already having deceived the American people and robbed the U. S. Treasury, is a classic example.

3. The Antichrist will dominate world economy.

When Rev 17:13 states that the kings of the earth “shall give their power . . . unto the beast,; this means not only their armies but also their economic power.

Revelation 17:13

It is inconceivable that a one-world government be established without an interrelated one-world economy.

Such an economy has been suggested in the European Common Market.

Although it is still in its infancy, because of economic necessity it could spread throughout the entire world and eventually become the type of instrument used by the Antichrist to control the monetary and financial affairs of the world.

4. The Antichrist’s atheistic religion.

The religion of the Antichrist appears in several places in Scripture, primarily Daniel 11:36-39 and 2 Thess 2:1-12.

Daniel 11:36-39

2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

These passages teach that the Antichrist will exalt himself “above all that is called God, or that is worshiped, so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.” (2 Thess 2:4)

This evil personage will be a master of deceit even in the religious realm.

According to Rev 17 he will give tacit approval to the ecumenical church, not because he believes in it, but because of its tremendous political overtones and his aspiration to control the world.

He apparently will be dominated by the ecumenical church, as we will see in Rev 17, since the harlot (the ecumenical church) rides the beast, indicating that she will actually limit or dominate many of his governmental activities.

But this will all be subterfuge on his part until he can gather sufficient control to throw her off and kill this idolatrous ecumenical religion that is gathering momentum in our own generation.

Antichrist’s true religion will be atheism, which has been increasing in prominence since the early days of German rationalism and today is given the respectability of intellectualism.

Antichrist’s religion of atheism is rapidly increasing already, particularly in key positions of influence.

It is well known that the headwaters of the educational system in America rise from Columbia University which, thanks to John Dewey and others, is predominantly atheistic in philosophy.

The atheists have propagated and enforced a purely secular education for our young people, contrary to all American principles.

All of these things fitted together are merely pieces of a puzzle that will spread the philosophies of atheism.

This does not even include the fact that the foundation stone of communism and socialism is atheism.

Wherever these “isms” are propagated (and they cover a third of the world today and are rapidly spreading), we find the seeds of atheism that will in the last days spring up in the worship of the Antichrist.

5. His covenant with Israel.

Daniel 9:27 indicates that he will make a covenant with Israel for seven years which, as we have already seen, will be broken in the middle of the Tribulation when it suits his purposes.

Daniel 9:27

This covenant will only serve to keep the children of Israel from seeking God; just as they looked to Egypt in the OT, they will look for help and alliance to the Antichrist for the first 3 ½ years of the Tribulation.

6. His death and resurrection.

As already seen, Antichrist will die and be resurrected.

Rev 17:8

This verse indicates that the Antichrist will die in the middle of the Tribulation.

Since we have already seen that Satan will be cast out of heaven, aware that his time is short, he will indwell the Antichrist and duplicate the resurrection.

Thus he will come up out of perdition and again contrast the supernatural work of Christ.

From that point on, indwelt by Satan himself, he will have power to perform “signs and lying wonders”.

2 Thessalonians 2:9-12

He could potentially deceive “even the very elect.”

He will have absolute authority by virtue of his supernatural powers and the submission of the kings of the earth to his control and dominance.

It is then that he will unleash his attack on the nation of Israel.

It will be the greatest anti-Semitic movement the world has ever known.

He will seek to put to death all those who do not bear his mark or bow down and worship him as God.

7. The ultimate destruction of the Antichrist.

2 Thessalonians 2:8

This destruction of Satan by Jesus at His coming is graphically described in Rev 19:11:20

Revelation 19:11-20

Christ will destroy Satan and his armies all at one time and will cast him alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.

We have no record of his judgment.

Only the Antichrist and the false prophet will not be judged, but because of their activities they will be cast alive into the lake of fire.

Thus we have prophesied the bitter end of the man of sin, the Antichrist.

But consider the millions deceived by him who will share his fate – the lake of fire.

We shall see how these basic practices of the Antichrist are further confirmed in ch 13, and later we will encounter his own private religious leader called the False Prophet.

Of all the names used for Antichrist, the most significant is that in the original language of 2 Thess 2:8, where he is called “the lawless one”.

The present generation is preparing for the rule of Antichrist by its insistent, contagious desire for lawlessness.

One of the plaguing problems of the younger generation is that of rebellion against law and order and a desire to reject restraint.

Instead of morality, honesty, and decency based on the fixed standard of God’s Word, we find immorality and self-expression.

Self-indulgence is the watchword of life today!

The Bible defines the spirit of lawlessness as sin in 1 John 3:4.

1 John 3:4

The spirit of rebellion in the heart of any man signifies that he is a subject of the Antichrist even before he arrives.
The spirit of submission to the Law of God is a supernatural result of having invited Jesus Christ into one's life.

The Beast Out of the Sea

Just as God uses men to accomplish His objective for mankind, so Satan uses men.

Rev 13 is a good example of that fact, for in it we meet two men, referred to as beasts, who will be used by Satan during the Tribulation.

Rev 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.

2 And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.

The best manuscripts use "he" instead of "I" at the beginning of v 1, indicating that the verse belongs with Rev 12:17, and refers to the dragon, or Satan.

In other words, Satan is standing on the sand of the sea, which gives rise to this fearsome beast that will come on the world scene in latter times.

A Description of the Beast

This beast is obviously unlike any animal we have ever seen.

Therefore we apply the golden rule of interpretation: "When the plain sense of the Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense."

Because the plain sense of this passage does not make common sense, we naturally seek another sense.

Since there are no seven-headed animals, this composite picture of a leopard, lion, and bear must be a symbol.

There is much controversy as to the identity of this beast.

Some would have us believe that it is a religious organization, because in ch 17 we find the scarlet woman astride a similar beast.

Others would have us believe that this beast is a kingdom, not a king.

This is not the first time that the Holy Spirit has used the symbol of a beast to describe either a king or a kingdom.

In Dan 7 we find that several beasts are employed to convey the meaning of coming world governments, with the lion referring not only to the Babylonian Empire, but to Nebuchadnezzar himself.

This is significant because Daniel said to Nebuchadnezzar, "thou art this head of gold."

The late Dr. David L. Cooper noted that the symbol of the beast can refer either to a king or his kingdom, depending on the Holy Spirit's point of view.

He used the illustration of a floodlight and a spotlight: when the spotlight is on, the king was in focus, but when the floodlight is on, the Holy Spirit would have us look at the entire kingdom.

Such is the case in Rev 13.

Some details about this beast can apply only to an individual, whereas others apply to his kingdom.

We find that the beast opens his mouth and speaks blasphemy, indicating a reference not only to a kingdom but to a specific personage.

We have already examined in detail the other Scripture passages about the Antichrist.

Now we find in Rev 13 the description of the end-time king and his kingdom.

The Seven Heads

The characteristics of this beast, as observed by John, are strange indeed.

He has seven heads, ten horns, and crowns on each horn.

Each head has on it a "name of blasphemy."

The beast has a body like a leopard, feet like a bear, and a mouth like a lion.

The source of his power and authority is the devil himself.

The seven heads are probably the most difficult part of this beast to describe.

The ten horns obviously correspond to the ten toes of the vision of Dan 2 and the ten horns of the nondescript beast which represents the Roman Empire in Dan 7.

They are the ten kings who give the Antichrist their power during the Tribulation.

The features of a leopard, a bear, and a lion characterizing the animal are most informative.

In fact, they afford a model indication of the absolute accuracy of Scripture.

Daniel's four beasts in ch 7 represented future kingdoms, beginning with the lion that represented the Babylonian Empire.

Then he saw a bear that represented the Medo-Persian Empire, followed by a leopard representing the Grecian Empire, followed by a nondescript beast portraying the Roman empire.

These four animals, representing the four world kingdoms, are most interesting, for no world powers have existed other than the four described by Daniel, who wrote at the beginning of the chain of conquests.

John penned his description when the last governmental beast was in control; therefore his description is in reverse order.

Daniel began with the lion, whereas John ended with the lion.

Because the prophets lived some 600 years apart, Daniel was looking forward to what would come to pass in relationship to these world kingdoms, but John was looking backward, for the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Grecian, and Roman Empires had already appeared on the scene.

The seven heads of this beast are mentioned in Rev 17:10 as kings of the Roman Empire.

LaHaye says best description he ever heard is that they represent five kings to the time of John; the sixth, Comitian, was the Roman king at the time of John, who then skipped forward to the end time for the seventh head, Antichrist.

Others suggest that these are the seven phases of Roman type of government through which the nondescript beast, which represents Caesarean imperialism, passed.

In either case the whole animal represents a bestial kingdom that will be in dominant control of the earth during the Tribulation.

A rather interesting side note regarding the Holy Spirit's description of the beast to represent kingdoms appears in the contrasts in Daniel.

When man thinks of world governments, they take on a beautiful shape, as did Nebuchadnezzar's image in Dan 2. Each section of that image represented one of the four coming world kingdoms.

However, when God describes the coming world kingdoms, He uses beasts to symbolize them.

Man looks favorably on government as a great hindrance to man, as does anyone who has studied history and observed government's bestial treatment of humanity.

Putting the description of the setting of the beast in Rev 13 does not indicate that the Antichrist will rise at the midpoint of the Tribulation.

It is a parenthetical insertion coming between the trumpet and bowl judgments.

His governmental reign will run through the entire period and reach its climax at the middle of the Tribulation.

The first 3½ years will be spent in trying to gain control of the world; they are described in Rev 17.

Antichrist will lead the governmental organization that will be dominated by the religious system of the day, which we will cover in our discussion of Rev 17, but in the middle of the Tribulation he will throw off the scarlet woman and assume absolute control of the world.

V 1 indicates that the beast rose "up out of the sea."

Whenever the Bible refers to the "sea," it means the Mediterranean Sea, unless the sea is used symbolically as it is here.

Sometimes "sea" is used to describe people, a sea of people.

The meaning, then, would be that the Antichrist arises from among the people around the Mediterranean Sea, which is in accord with the nationality description we saw in the previous chapter.

It is no wonder that Dr. Wilbur Smith describes this period of time rapidly coming upon the world as "the darkest hour of human history."

The Death and Resurrection of the Beast

Rev 13:3

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.

V 3 indicates that the beast, or Antichrist, will be given a deadly wound.

It is quite possible that at the midway point of the Tribulation, in the great war referred to as the second war of the Tribulation, the Antichrist will be killed.

(Apparently of the ten kings the three not in unanimity with the Antichrist will try to wrest control from him, probably at the same time the scarlet woman of ch 17 is thrown out of control.)

Rev 17:8 indicates that his spirit will go down into the pit of the abyss where it belongs, but he will be resurrected. One must keep in mind that this beast is the Antichrist.

In other words, he will try to duplicate everything Jesus Christ has done.

This is significant in view of the fact that the sign of our Lord's deity appears in His resurrection.

He said that no sign would be given unto men except "the sign of the prophet, Jonah; for as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." (Matt 12:39-40)

Christianity is unique in that we worship a resurrected, living Lord.

The power of this testimony is beyond description to men who are real seekers after truth.

This power will be all but nullified by the evil work of Satan through the resurrection of the Antichrist.

This will be the first time Satan has ever been able to raise the dead.

His power and control of man is limited by God, but according to His wise providence He will permit Satan on this one occasion to have the power to raise the dead.

When studied in the light of 2 Thess 2, it may well be the tool he will use to deceive men.

Rev 13:44

And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?

It would seem that after his resurrection thousands of individuals across the world, previously undecided about the Antichrist, will make him an object of worship and fall down before him.

The Blasphemies of the Beast

Rev 13:5-6

3 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.

4 And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.

Satan has long been the author of blasphemy against God.

That blasphemy will reach its climax when, not content just to damn or curse in the name of God, he will set up a form of worship that leads men to fall down before him as though he were a god.

That blasphemy will reach its climax when, not content just to damn or curse in the name of God, he will set up a form of worship that leads men to fall down before him as though he were a god.

This accords with Isaiah 14, which describes Satan's secret desire to have other creatures worship him.

The Jews accused Jesus of blasphemy because He said He was God.

Jesus was crucified for blasphemy.

But declaring that one is God is blasphemous only when untrue.

In the case of Antichrist during the Tribulation, it will be untrue, but such supernatural powers will be given to him by the devil himself that he will appear to have Godlike characteristics and thus deceive many human beings.

Some Bible teachers suggest that when ch 13 is compared with ch 12, where Satan is cast out of heaven in the middle of the Tribulation, it appears that Satan will actually indwell the body of the Antichrist.

This would account for the Antichrist's resurrection.

Thus during the first 3 ½ years of the Tribulation the Antichrist will be merely a man endowed with satanic powers, but during the last 3 ½ years, he will actually be Satan himself, clothed with the Antichrist's body.

The Power of the Beast

Rev 13:7

5 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.

Today the world is prepared for a one-world governmental philosophy.

That philosophy, propagated by Satan and advocated by the intellectual, godless, atheistic leading of world governments today, is rapidly spreading across the earth.

As already seen, man has just about come to the conclusion that the only solution to the problem of continuous war is a one-world government.

That government will be the devil's government, established during the Tribulation.

In the midst of that time he will assume control himself and, as v 7 tells us, will exercise power over "all kindreds and nations."

During that period he will do two things: exert power over all kindreds and nations and persecute the saints.

In accord with the fifth seal judgment, the latter half of the Tribulation will be a time of increased persecution of saints, and we have already seen from ch 12 that the devil will also persecute Israel.

Therefore, we may conclude that Satan will try to control all the people of the world and will launch a gigantic anti-Christian, anti-Semitic crusade.

One comforting truth gleaned from Rev is that although antichrist will have power over all kindreds and tongues, he will not deceive every individual.

Rev 7:9 makes it clear that the preaching of the Gospel by the 144,000 Jewish witnesses will reach a multitude which no man can number, from every tongue and tribe and people.

Therefore, even Satan's control will not keep men from receiving Christ individually.

This is in accord with the way it has been all during the Christian dispensation.

Nations and peoples have rejected Christ, but individuals have received Him.

According to **John 1:10-12**

Rev 13:8-10

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.

9 If any man have an ear, let him hear.

8 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.

It is evident even today that men seek to worship what they can see.

This is reflected in the widespread use of idols and holy relics in conjunction with the worship of their religions of the world.

During the Tribulation, Satan will provide a visible god with seemingly divine powers.

Those who prefer a comfortable religion which does not demand righteous behavior will find just what they are looking for.

On the basis of v 8 alone it would seem that the majority of the people on the earth, even during the Tribulation, will worship the Antichrist rather than Christ.

However, some will refuse to bow down and worship Antichrist.

We will see shortly that he will set up an image of himself to be worshipped by men.

Just as the three Hebrews refused to worship Nebuchadnezzar's image, which foreshadowed the day when during the Tribulation all men will be commanded to worship the beast, so there will be some faithful who refuse.

In this text it is those whose names are "written in the book of life of the Lamb."

The significance of this expression cannot be bypassed.

The Book of Life is introduced in several passages of Scripture, particularly Rev 20:15.

Revelation 20:15

It is God's book of anticipation.

That is, whenever a human being is born, God writes his name in that book; if he dies without receiving Christ, his name is blotted out of the book so that in eternity the only people whose names remain in the Book of Life are those who have received Christ by faith while they lived.

Revelation 3:5

The Lamb's Book of Life is quite a different matter!

There is no doubt as to the identity of the Lamb, for John the Baptist pointed to Jesus as "the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29)

The Lamb's Book of Life includes only those who have come to the Lamb for life.

Jesus said that He came to give unto men “eternal life,” and many times He stated that His believers would have life everlasting.

In fact, He proclaimed that those who believe on Him will “never die.”

He was not, of course, referring to the flesh, but to the real man of the heart, the eternal soul.

We conclude, then, that the Lamb’s Book of Life contains the names of those who have by faith received the Lamb of God and thus had their names “written in the book of life of the Lamb.

Not everyone has his name written in the Lamb’s Book of Life!

One’s name is not written in at birth, nor does he have it written in by the sovereign choice of God.

A man’s name is written in the Lamb’s Book of Life because he chooses to ask God to place it there.

Jesus Christ offers men eternal life if they will receive Him, if they will invite Him into their hearts.

If they heed His call and ask Him to come in as Lord and Savior, He enters their lives.

Revelation 3:20

The recording angel writes their names into the Lamb’s Book of Life, from which it can never be blotted.

Is your name written in the Lamb’s Book of Life?

If not, may I urge you to choose to invite Jesus Christ into your life right now and let Him write it there.

The False Prophet

Matthew 24:24

Although many false prophets have arisen, seeking to deceive men, and though many exist in this present day, there has never been an adequately fulfillment to Jesus' prediction quite like that which will take place during the Tribulation.

Since man is incurably religious, a world dictator must provide man with an outlet for his religious inclinations. We have already seen that Antichrist will come on the scene during Tribulation to take control of world government.

We shall soon observe that the ecumenical church, described in Rev 17, will exert such power that it will dominate him during the first 3 ½ years while he is solidifying the power of his empire.

That he will resent her and attempt to throw off these shackles is clear from the fact that he will destroy her in the middle of the Tribulation and set up his own form of worship.

To propagate that worship, the devil will provide a special man on the scene, the other awesome personage described in Rev 13 as the "beast coming up out of the earth."

That these two beast (the first beast that comes up out of the sea, the Antichrist, and this beast that comes up out of the earth) are men is clear from what will happen to them when our Lord returns at the end of the Tribulation.

Revelation 19:20

This verse can apply only to the two beasts described in Rev 13.

The first is the governmental leader, called the Antichrist, who will set himself up as God; the second is his religious leader, who will incite men to worship Antichrist.

Characteristics of the False Prophet

Revelation 13:11-13

In these two verses five characteristics chart the role of the False Prophet.

1. "And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth."

Many Bible teachers suggest that his coming up out of the earth indicates that he will not come up out of the sea of peoples, as will the first beast.

That is, he will not be of mixed nationality; that he comes out of the earth (around Palestine) may indicated that he will be a Jew.

This would point to an apostate Jew who during the first 3 ½ years will lead Israel to make a covenant with Antichrist and deceive them by hiding his apostasy until the middle of the Tribulation, at which time he will serve his purpose by rebelling his apostate beliefs and practices.

2. "He had two horns like a lamb."

Jesus is often referred to in the gospels and in Rev as "the Lamb of God."

As such He has taken away the sins of the world.

The False Prophet coming on the earth will look like a lamb with two horns.

Lambs do not have horns, which are symbols of authority, but instead are meek and mild animals.

Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, "Beware of false prophets that come unto you as wolves in sheep's clothing."

The False Prophet will come to Israel in sheep's clothing, but God terms him "a beast."

3. "He spake as a "dragon" suggests that he will derive power of speech from the devil who, as we found in ch 12, is the dragon.

This False Prophet, then, will deceive men by acting like a lamb; but really he will speak the words of Satan. Let it be understood that Satan is not against religion.

He is, however, against personal faith in Jesus Christ.

Therefore, the beast will be one of the chief spokesmen in the Holy Land for the ecumenical power described in Rev 17.

4. "And he exerciseth all the power [authority] of the first beast before him."

This close relationship between these two world leaders is seen in the fact that the False Prophet will be given power by the Antichrist himself.

His whole purpose will be to work toward the complete dominance of the earth by the Antichrist, including a form of religion satisfactory to the Antichrist.

5. “And causeth the earth and them who dwell on it to worship the first beast.”

The False Prophet’s basic purpose and operation with all of this power from the Antichrist and speech from the devil will be to drive men to worship the Antichrist.

When indwelt by Satan in the midst of the Tribulation, the Antichrist will be so deceived about himself that he will deem himself God and seek the worship of men.

2 Thessalonians 2:3-8

The Satanic Trinity

V 11-12 couple the three evil personages of the Tribulation that counterpart the person of God. Just as the dragon has already been anti-God, and the first beast will be anti-Christ, so the second beast will be anti-Spirit.

His capacity in working for the worship of the Antichrist will correspond with the present ministry of the Holy ‘spirit.

He will not seek to cause men to worship himself.

He will not court his own personal prestige but will work purely for the purpose of getting men to worship Antichrist.

This evil scheme will be used by the devil and his two cohorts to deceive men during the Tribulation.

They will victimize many individuals because they will traffic in amorality.

Supernatural Powers of the False Prophet

Every tribal witch doctor, false religious teacher, and false prophet has tried by magic, voodoo, trickery, or demonic power to deceive men by a display of supernaturalism.

Religions of the world are bound by superstition.

Only Jesus is able to give peace and confidence before God to men of fearful temperaments, and this is not dependent on supernatural displays or signs.

None of the false teachers to time has ever possessed the supernatural powers that will be exhibited by the False Prophet on behalf of the Antichrist during the Tribulation.

Look at their description in Rev 13:13

Rev 13:13

The word “wonder,” translated in the ASV as “signs,” is the same word used by John in his gospel, describing the ministry of Jesus.

It is translated in v 14 as “miracles.”

This would lead us to believe that the False Prophet will be equipped by Satan and the Antichrist with authority and power to do such supernatural signs as to “deceive the very elect.”

This should not come as a surprise to Bible students, for the devil has great power.

When Moses threw down his rod before Pharaoh, it turned into a serpent.

The false prophets of Pharaoh, however, were also empowered to make their rods turn into serpents, thus duplicating the miracle of the man of God.

However, God caused Moses’ serpent to eat up their serpents.

Missionaries have told us of phenomena so fantastic that they could only be explained on the basis of supernatural power.

2 Thessalonians 2:9-10

During the Tribulation the Antichrist, according to 2 Thess 2:9-10, will have the power to perform “signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness.”

It does not seem surprising that the False Prophet will be able to reproduce everything that the special witnesses of God described in Rev 11, will be able to do, even to the point of reproducing the miracles of Jesus.

This predicted demonstration of supernatural, miraculous power should warn us of the significant truth that the mere display of supernatural power does not suffice as evidence that a matter or practice originates with God.

All supernatural power is for the purpose of giving credentials to a person or a teaching, regardless of its accompanied signs – the Word of God.

If a teaching is not in accord with the Word of God, it is false!

Rev 13:13

The fire test of Elijah the prophet, which proved to the children of Israel that the prophets of Baal were powerless to communicate with God, will probably be repeated during the Tribulation Period.

That may be one of the reasons for the coming of Elijah at the time.

The difference between this confrontation and the previous one will be that the false prophet will be able to call down fire from heaven.

Lest this take us by surprise, we should be reminded that Satan, the real force behind the false prophet, brought fire down from heaven and burned up Job's sheep and servants in Job 1:16.

We could well ask ourselves, Why will God permit such power to be in Satan's hands?

It is because even during the Tribulation men will be forced to worship God by faith.

If all the supernatural power were on one side, it would not take faith but merely common sense to recognize the source of power.

But the principle of salvation as a gift of God will still rest on the basis of faith.

Hebrews 11:6

Revelation 13:14-15

The False Prophet will cause an image of the Antichrist to be built and will have power to "give life unto the image of the beast."

In the midst of the Tribulation, after the Antichrist has been slain and resurrected, the false prophet will cause men to build an image like Nebuchadnezzar's image and will demand that it be worshiped.

By some mysterious means unknown in the previous history of the world, he will give life to this image.

How long it will manifest life we are not told.

What characteristics it will have we are not told.

Possibly the only characteristic it will manifest is that it will "speak."

This verse indicates that its speech will be caused by the False Prophet, who in turn will get his authority from the Antichrist and the dragon Satan himself.

He will issue an order that all who do not worship him will be killed.

Revelation 20:4

Many will be slain by the guillotine.

This scene is so similar to that which happened to the children of Israel as a result of Nebuchadnezzar's image that we begin to realize that Satan's tactics do not vary significantly.,

Once again, an order will be given that those who do not bow down and worship him will be killed; instead of confronting a fiery furnace, they will be guillotined.

This certainly establishes the high cost of knowing Christ as personal savior during the Tribulation.

I have heard unthinking men make such statements as "I am going to wait until the Tribulation to accept Christ."

What they do not understand is the personal suffering and persecution that believers will endure during the Tribulation because of the animosity of Satan against God and those who worship Him.

Both the fifth seal and Rev 20:4 indicate that a martyrdom of true believers will exceed even that of the Dark Ages, when the Roman Catholic Church persecuted those who held to a personal faith in Jesus.

Many things coincide with the middle of the Tribulation, one of which is Satan's persecution of the nation Israel.

It may be persecution that will awaken Israel to the fact that the Antichrist is its enemy.

It may, however, be the disclosure of the False Prophet's true theological persuasion that will awaken Israel.

The Holy Spirit through the pen of Moses in Deut 13 determined the test of all prophets.

As stated above, it was not sufficient merely to regard the manifestation of supernatural power, but to hear what the prophet said.

Deuteronomy 13:2-3

When the False Prophet erects his idol worship, it may be that Israel, who does not seem to embrace Christ the Messiah in the first half of the Tribulation, will embrace Him in the second half, thus rejecting the deceiving, idolatrous religion of the Antichrist.

As we approach the end of the age and these signs in their initial stages begin to come pass, we should not let miraculous power deceive us, but judge everything according to the Word of God.

The False Prophet's Use of the Mark of the Beast

Revelation 13

What is the mark of the beast?

It is much easier to state what the mark of the beast is than what it means.

The plain sense of Scripture tells us that it comprises the numbers, six, six, six.

Perhaps some of the most fanciful suggestions for prophetic interpretation revolve around the meaning of this number.

Some have by mathematical computations come to the conclusion that the name of Adolph Hitler, Mussolini, and many others equaled six, six, six.

It is most dangerous to make such suggestions.

Actually, we only know that six is the number of man.

It is one short of the perfect number seven, and man was created on the sixth day; therefore in Bible numerology it is used to refer to man.

Why three digits are used we do not know.

Someone has suggested that it is the concentration of all that is human.

The text does indicate that it somehow will mathematically speak the name of Antichrist.

Since so many mistakes have been made in this regard, it behooves us not to offer any further suggestions.

Since the number will not be revealed until the middle of the Tribulation and the church will be raptured before the Tribulation, it seems more that likely that we will not be given a hint as to the full meaning or even the name of the Antichrist.

More important than the meaning is the use of these three numbers, six, six, six.

The False Prophet will use them as a means of forcing men to worship the Antichrist.

He will demand that all men have this mark on their foreheads or on their hands in order to buy or sell.

This economic pressure will be instrumental in causing many weak, worldly individuals to succumb to the establishment of this monarch, which will be tantamount to the personal rejection of Christ and acceptance of Antichrist.

One can scarcely imagine the pressures of having to possess such a mark in order to secure the necessary food for his family.

The U.S. government in WWII furnished a device of this kind in the form of food rationing.

It was not enough to have money sufficient to pay for an item, for one had to have food stamps.

The same will be true during the Tribulation, for the Antichrist will so control the economy that men cannot live if they do not worship him.

Physically speaking, it will be necessary for men to have the mark of the beast.

Spiritually speaking, it will be fatal.

For we have repeatedly seen that those who are redeemed by the Lamb, those who have the seal of God, do not have the mark of the beast.

But those who receive the Antichrist's mark will have made the final decisions for eternity to reject Christ and worship his archenemy.

This fact alone should cause men to fall down before the Jesus and worship Him today.

For He has promised to save us from the hour or Tribulation, "which shall try the whole earth," if we put our faith in Him.

Another 144,000 Servants

Revelation 14

Anyone who would accurately interpret Revelations must locate the scene of the activity before he begins his interpretation.

Ch 14 is a good illustration of that fact.

Many Bible scholars consider this to be a scene in heaven, while others regard it as a scene taking place on earth. The difference in viewpoint will seriously affect one's interpretation.

Another rule to be kept in mind is that the time should be pinpointed.

This passage, which falls within the "great parenthesis" that covers Rev 11:16-15:4, takes place in heaven at the middle of the Tribulation.

An examination of the chart (chart 2) will show that the seventh seal judgment at the end of the first quarter of the Tribulation opens up into the seven trumpet judgments, which we have already seen in ch 8-9.

Ch 12-13 describe events that culminate in the middle of the Tribulation.

Now, before we begin the bowl judgments that come out of the seventh trumpet, covering the last half of the Tribulation, we are about to look upon the upheaval that will take place at the end of the 3 ½ year period, or the middle of the Tribulation.

Actually, several things will occur at that time.

Antichrist and the 10 kings of the earth will throw off the ecumenical church, or the harlot of Rev 17.

He will break his covenant with Israel and drive her out of the Holy Land.

The revival under the witnessing of the 144,000 servants of God (ch 7) will come to a close.

The great persecution of tribulation saints, referred to in the fifth seal of ch 6, prior to the middle of the Tribulation, will evidently come under the auspices of the ecumenical church, which will function much like the National Council of Churches today in that it will not oppose evil such as communism, secularism, or immorality, but will persecute those who believe in the supernatural resurrected Christ and salvation in His name.

It will be violently overthrown by Antichrist, as we shall see in ch 17.

Ch. 14 introduces a scene in heaven in the middle of the Tribulation.

Christ and 144,000 Outstanding Christians

Rev 14:1-5

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.

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.

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.

The contrast between ch 13 & 14 is remarkable.

From the fleshly, debased scene of earth, we are lifted to the lofty heights of heaven where Jesus' name is honored rather than profaned, where He is the central figure before whom all bow and to whom all voices are raised in adoration.

Each time we are given a new glimpse of heaven, we again additional knowledge of the details surrounding the throne.

Such is the case on this occasion, for we are introduced to the 144,000 outstanding Christians from all ages standing before the throne.

We know that this is a scene in heaven because John sees "the Lamb standing on Mount Zion."

There are only two possible meanings for Mount Zion in Scripture.

One is the Mount Zion at the earthly site of Jerusalem; the other is the Mount Zion of the heavenly Jerusalem.

That the Lamb of God will not be on the earth in the midst of the Tribulation is apparent from ch 13.

This must be a scene in the heavenly Jerusalem, described by the H. S. in Heb 12:12-14.

Hebrews 12:12-14

The identity of this group of 144,000 subjects has for some reason eluded many outstanding Bible scholars. Most commentators have a tendency to assume that they are identical with the 144,000 described in ch 7.

Therefore we must examine them in detail.

A Comparison of the 144,000 in Ch 7 and the 144,000 in ch 14:

144,000 of Rev 7:1-9

vv 1-3 A scene on earth

v 3 Servants of our God, sealed in their foreheads

v 4 144,000 of all the tribes of Israel

vv 5-8 12,000 from each tribe

144,000 of Rev 14:1-6

v. 1 A scene in heaven. The Lamb is with them on Mount Zion

v 1b "Having his name and the name of this father written in their foreheads" (ASV)

v 3 Sing a new song before the elders and the four living creatures which only they knew.

v 3b "Who were redeemed from the earth

v 4 "they are not defiled with women; for they are virgins."

V 4 "They follow the Lamb wherever he goeth."

V 4b "These were redeemed from among men."

V 4c "The first fruits unto God and to the Lamb."

V 5 "In their mouth was found no guile."

V 5b "They are without fault before the throne of God."

The Similarities of the Two Groups

Two basic reasons are usually advanced for considering the two groups similar:

- (1) both groups total 144,000, and
- (2) both groups have something written on their foreheads.

The Differences of the Two groups

1. The Rev 7 group is specifically Jewish – 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes. The Rev 14 group comes "from the earth" or "from among men."
2. The Rev 7 group is sealed with the Father's seal.
The Rev 14 group has the name of both the Father and the Son.
3. The scene of ch 7 occurs on the earth
Ch 14 takes place in heaven, but only halfway through the Tribulation.
This can be explained in that the 144,000 witnesses of Rev 7, like their converts of v 9, are slain and under the altar by the middle of the Tribulation.
Thus they are described in ch 14 as before the throne, in their spirit or "soulish" state – "absent from the body, and ... present with the Lord."

2 Corinthians 5:8

4. The additional qualifications for being a member of this group, found in v 4-5, are not recorded in ch 7.
The 144,000 of ch 7 are "servants of our God"; the 144,000 of ch 14 are "redeemed from among men, the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb."
This indicates that their selection was not for the propagation of the Gospel on the earth during the Tribulation, but for a special position at the throne of God before Him and Jesus.
5. V 4 tells us "these are they who follow the Lamb wherever He goeth" which could well indicate that as a select group, they have been faithful in completely abandoning their will to the will of Christ during their lifetimes.

Not Jews – Christians

Since only two similarities and several differences exist between these two groups, we can safely conclude that they are not the same.

The fact that the numbers are the same – 144,000 – is not so overpowering when one bears in mind a statement by Dr. William R. Newell in his book on Rev, “The repetition of the number 144,000, one of governmental completeness and fullness, is not necessarily conclusive proof that the two companies are one and the same.” This would indicate that for God’s perfect governmental operation He has selected multiples of 12 to be His special servants in the Tribulation and another group, on the same basis, to enjoy a relationship with Him in heaven, the difference being that those in ch 14 have earned their position because of their faithfulness in doing whatever the Lord commissioned them to do.

That both have something in their foreheads is certainly not conclusive evidence one way or the other.

This could be a spiritual thing, exemplified by people of the stripe of the Apostle Paul, whose mind (behind the forehead) was filled with a desire to serve Jesus and God all the days of his life.

If anyone is permitted into that group, certainly the Apostle Paul would be qualified.

The differences between the two groups seem to limit our assuming that they are the same, particularly when one bears in mind that the scene in ch 14 is in heaven and that these are taken from among men, indicating they come from all nations, rather than just from among the Jews.

Dr. Newell identifies the two as Israel, but he also makes the following statement”

For, although we have thus spoken of them, we cannot but leave the question open for further light. Because in all other Scripture we can recall Israel’s victors are always named as belonging that elect nation, and the favor of God is seen as arising from that national election.

Whereas, these of Rev 14 do not have that mark, but rather seem to be from a larger circle than Israel – even “from among men”; and their peculiar distinction appears to be a reward for their utter self-abnegation.

As Dean Alford says, “We are perhaps more like that which the Lord intended us to be; but they are more like the Lord Himself.”

Considering the above statements carefully, I present the following possibility, not dogmatically, but with a sincere conviction that this is a more accurate interpretation than those I have come upon so far.

The 144,000 found in ch 14 are probably the most outstanding 144,000 saints of the Church from the early days of the spread of the Gospel to the Rapture of the Church.

For this consecrated and devoted service to our Master they will enjoy a special position before the throne of God from death until the glorious appearing of Christ, at which time all saints will come with Him.

This position doubtless signifies that they will have great responsibility while reigning with Him during the millennial kingdom.

Qualifications for The Elite Group of Christians

1. They are redeemed from the earth by faith in Christ, “having his name, and the name of his Father, written on their foreheads” (14:1b); “redeemed from the earth: (14:3b); “redeemed from among men” (14:4b).

Obviously these men were first born again by receiving Jesus as their personal Savior and Lord.

2. They are morally pure.

“These are they who were not defiled with women; for they are virgins” (14:4)

Much has been said by commentators about this qualification, suggesting that only unmarried men would qualify

There is no scriptural certainty to indicate that Paul was ever married, so that he very easily fits the pattern here, and to my knowledge we have no record of John having been married, though it is possible it is just not mentioned.

In any case, there could well have been 144,000 in the last 1900 plus years of the Christian Church who have remained single for the Lord’s sake; having met the other qualifications, they will share in that elite position with Paul, possibly John, and others.

I would not insist upon a literal interpretation of this expression for the following reason.

Nowhere does the Bible teach that sexual intercourse in marriage is defiling.

On the contrary, He 13:4 clearly announces, “Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled, but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.”

Even Paul, in 1 Cor 7, when encouraging consecrated young men to abide even as I; was doing so not for moral reasons, but that they might give themselves more completely to serving the Lord and not be encumbered with concerns of the desires and tastes of a wife.

In addition to this, we find Boaz in the book of Ruth addressing Ruth as “a virtuous woman,” even though she had been married to his kinsman who had died (3:11)

There is no indication that physical relations did not exist between Ruth and her first husband, and to assume so merely because she did not have children could be taking unwarranted license in interpretation.

I do not find where a faithful married woman is considered any less virtuous in the Scripture than an unmarried virgin.

Anything else than this would mean that God’s commandment to be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth would connote defilement in the act of obedience, which contradicts other principles in Scripture that indicate that God does not tempt men with evil.

On the contrary, the Revelation text probably does not mean unmarried men, but men who are undefiled by women; that is, they have either kept the marriage contract or have never know a woman, and thus in the eyes of God are considered virgins.

It is interesting that this passage of Scripture is the only one in the Bible referring to men as virgins.

The Bible everywhere advocates that Christians be holy and virtuous, undefiled by the world.

Misuse of sex has always been one of man’s greatest problems, infidelity and immorality one of man’s greatest temptations.

Therefore the elite group of 144,000 who qualify to stand before the throne of God in heaven are those who have kept themselves undefiled.,

That is, they kept their marriage vows or remained unmarried.

3. They are obedient and available. “These are they who follow the Lamb wherever he goeth” (14:4b)

It is obvious that all of God’s children, in fact, all of His servants, are not completely yielded to His will.

Some have known years of yieldedness and faithful service, only to go back and “walk no more wit him,” whereas others have had on-again off-again periods of obedience.

This elite group of 144,000 is unusually marked by obedience.

Their attitude is epitomized by the statement of Paul immediately upon recognizing Jesus, when he said, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?”

4. They tell the truth. “And in their mouth was found no guile: (14:5)

These men are characterized by a contrast to Satan.

They are faithful witnesses, always telling the truth.

Lying is a part of man’s nature when he follows Satan, “the father of all lies.”

One characteristic of an obedient Christian is that he tells the truth.

5. They live blameless lives.

“They are without fault” (14:5b)

This does not indicate that they are perfect, for they too had to be redeemed from among men; they were lost sinners and had to be born again.

It does not mean sinless perfection, that they have never sinned since their salvation, but reasserts what Paul meant in 1 Thess 2:10 when he said, “Yea are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblamably we behaved ourselves among you that believe.”

These are men who, in their desire to serve Jesus Christ and walk with Him, leaned on His power to live holily, consecrated lives.

They are men who can say with Paul, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” (Gal 2:20)

The Reward of the 144,000 Christians

1. They are “the first fruits unto God and to the lamb” (14:4b).

This would suggest that they are the outstanding believers of the Lamb and are give a special position, as indicated in v 1, in standing with the Lamb on Mount Zion, before the throne, and before the four living creatures and the elders.

2. They will sing a new song which no man can learn save the 144,000 (14:3).

These two rewards suggest that they will enjoy a special relationship with God the Son and God the Father from the time of their death after a life of faithful, holy service until they come with Christ to the earth, V 4 states, "These are they that follow the Lamb wherever He goeth,": perhaps indicating that in addition to being in a privileged position before the resurrection, they will always be in a special position of service for Christ after the resurrection.

LaHaye's interpretation of this passage puts him in the minority with interpreters of Revelation.

We will compare his interpretation with the popular view of ch 14.

An Angel Preaching the Everlasting Gospel

Revelation 14

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.

V 6 introduces the first of five angels who convey a special message concerning the middle of the end time, or Tribulation.

It is astounding that an angel is commissioned to go forth preaching the everlasting Gospel, for the preaching of the Gospel has not been committed to angels but to men.

This astounding state of affairs could only be an indication of the severity of the circumstances.

If we keep in view the setting of this passage, we will be able to understand readily why this will be necessary.

Prior to the Tribulation, the church will have been raptured.

The 144,000 Israelite witnesses from all over the world will be converted through the printed page left behind by the departing church.

These witnesses will harvest a multitude which no man can number according to Rev 7:9.

This would indicate, as we saw in our study of ch 7, that the early days of the Tribulation will experience the greatest revival in world history.

Accompanying this revival, however, is the opening of the fifth seal, indicating that there will be a great time of persecution during the Tribulation, instigated by Antichrist and in all probability administered by the ecumenical church.

As we will see in our study of ch 17, the ecumenical or harlot church will be so powerful during the first 3 ½ years of the Tribulation that it will actually exercise restraining power over Antichrist.

Therefore any persecution of true believers during that time would obviously be pursued within the framework of her administration and approval.

This should not take us by surprise, for when the Babylonian influence of the church was greatest during the Dark Ages, millions of Christians were persecuted to death.

This period of history is well named the "Inquisition."

An overwhelming majority of believers will be eliminated; thus few will remain to propagate the Gospel after the middle of the Tribulation.

We have already seen in ch 12 that Israel will not experience a revival in the first part of the Tribulation; instead, a Gentile revival will occur through the preaching of the 144,000, who are indicative of the minority of Israel, not the majority.

Israel's revival, according to Hab 3:2, will take place in "the midst of the years"; thus it would seem that only the persecution of Israel will bring about her national repentance.

One of God's faithful practices in all generations has been to send adequate warning prior to judgment.

The case of Noah was one example.

Before God sent the flood, Noah was a preacher of righteousness for 120 years.

Before God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, He sent Lot who, instead of being a faithful preacher, became corrupted by the immorality of the city.

Thus we find in the middle of the Tribulation, just before the greatest suffering inflicted upon the human race, and in the absence or deficiency of adequate human Gospel witnesses, God will make an omnipotent exception to His overall plan of committing the Gospel to men by commissioning an angel to go forth, preaching the everlasting Gospel.

The Everlasting Gospel

What is the everlasting Gospel?

Is this a different Gospel than that preached today?

On the basis of the Word, absolutely not!

This is the same Gospel that we preach, the same that was “once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3).

We have already seen in our study of Rev 7 that there are several terms for the Gospel, but only one Gospel.

It is evident from the text that the whole message committed to the angel is not here expressed, but that is not uncommon in Scripture.

The message angel preaches is one of warning!

Whenever the Holy Spirit through the Word informs us of individuals preaching the Gospel, the whole message is not necessarily given.

The prophet Jonah went into that pagan city, Nineveh, and the Scripture tells us in Jonah 3:4 that he simply preached, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.”

As we read the text, we find this simple message caused the king and the people to repent of their sin and turn to God.

The only conclusion we can come to is that in addition to preaching a message of warning, Jonah also told the people how to repent, for otherwise these pagans would not have known how to approach God in sackcloth and ashes.

The same picture appears in the NT when Philip went down to preach to the Ethiopian eunuch.

Acts 8:35 says, “The Philip opened his mouth, . . . and preached unto him Jesus.”

The first question we hear the Ethiopian asking is, “See, here is water. What doth hinder me to be baptized?”

Obviously, then, in preaching Jesus, Philip explained that it was necessary to call upon the name of the Lord to be saved and to give evidence of that act of faith through baptism.

In like manner, this angel will warn the people to fear God instead of Antichrist, to give glory to God instead of Antichrist, and he will instruct them how to do it.

Otherwise, he would be proclaiming a message of doom instead of good tidings.

The word Gospel means “good tidings,” and the only way we can offer men eternal good tidings is to show them how to receive Jesus by faith.

A message concerning the judgment of God is only a partial presentation of the Gospel of Christ.

The complete story of the Gospel not only clarifies that man is a sinner, but according to 1 Cor 15:3-4, 4 also includes God’s remedy for sin through Christ, who died for our sins’ “according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day.”

1 Corinthians 15:3-4

The extent of this Gospel should be noted, for it will be preached “to them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.”

Rev 14:6

6And 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,

This seems to be God’s last offer to mankind to flee the wrath to come before they accept Antichrist.

We have already seen that Antichrist and the False Prophet will mount a great campaign, after having killed the harlot, ecumenical, Babylonian church, and will seek to get all men to worship Antichrist.

This blasphemous idolatry will forfeit man’s claim to eternal life; thus we will be eternally lost.

As a prelude to that decision, the angel will make known the Gospel message to all the world so that no man can stand before God at the judgment and maintain that he accepted Antichrist without due warning from God.

There is no evidence that this angel will be any more successful in preaching the eternal Gospel than was Noah, the preacher of righteousness before the flood.

ON the contrary, it seems that man will pit his will against God and succumb to the lying tongues of Satan's chief tools during that period, Antichrist and the False Prophet.

We will discover in ch 1: that the angel's announcement will introduce the darkest days of human history.

Some have suggested that the message preached to every nation, kindred and tongue would indicate a universal language at the middle of the Tribulation.

This, however, is certainly not conclusive and would imply that we are some time away from the beginning of the Tribulation, for 3 ½ years would not be adequate time to teach a common language to all peoples of the earth.

It is much easier to assume that since an angel, a supernatural being, will be doing the preaching, he could very easily use the language of the people to whom he is preaching.

The Fall of Religious Babylon

Revelation 14:8

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.

The message of the five angels we are presently studying should be considered in light of the fact that this scene takes place in heaven, not on earth, and is an anticipatory announcement of what will soon become to pass.

As with the first angel's message, this event will take place in the middle of the Tribulation and offers a foreglimpse of the destruction of the ecumenical, Babylonian, harlot religion detailed in Rev 17.

Bible students are well aware of the fact that two Babylons are referred to in Rev, both termed "Babylon the Great."

Destruction is predicted for both because they will cause men to drink of the wine of the wrath of their fornication. We may understand that this foreglimpse refers to religious Babylon because it will take place in the middle of the Tribulation.

The prediction of the destruction of the literal city of Babylon is found in Rev 16:18-19.

That the city of Babylon will be rebuilt and become the commercial center of the world is seen from such passages as Is 13 & 14, together with Jeremiah 50 & 51.

As we will explain in detail in our discussion of ch 17 & 18, the city of Babylon has never been destroyed according to the OT predictions; thus we may only conclude that it will be rebuilt and become the commercial center of Antichrist's kingdom; then it will be destroyed at the end of the Tribulation.

This again points to the fact that Babylon will become the center of the world.

Future studies will reveal that the two Babylons begun by Nimrod in the city of Babylon, which have brought more misery and heartache on humanity than any other concepts, will be destroyed at the end time.

More individuals have been ruined in the plan of God for their lives because of the two Babylons than for any other reason.

These two Babylons begun by Nimrod are (1) false religion, which emphasized idolatry, and (2)

commercialization, which causes men to become materialistically oriented. (*What role might oil play?*)

These concepts that are playing such havoc in the world today will be destroyed – one in the middle of the Tribulation by Antichrist, the other at the end by the supernatural hand of God.

The Doom of Antichrist's Worshipers

Revelation 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.

The third angel will pronounce doom on the worshipers of Antichrist during the Tribulation.

It may be, since he follows the, that he will come to the earth and , like the angel who preached the eternal Gospel, warn men of the consequences of worshipping the beast.

His is not called the Gospel message.

On the contrary, his message issues a warning of the awful consequences of accepting the mark of the Antichrist and becoming his worshiper.

We have already seen that during the Tribulation a man will be required to worship the Antichrist image and receive his mark (666) in his forehead or in his hand.

When a man does this, he will “drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation”; that is, he will have turned his back on God’s method of salvation and taken to himself man” method.

This will incur the displeasure of Almighty God and bring upon men judgment and destruction.

We have already seen that at the breaking of the fourth seal 255 of the earth’s population will be destroyed (Rev 6:8) and during the blowing of the sixth trumpet (Rev 9:18) a third part of the earth’s population will be destroyed. Dr., David L. Cooper used to say that these were the “incorrigibles of the Tribulation.”

That is, these are the ones who turn their backs on the Messiah and become worshipers of Antichrist, thus forfeiting their chance for eternal life.

Rather than be allowed to pollute others of like mind, they will be destroyed in these two great purges of the first half of the tribulation.

During the latter half, as we will see in our study of the bowl judgments, great persecution will fall on all those who take the mark of the beast and become worshipers of Antichrist.

Fire and brimstone will be their lot while they live, and they will be tormented forever and ever and have no rest day or night. (v 11)

This, of course, refers to their eternal judgment.

Not all ungodly men will receive judgement during this life, though all will receive it in the next.

The followers of Antichrist, however, will be different, for all who worship the Antichrist during the latter half of the Tribulation will receive the judgment of fire and brimstone, plus the many other cataclysmic judgments sent by God upon the Antichrist worshipers outlined in the bowl judgments.

In addition, they will also be in torment for eternity.

Dr. Clarence Larkin, in his commentary on Revelation, stated “If ‘eternal punishment’ is taught nowhere else in the Bible it is taught here, and if here, why is it not true as to other classes of sinners?”

This is only one of the many passages in the Bible that clearly teaches the eternal suffering of the damned.

I don’t enjoy teaching eternal damnation for lost men, but as a faithful teacher of the Word, I can do nothing else. Satan tries to discredit the Word and minimize the importance of turning from one’s sin to Jesus, and he does not lack for false teachers to assist him in deceiving men.

Many today attempt to teach a no-judgment concept, including the annihilationists.’

These heretics take many forms in the various cults or “isms” of our day.

It is well to remember that even matter cannot be annihilated, as any scientist will confirm.

Elements can be changed, but they cannot be annihilated!

If matter cannot be annihilated, how much less the immoral soul of man.

The marvels and blessings of heaven are so magnificent that it is a great tragedy and loss indeed just to miss that marvelous place.

However, according to the Bible, just missing heaven is not hell.

I wish I could report that the Bible teaches that hell is a place where men will suffer for a little while and then be burned up, never to be remembered again, or where they will be given a second chance to get into heaven, but I could not be honest to the Word and make such a statement.

Not the slightest suggestion of this is found in the Bible, nor does it hint of a second chance after death!

The Bible presents no picture other than that the lake of fire is absolutely eternal and that the populace of the lake of fire will be “tormented day and night forever and ever.”

Rev 20:10

The blessed State of Tribulation Saints

Revelation 14

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.

One of the consistent chords of the Scripture is the concept that present-day sufferings are inconsequential in view of the eternal blessing prepared for them that love the Lord.

This passage certainly teaches that fact, for it refers to the patience (endurance) of the saints who are characterized by obedience during the Tribulation.

Jesus said, “if ye love me, keep my commandments.” (John 14:15)

Therefore, one who loves Him is obedient, as these saints will be obedient, even at the expense of great personal suffering at the hands of Antichrist.

Because of their patience or endurance, they will be eternally “blessed” or “contented of heart,” for this is the true meaning of the word blessed.

Because they have “died in the Lord” or died in saving faith, they “rest from their labors [of the Tribulation], and their works do follow them.”

Here we see again that a day is coming when believers will be rewarded because of their faithfulness to the Lord.

A just God will bring forth justice and equity in eternity.

The principle that “their works do follow them” is a blessed truth to the child of God.

The Word clearly teaches that our investment of faithfulness to Jesus today will earn eternal dividends.

This conforms with the Savior’s challenge to “lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal” (Matt 6:20).

The tribulation saints will be given special blessing for their faithfulness to Christ during that awful time of tribulation.

Revelation 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.

The fourth and fifth angels of this chapter introduce the events following our Lord’s return to destroy Antichrist and all his followers.

This, like the passages before it, is a prophetic foreglimpse of what is to come, details of which will be found in Rev 15:12-16 & 19:11-20.

We will look at these passages later when we get to the bowl judgments, particularly the sixth vial.

We will pause, however, to point out in this text that it is not difficult to identify what the Holy Spirit is revealing to us.

The one sitting on the white cloud “like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle: can be none other than Jesus appearing in judgment.

The timing is important, for we find that it is when “the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.”

What makes the harvest of the earth ripe?”

The fullness of the cup of God’s wrath is pictured by the harvest time of grapes.

The “winepress of the wrath of God” can be nothing other than the last 3 ½ years of the Tribulation, when man’s rejection of God will have reached its ultimate and God will bring upon him His almighty wrath, culminating in the war of the day of God the Almighty and the triumph of Christ over Antichrist.

In concluding this chapter, we must stress that the prediction that Christ will bring judgment on the earth comes only after three angelic warnings:

- (1) in the preaching of the everlasting Gospel;
- (2) in the warning that the Babylonian religion will eventually be destroyed; and
- (3) in the assurance that worshipers of Antichrist will be judged in this life and in the life to come.

We can only conclude that those who are thus harvested and pressed into the winepress of the wrath of God are the incorrigibles who stumble over all kinds of divine warning against following Antichrist.

This tragic picture of the culmination of all things is another indication of the depravity of the human heart.

With such supernatural warnings one would think that ungodly men would fall down and worship Jesus, but nothing could be further from the truth.

This is another reminder to us that when men reject the Lord, their problem is one of the will.

Another Glimpse of Heaven

Revelation 15

Ch 15 is the shortest chapter in Rev.

Its size should not be taken as an indication of its importance, however, for it reveals three things:

1. It concludes the events revealed in ch 10-15 concerning visions in heaven or conditions on earth to the middle of Tribulation.
2. It serves as an introduction to the Great Tribulation, the latter half of the Tribulation described in ch 16, when the seven angels pour out the bowls of the wrath of God.
3. It reveals important truths concerning the wrath of God.

Revelation 15:1

1 And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God.

The word “another” relates to the two signs revealed to John in ch 12, the woman representing Israel and the great red dragon representing Satan.

This third sign is described by John as “great and marvelous,” indicating that it is the most significant of all the signs revealed to this point.

When we bear in mind that it is the sign revealing the final act of God’s judgment upon earth, we will understand that it has great spiritual significance. God has inflicted judgment many times:

His judgment on the tower of Babel;

His judgment on the world in sending a universal flood;

His judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah;

His judgment on Jerusalem in AD 70; and

His judgment on Israel for almost 2000 years.

This will be God’s final judgment, the result of His wrath being “filled up.”

The word “sign” should not confound or disturb us, for it occurs 77 times in the NT.

An examination of the use of this word would certainly put an end to the lie that the Rev is clouded with “signs and symbols” impossible for the average person to understand.

John used this term in reference to Jesus’ prediction of His death.

John 12:32-34

This is not mysterious or hidden, but a plain statement of fact that Christ would be lifted up on the cross.

John used this word again in John 18:32 and John 21:19 in reference to Christ’s prophecy of the death of Peter.

He used the same word when referring to His own death, burial, and resurrection as covering a period of three days and three nights. (Matt 12:38-40)

Rev becomes much more understandable when one recognizes that the word “sign” really means a “symbol of revelation.”

That is, it is a symbol or picture or prophetic event that conveys some great truth or principle of God that He wants to convey to His people.

As we study Rev we should begin to understand the meaning of these signs, we should receive the fulfillment of Rev. 1:3.

Revelation 1:3

As we shall see in ch 16, the sign of these seven angels before the throne of God results in literal events of judgment emanating from the throne of God to the earth.

Revelation 15:2

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.

This sea of glass is probably the same sea observed before the throne of God in Rev 4:6.

The fire may refer to the trials of fire endured by the tribulation saints.

On this sea of glass before God's throne are people described as "then that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name," who stand "on the sea of glass, having the harps of God."

These are believers in Jesus, for otherwise they would not be in the presence of God.

They are not the saints of the church age who were raptured before the Tribulation, however, but the saints of the Tribulation who are victorious over the beast.

Most Bible commentators suggest that these people have been martyred by the beast during the Tribulation because of their personal faith in Christ.

In Rev 13 we saw that the beast and the False Prophet will come on the scene in the midst of the Tribulation, seeking to make men worship Antichrist.

The complete tyranny of the Tribulation is seen in the fact that during the first 3 ½ years the ecumenical church of Rev 17 will be so powerful it will dominate Antichrist and kill all believers who refuse to join with it.

During the second half of the Tribulation it will be Antichrist and the False Prophet who will kill those that refuse to worship his image and receive his mark.

Therefore, this group may be those who are saved out of the last half of the Tribulation, because Rev 7:0 states that there will be a mighty harvest of souls during the first half of the Tribulation under the preaching of the 144,000 servants of God.

This passage may suggest there will also be a great host of martyrs who will be victorious over Antichrist.

Death is Victory for Christians

How could these folks standing on the sea of glass in the presence of God be victorious when they will have been killed during the Tribulation by the wave of persecution inspired by Antichrist?

The answer is found in 1 Cor 15:55-57.

1 Corinthians 15:55-57

Death at the hands of a murderous dictator or anti-Christian persecutor is only defeat as man looks upon the situation.

People living during the Tribulation will think the Antichrist is overcoming the saints, but in reality he will be sending them out into eternity to be with their Lord.

Man's vision when unenlightened by the Holy Spirit renders him incapable of understanding the eternal blessings of God.

If man does not incur blessings in this life, he considers that defeat, not realizing that what man gains in this life is inconsequential in comparison to what he gains in this life is inconsequential in comparison to what he gains in the life to come.

One great blessing bestowed upon these souls is the martyr's crown, which will provide them with a special position of authority during the millennial kingdom and probably throughout the eternal ages to come.

James 1:12

Revelation 2:10

"Having the harps of God" would indicate that they are playing the heavenly instrument in a beautiful symphony of praise and worship.

In addition to the heavenly harp, they will also sing "the song of Moses . . . and the song of the Lamb.

The Song of Moses and the Lamb

These tribulation saints sing "the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb" (v 3).

This does not mean that they are Israelites; instead, it signifies that they are singing the song of victory over the enemy, which is the song of Moses in Ex 15:1-21.

They couple this with the song of praise to the Lamb of God.

To understand the song of Moses, we must remember that after Pharaoh released the children of Israel, he repented of his decision and pursued them furiously with a host of Egyptian troops.

When the children of Israel saw their plight, the Red Sea in front of them and Egyptian troops in behind them, Moses looked to God, who had instructed him to put his rod upon the water.

Thus the people walked over on dry land.

It must have been a harrowing experience when the people barely got across the supernaturally created channel with the Egyptian army in hot pursuit.

No sooner had the people safely arrived on the opposite shore when God permitted the channel to close and drown the Egyptians.

The people were naturally overwhelmed, because what looked like complete disaster at the hands of a cruel, satanically inspired king (a brief likeness of Antichrist) was suddenly turned into victory, and they lifted their hearts in gratitude to God.

That exactly parallels the response of these tribulation saints standing before the throne of God, realizing that they are out of the clutches of Antichrist and Satan.

Their hearts are filled with rapturous joy at His deliverance.

Since they are not OT saints, they are not content to sing just the song of deliverance, as were the children of Israel, who were merely delivered physically from an oppressor, but a song of eternal redemption by the blood of the Lamb.

Christ Worshipped in Heaven as God

In a day when men have been deceived about the true nature of Jesus Christ, it behooves us to remember that heaven is not one iota confused about His identity.

Understood in the light of Ex 15 and the song of Moses, this verse makes plain that the God Moses and the children of Israel addressed in the face of their great earthly victory was none other than Jesus Christ.

For confirmation of this fact we quote selected portions of that great psalm.

Exodus 15:1-3,17-18

1 Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

2 The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him.

3 The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is his name.

17 Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O LORD, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established.

18 The LORD shall reign for ever and ever.

The fact that they combine this song and the song of the Lamb can only be explained on the basis that Jesus Christ is Almighty God.

The song of Moses and the Lamb in v 3-4 clearly identifies Jesus with the attributes of God Himself.

No man or created being has ever been addressed like this.

Note the characteristics attributed to Him:

1. Creation – “Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty.”
2. Justice – “Just and true are thy ways.”
3. Object of worship – “... thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name?”
4. Omnipotence and eternity – “. . . for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.”

This song is a prophetic foreglimpse of the true treatment of Jesus at the end of the Tribulation that will exist for the entire millennium ad eternal order.

The most pitiful people in all the world are the religionists who, representing modernistic liberalism or the cults and isms, do not understand who Jesus is.

Rev certainly clarifies His identity, and, if for no other reason, it is worthy of our study because it does what its introduction predicted.

Rev 1:1 introduces “The Revelation of Jesus Christ.”

It is the only book in the world that truly presents Jesus Christ as He really is.

The Temple of the Tabernacle of God

Revelation 15:5

5 And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened: The tabernacle of the temple of God is the Holy of Holies.

Great significance should be attached to this scene.

Dr. J. Vernon McGee points out in his commentary on Revelation:

The temple is referred to 15 times in the Rev. Its prominence cannot be ignored. Each reference is either to the temple in Heaven or to the absence of the temple in the New Jerusalem. In this instance the reference is specifically to the tabernacle, and the Holy of Holies in which the ark of the testimony was kept. In the ark were the tables of stone. Both the tabernacle and the tables of stone were duplicates of originals in heaven.

The testimony that emanates from the tabernacle is seen in the Ark of the Covenant.

God has always kept His covenant with Israel, or with any to whom He has entered into a covenant relationship, including the members of the Church of Christ, who have entered into the "new covenant" through the blood of Christ.

The Seven Angels Before the Throne

Revelation 15:6-7

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.

7 And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever.

This is the third time we have encountered a group of seven angels at once.

There were 7 angels assigned, one each, to the seven churches in ch 2 & 3.

Then each of the 7 angels was given a trumpet to blow in revealing the second quarter of the tribulation judgments. Now we see the 7 angels to whom the judgments of the last half of the Tribulation are given.

Since these angels come out of the temple, it seems that angels are given access to the presence of God.

Created holy beings, angels are permitted entrance into the presence of God in the true temple in heaven, of which the OT tabernacle and temple were merely patterns or symbols.

In those earthly dwelling places of God, men were not permitted except the high priest once a year, and then only after the most scrupulous preparation in righteousness.

As these angels leave the temple, having worshiped the Lord, one of the four living creatures gives them each a bowl that will be poured out on the earth, the significance of which is revealed in ch. 16.

As soon as the angels come out of the temple, great smoke from the glory of the presence of God and His power fills the temple so that neither angels nor men can go back into worship until "the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled" (v 8).

In other words, from the middle of the Tribulation neither angels nor man will have access to the presence of God at His throne until the end of the Tribulation, for He will not be dealing with men in mercy, as is His usual custom. During the latter 3 1/2 years of the Tribulation, He will deal with men in judgment.

The Wrath of God

This brief section of eight verses in the middle of Revelation opens and closes with the wrath of God.

It depicts the scene in heaven of God sending out His angels of judgment to perform His last act of bringing men to Himself.

He uses mercy, love, circumstances, the Holy Spirit, and many other divine tools to bring men to Himself.

Ordinarily, unsaved men are not judged on this earth, which explains why people can break the laws of God and seemingly get by with it.

The judgment men receive on this earth is merely the judgment of their deeds - whatsoever they sow, they reap - but men do not receive the judgment of God until the day of judgment, with but one exception.

During the last 3 1/2 years of the Tribulation, God will bring great judgment and calamity on mankind.

Filling Up God's Wrath

V 1 of Rev 15 says of the seven last plagues, "for in them is filled up the wrath of God."

V 5-8 describe the judgment of God being fulfilled.

V 1 makes it clear that this will be the last judgment before the millennial kingdom.

A literal translation of v 1 would be, "And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels having seven plagues, the last ones. . . ."

When this judgment is finished, the Tribulation will be concluded and the millennium begun.

God's Purpose in This Great Tribulation

Not to understand that this impending period of great tribulation is of divine purpose and intent is to fail to understand significant truths relative to these coming events.

Although we will probably not know the full extent of God's purpose for the Tribulation until we look down from heaven and see these events transpire, I would like to suggest the following four purposes as being discernible from the Scriptures:

1. To introduce a worldwide revival when, under the preaching of the 144,000 servants of God, a multitude will be gathered which no man can number (Rev 7:9);
2. To destroy the wicked followers of Antichrist who are committed to his way, lest they pollute others and corrupt them from the truth of the Gospel, thus damning their souls;
3. To break the stubborn will of the nation of Israel, who will confess her national sin of rejecting Messiah and plead for His return;
4. To shake the earth and all things therein so that man's normal sense of security will be so disordered that he will be more prone to look to God.
5. Crises usually cause men to look to God. The Tribulation will be a time when God creates a climate of crisis, a climate conducive for all men to call upon Him when He is near.

The Seven Bowl Judgments

Rev 16

No introduction is needed for this chapter, since ch 15 has already prefaced it

The 7 angels, each holding a bowl containing the judgments that are about to fall on the earth, seem reluctant to cast their bitter judgments forth.

However, they are obedient to the voice of God when He speaks, saying, For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. (Matthew 24:21)

These bowls constitute what Jesus referred to as the "great tribulation" or the last 42 months of the Tribulation.

Wile and fanciful ideas have been offered through the years as a means of symbolizing or spiritualizing these judgments.

There is no scriptural basis for such symbolism. In fact, four of these 7 judgments occurred quite literally in Egypt among the 10 plagues and have never been accepted by credible Bible teachers as anything but literal.

In addition, part of the sixth judgment, that of drying up the Euphrates River and producing frogs, was also literally fulfilled during the history of Israel.

Frogs were generated as one of the plagues of Egypt, and both the Red Sea and Jordan River were rolled back that God's people might walk forth on dry ground.

Therefore, nothing new will be transpiring when God dries up the Euphrates River that the kings of the East may march over on dry ground.

If the plagues of Egypt were literal, and they certainly were, why should we not expect these awful judgments likewise to be literal?

We shall now examine the judgments individually.

Revelation 16:1-2

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.

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.

The First Bowl Judgment - Sores Upon Men

This first bowl judgment introduces grievous or painful sores upon men.

Dr. Wilbur Smith notes that the same word is used by the OT translators of the Greek Septuagint for boils when telling the story of the Egyptian plagues.

For this reason many have called it the plague of boils.

This judgment delineates two essential points:

1. The time - when Antichrist is worshiped.

Further confirmation that the three judgments, the seals, the trumpets, and the vials, are sequential, not concurrent, as some Bible teachers suggest, is clarified in the time of this judgment.

Antichrist will not be set up as the object of worship until the middle of the Tribulation as we saw in ch 13. The time of this judgment, then, will probably commence within the first 1 to 3 months of the last half of the Tribulation.

2. The recipients - beast worshipers.

The selection from among the peoples of the earth is clearly seen in this passage: only those containing the mark of the beast and worshiping his image will be selected for those awful sores.

This would indicate that God in His marvelous grace will not bring judgment on believers during this latter half of Tribulation, but will protect them as He did the children of Israel during the plagues of Egypt.

This further confirms our assumption that in the previous judgments, when He slays 25% and 1/3 of the world's population, He will exempt believers.

The Second Bowl Judgment - the Seas Turn to Blood

Revelation 16:3

3 And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea.

In this one short verse we encounter a catastrophe predicted for the earth that is almost beyond human comprehension.

We have already seen that God will cause a third part of the sea to turn to blood during the second trumpet, but this second bowl includes the entire sea.

The NAS says, "It became blood as of a dead man"; that is, the entire sea will become corrupt, so that every living thing in the sea will die.

It does not take much imagination to see that when all living creatures in the seas die, they will float to the top, their decaying bodies discharging an unbearable stench and inaugurating potential disease.

This judgment could well interfere with commercial shipping and send whole populations into confusion as man gropes for an adequate supply of water.

The Third Bowl Judgment - Rivers and Fountains Turn to Blood

Revelation 16:4-7

4 And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood.

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.

7 And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.

The third bowl, a sequel to the second, carries with it an interesting explanation as to why God permitted it.

Now God will destroy the only remaining sources of water, the rivers and fountains or springs of the deep, by letting them turn to blood.

Whether this means literal blood is really inconsequential, for if Christ can turn water to wine, He certainly could turn water to blood.

What is significant is that it will become corrupt blood, which would breed disease and pestilence.

One of the basic needs of mankind is water.

Unless God provides water from another source or engineers by some process can turn this corruption into pure water, the world will be in a state of riot and confusion, seeking this necessity of life.

The Angel of the Waters

Rev reveals interesting things from time to time about the activity of angels in this universe.

It seems that, in addition to other functions which we have already noted, a special angel is assigned to the waters.

This angel will speak when his waters are turned to blood, proclaiming the justification for such an awful miracle, for Antichrist will have put so many Christian martyrs to death that he will deserve exactly what he receives. His quest for the blood of Christians during the first half of the Tribulation will result in his water supply turning to blood in the last half.

This is God's earthly vindication of the suffering martyrs from earliest times to the present, answering the prayers of the souls under the altar in Rev 6.

The Fourth Bowl Judgment - Scorching Heat of the Sun

Revelation 16:8-9

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.

The consistency of the sun, in that it rises every morning and sets every evening, producing light and heat for man according to the seasons of the year, affords a great sense of security to all people.

During the Tribulation, when the fourth bowl is poured out on the earth, man will contend with a sun-induced heat wave the like of which he has never experienced.

Even though a third part of the sun will be darkened, that which is left will be so powerful that it will scorch men "with great heat."

We have all lived through acute heat waves at one time or other, but we endure them because night comes to cool things somewhat, and eventually the distressing season will pass away.

Even so, many deaths are occasioned through heart attack or heat stroke during such periods, and those not so afflicted are still miserably uncomfortable.

Such will be the case during the Tribulation; but when we add the effect of this excruciating heat on the corrupt waterways and rivers, we find man almost tasting the torments of hell described by Jesus in Luke 16, without water to satiate his thirst.

One would think that this experience would drive men to their knees in repentance to the God of creation.

Instead, in this chapter is found the first of three occasions, when men "blasphemed the name of God . . . and they repented not to give him glory."

This illustrates the most severe rebellion and hostility to the will of God found anywhere in the annals of human history.

The best commentary on this judgment comes from the pen of Malachi, when speaking of that same day, described it with these words:

Malachi 4:1-2

The Fifth Bowl Judgment - Darkness

Revelation 16:10-11

10 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,

11 And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.

The fact that the fifth bowl introduces darkness may be the singular expression of God's mercy to the rebellious citizens of the earth during the Tribulation.

Following the great heat wave occasioned by the fourth bowl judgment, it may significantly give relief to human flesh.

This is a special judgment that seems to center on the headquarters of Antichrist, for it is poured out on "the throne of the beast, and his kingdom was full of darkness."

The seat of the beast will probably be the rebuilt city of Babylon during the Tribulation, the center of all commerce, religion, evil, and government.

Two things would indicate that this darkness will prevail for some time upon the earth: (1) the predictions of other prophets, and (2) the effects on men.

This judgment, a repetition of the ninth plague of Egypt, is to be understood literally.

Nahum 1:6, 8

Zephaniah 1:15

Christ's own prediction was: "In those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give its light." (Mark 13:24)

The effects on men, described in v 10, "they gnawed their tongues for pain," indicate that the relief from the heat soon will produce exasperating, frustrating darkness.

If you have visited Carlsbad Caverns or Mammoth Cave, you know what true darkness really is when absolutely no light is available.

We might forecast that man's ingenuity in producing electricity would solve this problem, but we must remember that the water supply produces electricity, and with the tampering of the water supply, as seen in the second and third judgments, man might be incapable of continuing to draw his electrical power and illumination from the rivers and bodies of water.

They Repented Not

These judgments are so clearly supernatural that all men will know that they descend from the God of heaven.

But instead of falling down before Him to become the recipients of His mercy, they only "blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds."

They not only blaspheme God, but refuse to change their ways.

Let it be understood that when men reject the Lord, it is not because of philosophical doubts or unexplained answers to unanswered questions, but hardness of heart and love for sin.

The Sixth Bowl Judgment - Euphrates Dried Up.

Revelation 16:12-16

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.

The sixth bowl judgment really comes in two parts:

(1) the drying up of the River Euphrates, which will be a preparation for the "battle of that great day of God Almighty"; and

(2) the tremendous demon forces that will bring the rebellious armies of the world to the Valley of Megiddo for the purpose of opposing the Lord.

The Euphrates River, one of the most prominent rivers in the Bible, since the dawn of human history has stood as a natural barrier between east and west.

To those of the western world, the peoples living east of the Euphrates River have been shrouded in darkness, while all the time their numerical superiority has been building up. The Euphrates River is the eastern border of the land God gave to Abraham.

Genesis 15:18

It is about 1800 miles long and so large that it forms a natural barrier against the armies of the world.

Most people are not particularly conscious of the fact that it served as the eastern border of the Roman Empire.

The sixth bowl judgment will dry up that river to make way for the "kings of the east."

The Kings of the East

The booming population explosion of the eastern nations has produced a new interest in Bible prophecies concerning "the kings of the east."

Actually, there is very little information the subject.

The literal rendering of the word would be the kings of the "sunrising," a reference to the kings of the oriental nations of the world.

Since it refers to them en masse, it would indicate that they do not amalgamate or lose their identity (for they are "kings"), but instead form a massive oriental confederacy.

This confederacy may be preparing to oppose Antichrist, whose capital lies in Babylon, but due to the lying tongues of the demons we are about to study, they will be brought across the Euphrates River on the side of Antichrist in opposition to Christ.

Three Froglike Deceiving Spirits

The second part of the sixth bowl judgment reveals the three unclean froglike spirits that will come from the mouths of the devil, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet.

These deceiving spirits, by working miracles before the "kings of the earth and the whole world," will trick them into coming together for the "battle of that great day of God Almighty."

After the five preceding judgments of God, the earth will be in a terrible dilemma.

Only by the supernatural spirit of deception on the part of Satan, Antichrist, and the False Prophet will they be able to summon the kings and the armies of the world to the final conflict against God and His Christ.

The timing of this event must be the very last days of the Tribulation, since the next bowl immediately concludes the Tribulation with the destruction of Babylon.

Armageddon

"The battle of Armageddon" is an expression often used to describe the decisive battle between Antichrist and his God-hating forces of the earth and Christ, who will consume them with the power of His mouth, according to

Revelation 19:11-16.

Actually, it is more proper to call this "the battle of that great day of God Almighty" because that is the scriptural expression.

It takes place in Armageddon, which means "the Valley of Megiddo."

LaHaye said, "The Megiddo Valley, located close to the center of the land of Palestine, offered one of the most breathtaking sights my wife and I encountered in our trip through the Holy Land."

Napoleon Bonaparte is said to have stated with deep emotion after his first sight of this great valley, "This is the ideal battleground for all the armies of the world."

Little did he realize that prophecy had preceded him, that it will be the world's great battleground.

Actually, it has already served as the battleground of many major wars.

There Barak defeated the Canaanites (Judges 4:15); there Gideon defeated the Midianites (Judges 7) ; there Saul and Josiah both met their deaths.

Dr. M. R. Vincent in his *Word Studied in the New Testament* notes:

Megiddo was in the plain of Esdraelon, which has been a chosen place for encampment in every contest carried on in Palestine from the days of Nabuchodonozor, king of Assyria, unto the disastrous march of Napoleon Buonaparte from Egypt in to Syria. Jews, Gentiles, Saracens, Christian crusaders, and anti-Christian Frenchmen; Egyptians, Persians, Druses, Turks and Arabs, warriors of every nation that is under heaven have pitched their tents on the plain of Esdraelon, and have beheld the banners of their nation wet with the dews of Tabor and Hermon.

What could induce the kings of the earth to concentrate their forces on that one spot in such an enlightened generation?

The only answer is the devastating power of the lying, froglike spirits that go forth from the satanic trinity of Satan, Antichrist, and the False Prophet during the last days of Tribulation. Dr. Clarence Larkin, in *The Book of Revelation*, makes a significant statement:

The power of a delusive and enthusiastic sentiment, however engendered, to lead to destruction great hosts of men is seen in the Crusades to recover the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem. If a religious fanaticism could, at nine different times, cause hundreds of thousands of religious devotees to undergo unspeakable hardships for a religious purpose, what will not the miracle working wonders of the "froglike demons" of the last days of this Dispensation not be able to do in arousing whole nations, and creating vast armies to march in all directions from all countries, headed by their Kings, for the purpose of preventing an establishment of the Kingdom of the King of Kings in His own Land of Palestine.

Christ's Challenge to Tribulation Saints

V 15 is our Lord's challenge to any saints living during the closing day of the Tribulation.

He will come as a thief to the ungodly world not prepared for Him, and as He challenges believers of all generations to be faithful, so in those closing days He will challenge His servants whom He has supernaturally preserved from the effects of the previous judgments to continue faithful to the very end.

This little parenthetical thought reminds us again of the faithfulness of our God to all of them that look to Him for the manifestation of His mercy and grace.

With the armies of the world gathering together in the Valley of Megiddo, the Lord will give one last challenge to His saints; then the time will be prepared for the final judgment to be poured out upon the earth.

The Seventh Bowl Judgment - the Wrath of God

Revelation 16:17-21

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.

When the seventh angel pours out his bowl into the air a voice will be heard from the temple of God before the throne conveying a most welcome message: "It is done!"

It is most welcome because it signifies the consummation of Tribulation, the conclusion of the day of wrath upon ungodly men, the end of the time of Jacob's trouble.

This final judgment of God will appear in the form of the world's greatest earthquake, "such as was not since men were upon the earth."

It will destroy "the great city," meaning the city of Babylon, the capital of the world at the time, dividing it into three parts.

In addition, "the cities of the nations fell," meaning that the cities of the world will be wiped out.

In addition, every island will vanish and the mountains will not be found.

This would indicate a complete renovation of the earth, which may be a fulfillment of 2 Peter 3:10, which predicts that the entire earth will be destroyed and "the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also and the works that are in it, shall be burned up."

If this were not enough catastrophe, great hailstones, "the weight of a talent" (about 135 pounds), will come down out of heaven upon men.

It is difficult for us to conceive of hailstones that large, or of the devastating effect they would have upon men were they to fall.

Dr. David L. Cooper, in commenting on this verse, draws attention to "what the Lord said in

Job 38:22-23

He has filed His armory full of hail and snow "against the time of trouble, against the day of battle and war."

More details of this catastrophe will be seen in Rev 18 under the detailed destruction of the city of Babylon and in ch 19 with the coming of Christ on the white horse to conquer the earth and subdue it.

Man's Perennial Rebellion Against God

Already we have seen man refuse to repent on two different occasions in the face of these judgments.

The last thing to be noted in this passage of Scripture is the hardness of the unsaved, unregenerate heart.

"And men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail.

It is hard to conceive of man so rebellious that he would lift his face in final defiance to God even in the face of such disaster.

All hopes and dreams will be ended with the ultimate consummation because man will have chosen to worship Antichrist.

In conclusion, it is important for us to understand the purpose for all this judgment.

The citizens of the Tribulation who take the mark of the beast and worship his image will break the first four of the ten commandments.

Jesus said we are to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind; "this is the first . . . commandment."

Exodus 20 lists the commandments: (1) Have no other gods before me; (2) Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image; (3) Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; (4) Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy.

None of these commandment will be kept by the inhabitants of the Tribulation.

The judgments of God upon men will appear primarily because instead of worshiping Him, they worship Antichrist.

Instead of worshiping God in spirit and truth through His Son Jesus Christ, they will fashion an image and fall down and worship it.

Instead of worshiping in speech and word, they will "blaspheme the name of God."

God has said, "I will not hold him guiltless that taketh the name of the Lord thy God in vain."

The fact that they do not remember the Sabbath day or any day is further confirmation of their unregenerate, atheistic, godless hearts.

Every individual that refuses to acknowledge the coming judgment of God on unregenerate men should study this chapter of Scripture.

It not only clearly depicts God's intended plan for the coming tribulation people, but also reveals His plan to judge men for eternity.

Religious Babylon Destroyed

Revelation 17

Archaeologists tell us that Babylon is cradle of civilization.

Located on shores of Euphrates River, ruins of this city have revealed some of most ancient documents of past generations.

This city begun by Nimrod, who was rebel before Lord, authored some of greatest evils ever to fall on mankind. Two of these evils will be destroyed during Tribulation, according to Rev 17 & 18.

In ancient days Satan seemed to make Babylon capital of his evil operation.

From this headquarters was started false religion, man's attempt for self-government in defiance of will of God, and city dwellings for commercial and social purposes contrary to commandment of God to "be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth."

These great evils, which have damned souls of millions by substituting counterfeit solutions to man's natural problems that would ordinarily lead him to God, will all be destroyed at end of Tribulation.

Ch. 17 describes coming judgment of God on religious system that has enslaved men in superstitious darkness for centuries.

Mystery, Babylon the Harlot

Revelation 17:1-6

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.

The first six verses of Rev 17 reveal to us most astounding and awful scene, portraying through symbols two great forces, one religious, other governmental.

This vision comes from "one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls."

Though it is not stated by John, context locates this judgment scene as taking place in middle of Tribulation.

It is description of ecumenical religious system powerful enough to gain controlling influence in Antichrist's government.

Rev 17:7

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.

The Vision of the Woman

Ten details delineate this woman:

1. "The great harlot"
2. "That sitteth upon many waters"
3. "With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication."
4. "And the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication"
5. "A woman (in the wilderness) sitting upon a scarlet-colored beast"
6. "Arrayed in purple and scarlet"

7. "Bedecked with gold and precious stones"
8. "Having a golden cup in her hand, full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication"
9. "Upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH"
10. "Drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus."

Even before we come to angel's interpretation of this vision, it is clear that we are not dealing with human being, for no one woman could commit fornication with kings of earth, nor could woman be "drunk with blood of saints and with blood of martyrs of Jesus."

Our rule for Bible interpretation is that when plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense. In this case plain sense "a woman," does not make common sense; therefore we must seek another sense. Fortunately, angel gave John interpretation to this vision, which we will consult after examining vision of beast.

The Vision of the Beast

Five details describing the beast are given:

1. "Full of names of blasphemy" (v. 3)
2. "Having seven heads" (v. 3)
3. "And ten horns" (v. 3)
4. "The beast that carrieth her" (v. 7)
5. "The beast . . . was, and is not, and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition" (v.8)

The Interpretation of the Beast and the Harlot

Revelation 17:8

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.

The careful Bible student will immediately begin to recognize this beast even before examining angel's interpretation.

In the first place, it is similar to beast of Rev 13 and doubtless represents what all best used symbolically represent, either king or kingdom that functions in opposition to will of God.

We will consider these in reverse order, just as angel interpreted them to John.

When John "wondered with great wonder," angel said to him, "Why didst thou wonder?"

Actually, some parts of this should have been familiar to John, for it is obviously same beast that was described in ch. 13.

Rev. 17:9

And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.

Angel introduced his explanation with words, "And here is the mind which hath wisdom" (v. 9).

The Beast Explained

1. "The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth." (v. 9)

Seven mountains of this passage of Scripture have caused some to suggest that since Rome is built on seven hills, she is one designated here as beast with seven heads.

But there are good reasons for not accepting this interpretation.

Geographically, it would be difficult to establish seven hills of Rome.

In addition, context seems more to indicate that these are seven kings.

It is not uncommon for mountains to designate kings or kingdoms.

Isa 2:2

As pointed out in ch 13, these seven mountains are seven kings.

Revelation 17

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.

As he said before, LaHaye is inclined to believe that five represent five kings of Roman Empire until John's lifetime; existing king when John saw revelation, Domitian, was sixth; thus we have five that were, sixth that is, and seventh who is to come, referring to Antichrist at end time.

2. **Revelation 17:11**

11 And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.

This strongly suggests that Antichrist is seventh head.

He will die in middle of Tribulation, duplicate resurrection of Jesus Christ by coming back to life, but at end of Tribulation go “into perdition” (Rev 19:20)

3. **Rev 17:12-14**

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

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.

Ten horns coincide with ten toes of Nebuchadnezzar’s vision of Dan 2 and ten horns of nondescript beast of Dan 7 and Rev 13.

These are ten kings who will make up Antichrist’s world confederacy of nations.

Since they get their power from Antichrist, perhaps he will appoint them kings of certain countries after he has taken over world governments.

Their oneness of mind is seen in v 13 in that they “give their power and strength unto the beast”; that is during last 3 ½ years of Tribulation they will promise complete allegiance and cooperation to beast.

4. The end of the beast. Looking forward to end of Tribulation, angel explained to John that these ten kings will continue to function until they bring their armies to Valley of Megiddo in last great rebellious act of mankind against Christ, who shall “overcome them” at battle of great day of God Almighty.

He will overthrow them because He is Lord of lords and King of kings.

5. Full of names of blasphemy. Of five characteristics in John’s vision of beast, first is not interpreted here by angel.

He has already interpreted this clearly in ch 13 when telling about this same beast, for he said “upon his heads [is] the name of blasphemy” (v 1), “and there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies” (v 5), “and he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven” (v 6).

Blasphemous nature of world government is not limited to Nimrod’s time but has been characteristic of all world governments which continue in opposition to will of God.

One-world organization that contains dreams and aspirations of one-worlders of today affords good example of this.

About only person to whom they have not granted some kind of recognition is Jesus Christ.

He was excluded in founding of United Nations and is also excluded from conduct of its business.

That is one reason for its futility and major reason why we can be so confident that it will continue to be futile and detrimental to humanity.

The Harlot Explained

Rev 17:15-18

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.

1. Peoples harlot sits upon – v 15.

Angel first explained to John meaning of water on which woman was sitting: it is peoples of earth.

Peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues are description used to designate all humanity in Rev.

We note this in Rev 7:9, where 144,000 are used of Spirit of God to harvest in “a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, interpreting Babylon the Great, harlot who sits on

bestial world kingdom: She is worldwide system that has dominance on all peoples; thus she is sitting upon them.

2. Woman as city – v 17

Many have taken this to mean that woman represents capital city of Antichrist's kingdom, but this cannot be, for Antichrist himself rules over kings of earth.

If, then, woman is not Antichrist, what other possible explanation could we have for such unanimous world dominance?

Only answer is one system before which all kings, dictators, and nations have been forced to bow down throughout history, that is, Babylonian religion of idolatry.

No system in world's history has enslaved more people than this awful religion.

It has not only brought them into decadence of superstitious ignorance, but it has darkened their understanding, making it difficult for them to grasp simple plan of salvation as revealed in person of God's Son, Jesus Christ.

It should not take us by surprise that this harlot woman, religious system, is referred to as city.'

Bride, who is Christ's raptured and resurrected Church, is described in Rev 21 as "the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."

Same expression is used in v 9 and 10.

Thus we see that city can be used as symbol of idolatry.

Returning to parts of vision that are not explained in detail by angel because they are referred to so frequently throughout Scripture, we find that such is exactly picture.

This harlot who sits upon many waters is religious harlot of Babylonian idolatry.

Taking many forms, she will have encircled globe, causing kings of earth to commit fornication and making inhabitants of earth "drunk with wine of her fornication."

Religions of world are synonymous with depravity, debauchery, and contemptible low standard of morality.

In viewing Hindus, Buddhists, Confucianists, Taoists, Mohammedans, and primitive religionists, LaHaye said he found that none of them teaches moral standards of God.

Instead, their practices are based on loose form of behavior that permits sensual activities, producing guilt complexes which religion in turn uses to enslave people in forms of personal sacrifice and self-abuse to atone for their own sin.

Babylonian religions of world, whether they be Greek, Indian, African, Roman, or Chinese, are arrayed in gold, precious stones, and costly array.

They use mystery and idolatry.

Being "mother of harlots and abominations of the earth" means idolatry.

Abomination in OT refers to worship of idols, and that is exactly form of religion Satan has used to deceive men and lead them away from God.

Such religions have unanimously been opposed to "the saints" and "martyrs of Jesus."

3. Religion dominates politics – ". . . which reigneth over the kings of the earth.

Fact that harlot is seated upon beast and is defined as one that "reigneth over the kings of the earth" indicates tremendous power she will exercise over world government.

This is nothing new.

Leaders of Babylonian idolatrous religions of world have always vied with political leaders for dominance over their country or world, in distinction from true Christian Church, which has never sought political power.

John 18:36

He came first time to establish spiritual kingdom, to which no one gains entrance by being born again.

John 3:3

When He come second time in His glorious appearing, He will establish His earthly kingdom, but He will not need any help from those who come with Him.

Instead, He will be sole warrior, generating all power to combat Antichrist and his cohort.

Church, His Bride, will merely be accompanying Him on her honeymoon, prepared to rule and reign with Him for thousand years.

Whenever church as organization has involved herself in politics, she has forsaken will of God.

That does not rule out individual Christians being good citizens and participating in offices of government, but nowhere in Scripture is Church taught to usurp authority from kings of earth.

Such, however, has been practice of Babylonian, idolatrous religion.

The People of That Period

Almost obscured by two great personages, best and harlot who rides beast, are millions of individuals living on earth during time of these events.

They are referred to as “waters,” or “peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.”

All people in any age fall into one of two classifications throughout Scripture – believers or unbelievers.

Such is case in this passage.

Revelation 17:8

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.

V. 8 records for us people living during time of death of Antichrist

These folks are described as those “whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world.”

This can only refer to unbelievers during Tribulation who have never by faith called upon Lord Jesus Christ to have their names written in Lamb’s book of life.

Other group cited in this passage is referred to on two occasions as “the saints” and “the martyrs of Jesus” who, because of their personal faith in Jesus Christ, will have been killed by Babylonian religious system.

We have already seen that these people “overcome the beast.”

Revelation 17:14

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.

In v 14 we find that when Christ comes as King of Kings and Lord of lords, He will bring with Him those who are “called and chosen and faithful.”

These are individuals who have in sincere faith called upon name of Lord for salvation.

Whether they live through Tribulation or are martyred is not really important, for because of their faith in Christ they overcome bestial Antichrist and harlot.

The Current Identity of Babylon the Harlot

A careful examination of this passage of Scripture should make it easy for us to identify the current harlot of Babylon and predict with some degree of accuracy what we can expect on religious horizon.

To do so, however, we must develop basic understanding of biblical meaning of Babylon.

“Babylon” occurs 290 time in Bible.

Greatest book ever written on this subject is masterpiece, *The Two Babylons*, by Rev. Alexander Hislop, published in 1858.

It contains quotes from 275 authors and describes origin of religion in Babylon and its present-day function.

Two more recent authors who quote heavily from this book are likewise presented at length because they have so clearly and simply summarized heart of his work and provided, in few words, best description of these ancient events.

Woman is religious system, who dominates civil power, at least for time.

Name upon her forehead should easily enable us to identify her.

But in order to do that we will do well to go back in OT and see what is there revealed concerning literal Babylon, for one will surely throw light upon other.

Founder of Bab-el, or Babylon, was Nimrod whose unholy achievements are in Gen 10.

He was arch-apostate of patriarchal age . . . he persuaded his associates and followers to join together in “building city and tower which should reach unto heaven.” Not . . . tower by which they might climb up into skies . . . but tower of renown . . . to be recognized as temple or

rallying centre for those who did not walk in obedience to word of Lord . . . they called their city and tower Bab-El, gate of God; but it was soon changed by divine judgment into Babel, Confusion.

It bore stamp of unreality from first, for we are told "they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar.

Imitation of that which is real and true has ever since characterized Babylon, in all ages.

Nimrod was grandson of Ham, unworthy son of Noah . . . Noah had brought through flood, revelation of true God . . . Ham on other hand seems to have been all too readily affected by apostasy that brought flood, for he shows no evidence of self judgment . . . His name . . . means "swarthy," "darkened," or, more literally, "the sunburnt."

And name indicates state of man's soul . . . darkened by light from heaven . . .

Ham begat son name Cush, "the black one," and he became father of Nimrod, apostate leader of his generation.

Ancient lore now comes to our assistance, and tells us wife of Nimrod was infamous Semiramis the First.

She is reputed to have been foundress of Babylonian mysteries and first high-priestess of idolatry.

Thus Babylon became fountainhead of idolatry, and mother of every heathen and pagan system in world.

Mystery-religion that was there originated spread in various forms throughout whole earth . . . and is with us today . . . and shall have its fullest development when Holy Spirit has departed and Babylon of Apocalypse holds sway.

Building on primeval promise of woman's Seed who was to come, Semiramis bore son whom she declared was miraculously conceived!

And when she presented him to people, he was hailed as promised deliverer.

This was Tammuz, whose worship Ezekiel protested against in days of captivity.

Thus was introduced mystery of mother and child, form of idolatry that is older than any other known to man.

Rites of this worship were secret.

Only initiated were permitted to know its mysteries.

It was Satan's effort to delude mankind with imitation so like truth of God that they would not know true Seed of woman when He came in fullness of time. . . .

Pre-Christian Practices of Roman Catholic Church

One need only turn back to ch 5-6 to examine changes made in Christianity by Roman Catholic church.

When bishop of Rome became dominant over other church bishops, gradually "Mary-olatry" and other Babylonian practices were brought into church.

These practices had one thing in common: they existed before Christ and were not taught by Him.

For example, prayers for dead, not instituted until A.D. 300, are nowhere taught in Scripture but are regular part of ancestor worship of Chinese, who practiced it hundreds of years before Christ.

In addition, worship of Mary and Christ as baby was conceived in same form with other names by most of major religions of world hundreds of years before Christ.

Easter and Lent observances with 40 days fasting were practiced for benefit of Tammuz 500 years before Christ.

To prove that Tammuz was worshipped before Christ, we can look at Ezekial 8:7-14.

Worship of Tammuz was so extensive by that time that even women of Israel was seen "weeping for Tammuz."

Title "Queen of Heaven: given to Mary is certainly not Christian.

In fact, good Roman Catholics should be horrified to find that term is found in OT.

Jer 44:17 points out that it was used to describe mother of Tammuz, mother goddess of Babylon, over 500 years before Christ.

Practice of establishing celibate priesthood and having nuns is not of Christian origin.

Nothing in Bible teaches this.

Indeed, 1 Tim 3:1-3 forbids it.

Hundreds of years before Christ it was incorporated by Buddhists and Hindus, who practice it to this day.

Where do they get it?

From Babylonian mysticism, "mother of harlots."

Sign of cross used on end of pole is likewise not of Christian derivation.

It was used in worship of Tammuz 500 years before Christ.

Confession, not taught in Scripture, was practiced in Babylon, and we could go on to include prayer beads, purgatory, and many other pre-Christian practices of church of Rome.

Thinking people can scarcely deny fact that Rome today is form of Babylonian mysticism.

Rome Is Not Only Form of Babylonian Religion

There are strangest chords of similarity in all forms of religions around world.

Mystery, darkness, incense burning, superstition, ignorance, immorality, priesthood, nuns, sprinkling, idolatry, and many other Babylonian customs appeared repeatedly.

Rome is not only form of Babylonian mysticism, but merely one that has infiltrated Christianity.

And she may be one leading all forms of religions at end time.

Ecumenical Church Unity – Plan of Devil

We are living in day of ecumenical propaganda calling upon churches of world to amalgamate.

Church unity is moving at breathtaking pace.

LaHaye once preached sermon entitled “The Ecumenical Church – A Sign of Our Lord’s Return.”

He said day would come when Roman Catholicism and liberal Protestantism would begin moving together and make overtures to unite.

That statement struck many in church like bombshell.

He was accused of being radical and extreme.

Now, when he makes statement he finds overwhelming agreement.

Newspapers are filled with accounts of such strange things as Catholic and Protestant churches working together with Jews on common translation of Scriptures; Baptist minister participating with Catholic priest participating in marriage ceremony, and Catholic priest participating in ordination of Baptist minister, after which he is quoted as saying, “It was a rich and meaningful experience.”

As we approach end of age, we can expect to see liberal Protestantism, in form of National Council of Churches and World Council of Churches, being swallowed by church of Rome.

This unity movement should not, however, be limited to apostate Christianity.

Revelation 17:15

15 And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.

We can expect to see it move toward amalgamating all religions of world under Rome’s headship because our text states that religious system at end time will be one-world religion: “where the harlot sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.”

This can only mean one-world religious system.

Finally, it need only be pointed out that Inquisition found church of Rome persecuting “heretics” (Christians – “saints, martyrs of Jesus) to death.

Rome’s Persecution of Christians

Protestant ecumenicists should keep in mind that Rome has long history of persecuting Christians.

V 6 says that woman is “drunken with blood of saints and with blood of martyrs of Jesus.”

Whenever in control of country, Rome has not hesitated to put to death all who oppose her.

Rome’s frantic opposition to Reformation (caused by her pagan indulgences and corruption of true faith) is good example.

Rome has never been noted for her toleration.

According to LaHaye, she has never publicly acknowledged her sin of putting Protestants to death.

When she has established power, we can expect additional outbreaks of Inquisition.

Look at Catholic-dominated countries today, Colombia and Spain, where Protestants are treated as heretics, their churches burned, and their religious freedom denied.

In India we find that Hinduism is so parallel to practices of Romanism that many of Hindus can become Roman Catholics and need not give up Hinduism.

Since religions of world all have idolatry in common, it would be simple thing for them to amalgamate on common basis.

What do they care whether they are worshiping Semiramis and Tammuz or Mary and Jesus, just so they have idol before which to bow down.

Color scheme of this one-world religion as defined in v 4 is most revealing:

Revelation 17:4 - 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: Abomination and fornication is idolatry and worship of gods other than Jesus Christ. In Rome we saw all manner of idols in very headquarters of Roman Church. More costly surroundings can scarcely be found than in Vatican.

The Coming Destruction of the Babylonian Harlot

Revelation 17:16-17

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.

Antichrist will permit one-world church to govern his actions during first 3 ½ years of Tribulation while he is gathering more and more power; but in middle of Tribulation, when he feels he can become autocratic ruler, he and 10 kings will throw off harlot because, in reality, while being dominated by her they “hate the harlot.”

None of world’s political leaders have enjoyed their subjugation to religious leaders, but have continued in servile role only for expediency.

When it is no longer necessary, 10 kings will “make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire,” meaning they will confiscate her temples, her gold, and her costly apparel.

In so doing, they will unwittingly be instruments of God in destroying this awful Babylonian system once and for all: “For God hath put in their hearts to fulfill his will.”

What is will of God in regard to Babylonian system?

That she be annihilated.

I am not suggesting that Christians attack her and seek to exterminate her.

Instead, our responsibility is to “come out from among them, and be yea separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing” (1 Cor 6:17), leaving her destruction to God, who will use 10 kings of Tribulation as His agents. It behooves true Church of Jesus Christ not to sink into pitfall of religious phobia of our day, which is “religious unity.”

Charles Haddon Spurgeon once said, “you cannot have unity without forsaking truth, and to forsake truth for the sake of unity is to betray Jesus Christ.” May God help us to be faithful unto Him in these last days.

Commercial Babylon Destroyed

Revelation 18

Destruction of Babylon described in Rev 17 and 18 will decisively rid world of major evils that have plagued man for about 5000 years.

We have already seen destruction to be unleashed upon ecclesiastical or religious Babylon in middle of Tribulation.

Destruction of commercial and governmental systems will not take place, however, until end of Tribulation.

Some Bible scholars do not distinguish between destruction of ch 17 and that of ch 18, but mold them altogether.

We will look at six reasons that establish that they are not same:

Revelation 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.

1. "And after these things. . . ." This expression indicates that events described in ch 18 will not take place until after events of ch 17 have been fulfilled.

2. "I saw another angel come down from heaven" { Events of ch 17 were introduced by "one of the seven angels who had seven bowls"

Angel referred to in ch 18 is obviously not same as one who introduced events of ch 17.

Therefore, we can expect same sequence of events that have happened all through Rev. – when angel fulfills his responsibility, another distinct judgment takes place on earth.

3. Names in two chapters are different.

Name in ch 18 is simply "Babylon the great" (18:2)

True, Babylon destroyed in ch 17 has name, "Mystery, Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth (17:5), but only similarity is location, Babylon.

When both titles are used fully, contrast of these two Babylons is clearly seen.

4. Babylon harlot of ch 17 will be destroyed by kings of earth (17:16).

Babylon of ch 18 will be destroyed by cataclysmic judgments of God.

5. Babylon of ch 17 will be destroyed by kings of earth, who rejoice.

In Babylon of ch 18, kings and merchants lament and weep for her (18:9-15).

6. If ch 17 & 18 take place during last days of Tribulation, there will be no place for Antichrist and False Prophet of do away with all religions and substitute worship of Antichrist's image as described in ch 13.

We conclude, then, that ch 17 describes destruction of religious system, whereas ch 18 denotes destruction of "Satan's seat," commercial and governmental city of Babylon, marking prelude to consummation of Tribulation.

Babylon the Great is Fallen

Revelation 18:1-2

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.

Whether "another angel" is one of seven angels who had seven bowls we are not told.

But it seems doubtful, for this angel is distinctive, with such "great power" that he lights earth with his glory.

Message of this angel who cries with "strong voice" is that "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen."

Since ch 18 describes destruction of literal commercial city, governmental capital of world during Tribulation, we naturally ask ourselves question, "Where is that city?"

Again, Bible prophecy students are not in complete agreement.

Some men suggest that it is city of Rome, and some years ago it was suggest New York City because it is considered by some to be commercial center of world.

Those who believe that we should take Scriptures literally whenever possible are inclined to believe that city of Babylon will be rebuilt.

LaHaye believes weight of Bible prophecy requires literal rebuilding of Babylon.

Babylon to Be Rebuilt

Main reason for believing that Babylon must be rebuilt relates to come prophecies concerning her destruction which are yet unfulfilled.

1. Is 13 & 14 and Jer 50 & 51 describe destruction of Babylon as being at time of “the day of the Lord.” Careful reading of these four chapters will reveal that prophecies concerning destruction of Babylon in OT use law of double reference; that is, they refer to overthrow of Babylon enemy of Israel in 17th year of their captivity.
But since Babylon is headwaters of world’s governmental, commercial, and religious systems in opposition to will of God, second reference in these prophecies has to do with day of Jehovah, or Tribulation Period.
2. Ruins of Babylon have been used to build other cities, contrary to Jer 51:26.

Jeremiah 51:26.

It is reliably reported that at least 6 cities bear marks of having used parts of ancient Babylon in their building, including Seleucia, built by Greeks; Ctesiphon, by Pathians; Almaden, by Persians; and Kufa, by Caliphs.

Hillah, just 20-minute walk from Babylonian ruins, was built almost entirely from ruins of Babylon.

Builders of Bagdad, 50 miles north of Babylon, also used materials from ancient city.

The Encyclopedia of Lands and People, Vol. 3, published by Grolier, states in reference to Babylon, “. . . the found great treasure and the materials of its wonderful buildings were used for the construction of Bagdad in 762. . . . And so, during the centuries, the greatness of Babylon and Assyria passed away.

Their magnificent cities were used to supply bricks for succeeding towns and villages, and such ruins as the barbarians left fell into decay until they became shapeless mounds whose very names were forgotten.”

This fact alone would demand rebuilding of Babylon, because when God destroys it in ch 18, no part of it will ever be used to build another city.

3. Prophecies of Jeremiah and Isaiah indicate that “Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed.”

Jeremiah 51:8

Isaiah 13:19

When taken together, these two prophecies indicate that Babylon will be destroyed by sudden cataclysm, much same as Sodom and Gomorrah.

History reveals that ancient Babylon was never destroyed like that.

4. **Isaiah 13:20**

Again, look at history will reveal that such has not been case with ancient Babylon.

Iraq has rebuilt area around and including Babylon and it is prosperous area with large population.

Ancient city of Babylon is being “resurrected.”

It is not too difficult to grasp what all this means.

One-world government, one-world religion, and one-world banking system that make possible commerce of world are already gathering momentum.

It is just matter of time before they decide to locate in single spot. That spot will be Babylon.

By that time Babylonian religion under leadership of Rome will have consumed World Council of Churches and its ecumenical movement and will be rapidly moving toward amalgamating major religions of world under headship of one who bears title “Pontifex Maximus.”

World bankers will be more than happy to finance rebuilding of Babylon as greatest city of world to accommodate headquarters of this one-world government and one-world religion.

Fact that Iraq is most oil-rich country in world will guarantee their investment, which, as usual, will return them handsome profit.

Railroads, river bottoms dredged to provide harbor facilitates, and transatlantic air routes will make Babylon strategic glory of kingdoms, beauty of Chaldeans’ excellency.

Unless Lord raptures His church soon, we can expect to see foundation laid for greatest city in all world’s history.

The Coming Destruction of Babylon

Once rebuilt, great city of Babylon will serve as seat of Satan, governmental, religious, and commercial headquarters of world during Tribulation.

In spite of her splendor and magnitude, this will be most short-lived of capitals of world, for she will be earmarked for destruction by Almighty God.

Revelation 18:19

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.

Kings of earth, merchants, and sailors will stand off as city is destroyed, weeping because their great concern for making money and living to gratification of flesh has been cut off.

No more will they be able to make merchandise; no more will men buy from them; their riches are gone, and thus they weep in despair.

By contrast, angel cries to heaven and instructs holy apostles and prophets to “rejoice over her . . . for God hath avenged you on her.”

For centuries, spiritually dead in their quest for material gain, merchants, religionists, and governmental leaders of world have tried to destroy true prophets and apostles of God.

Revelation 18:5-6

5 For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.

6 Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double.

In one hour they will receive double judgment for their iniquities and works.

This predicted judgment should certainly caution all those who put their trust in stocks and bonds, houses and lands, or making of money, that they are trusting in wrong things.

Their trust should be wholly and completely in Lord.

Babylon is Millstoned

Mighty angel that casts down great millstone symbolizes permanence and suddenness of destruction of Babylon, which we have already seen will be by earthquake, thunder, lightning, plagues, death, mourning, and famine, and “she shall be utterly burned with fire”

Revelation 18:8

Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.

Revelation 18:21

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.

This coincides with prophecies of Is 13 and Jer 50 & 51, depicting permanence of her destruction, whereas with Edom and serpent, lifting of curse during millennial kingdom will not include her.

Revelation 18:22

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;

This verse would indicate that in addition to commerce, religion, and government, Babylon will also be music capital of world.

If her product is similar to present-day popular music, and it no doubt will be, its noise and confusion will cease upon her to fall.

The Light of Life Destroyed

Darkness with which Babylon will be perpetually enshrouded is testimony to her lifelessness for eternity.

She will be solemnly and finally judged because of her slaughter of saints and those who would communicate God’s truth to men.

Revelation 18:23-24

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.

24 And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.

God's Merciful Call to His People

Revelation 18:4-5

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.

5 For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.

One thing which we purposely omitted was voice from heaven calling God's people out of city of Babylon *before her destruction*.

Who are these people referred to by voice from heaven as "my people"?

They could be tribulation saints, people who were not Christians at time of rapture of church but who, during Tribulation, received Christ as Savior and Lord.

What they are doing in capital city without mark of beast is very difficult to comprehend, but passage indicates that some will refuse to bow their knee to Antichrist.

Another suggestion is that they may be Israelites who have not yet recognized Christ and repented of their national and personal sin by turning to Him.

If Babylon is to be headwaters of commercialism, one can be sure that many Jews will be present.

God's call to these people at end of Tribulation is another example of His consistent administration of mercy, as in His call to Lot and his family prior to destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

One of interesting parts of God's call to His people living in Babylon is that "yea be not partakers of her sins, and that yea receive not of her plagues."

Because God works on principle of "whatsoever man soweth, that shall he also reap," these people are warned that if they partake of sins of Babylon, they will be judged accordingly.

His invitation to come out of her is typical of God in His call to sinners of all their sins and removes from them their judgment.

Mercy of God is forever available.

In every age He receives men who are willing to repent of their sin and look to Him for mercy through His Son, Lord Jesus Christ.

Only those who have done so will avoid judgment of God that comes upon all sinners.

The Heavenly Hallelujah Chorus

Revelation 19:1-6

Revelation 19:1-6

1 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:

2 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.

3 And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.

4 And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.

5 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.

6 And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

“Hallelujah Chorus” from Handel’s Messiah is usually considered most sublime expression of praise in field of music.

This fantastic song of praise will be totally eclipsed by magnificent heavenly hallelujah chorus of future described here in Rev 19, which was source of Handel’s inspiration.

We have already seen that in order to understand Rev, we must always keep in view whether scene is depicted in heaven or on earth.

Contrast between destruction of Babylon in ch 17 & 18 and rapturous songs of praise in ch 19 can be explained in terms of specific relationship to time and location.

Ch 17 & 18 depict impending doom of man at end of tribulation on earth.

Ch 19 gives us view of rejoicing in heaven that God’s judgment is finally settled upon earth; no longer will men be permitted to rebel against Him.

In vital sense rejoicing in heaven of ch 19 is occasioned by final triumph of good over evil, Christ over Antichrist, God over Satan, and H. S. over spirit of evil.

Ever since fall of Adam angelic creatures around throne of God have anticipated that ultimate day when cup of man’s iniquity would be filled with his abominations and God would finally judge him.

This contrasts with attitude of people in world, who will be weeping for doom of harlot, Babylon.

Scene in Rev 19 offers brief glimpse of what God intended to be experience of man in his relationship with God, from which man fell.

Man is seriously frustrated today because he is incapable, without Jesus, of worshiping God as described here.

His spirit of self-sufficiency and pride prohibit his abandoning himself to God; consequently he is to some degree frustrated person.

Only Christians who have voluntarily bent their knee to Jesus (Phil 2:8) are really able to enjoy blessings of true worship which is such integral part of man’s emotional desires.

Philippians 2:8

Reference to “much people” in v 2 is same group as in Rev 7:9 where “a great multitude” is translation of same Greek words.

It seems allusion is to martyred dead of great tribulation.

Actually, people of v 1 are distinct from other beings in heaven, as we will see, for they are singing song that includes salvation.

This would incorporate all believers – OT saints, church age saints, and tribulation saints.

Together they join in this great chorus, proclaiming “Hallelujah!”

Rev 19 is only place in NT where word “Hallelujah” is found; it appears four times.

Actually, it is OT word, taken from Psalms, and means “praise the Lord.”

There are many things for which men should praise Lord, as outlined in Psalms 146-150, including praise to Lord for His judgment.

Three additional words are used in original to express this praise unto Lord our God (word “honor” does not appear in best ancient manuscripts): “salvation,” “glory,” and “Power.”

Walter Scott, in his exposition of Rev, stated, “First of three terms signifies deliverance, second God’s moral glory in judgment, and third His might displayed in execution of judgment upon harlot.”

V 2 establishes cause for judgment effected upon Babylon, here called “the Great Harlot,” referring primarily to religious Babylon of ch 17.

But man has also made religion of commercialism and government, whose destruction is described in ch 18.

In this sense it would probably refer to all three forces that prostitute man’s basic quest for God into either false religion, lust for money and material possessions, or lust for power through government.

These three evils have characterized unregenerate men since before flood.

Destruction referred to here is not significant because it will involve more than just city of Babylon and commercial government and religious headquarters.

It will include all that Babylon has typified since days of Nimrod, who succeeded in carrying on nefarious work of Cain and Lamech in pre-flood days, when they inaugurated systems that led men away from God.

In both cases these men were Satan’s tools because they were unwilling to be “servants of God.”

All iniquities of past ages will be justified in this ultimate destruction when God, in righteous judgment, avenges “blood of his servants at her hand.”

Extent of her judgment is seen in v 3 in that “her Babylonian religion, politics, and commerce will last forever.

No wonder commercial, or political systems will never again be permitted to lead men astray.

Four and Twenty Elders

Revelation 19:4

4 And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.

24 elders mentioned in v 4 are not strangers to us.

We saw in ch 4 that they are probably special order of angelic beings who have under them 1000s and 1000s of angels administering affairs of God’s universe.

These, plus four living creatures also described in ch 4, will join redeemed men in heaven to sing praises unto God. Five times in Revelation 24 elders express themselves, each time in praise and rejoicing.

When we read this, we find that elders frequently break out in chorus of praise for Lamb and His conquests.

In Rev 4:10-11 we see them honoring God for His creative power; in Rev 5:8-9 they worship God when He announces that world has become kingdom of Christ and He will reign forever; and now in our text we find them adding their “Amen, Hallelujah!” to God’s judgment and destruction of Babylon.

Revelation 19:5-6

5 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.

6 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.

Voice from throne is evidently that of angel commanding all His servants to praise Him.

All those in heaven are willing servants of God.

Angels had chance to make their choice at fall of Satan.

Some chose to leave; other passages suggest that additional angels have left since then.

Men choose whether or not they will serve Him during this life.

Thus in that great heavenly chorus there will be mixture of human and celestial voices as they sing, “Praise be unto our God.”

They all share this in common: they have voluntarily become His servants.

Whole purpose of man is to glorify God.

Man was created for His good pleasure (Rev 4:11)

When man refuses to be God’s servant, he does not function according to God’s pleasure, thus living in disobedience.

One gains entrance into heaven only by faith in Jesus, involving sublime act of yielding oneself to Him, not only as Savior, but as Lord and Savior.

Having once invited Jesus into your life to be your Lord and Master, you have volunteered to become His servant.

Lord God Omnipotent Reigneth

United song of all those in heaven anticipates rulership of Lord God by His Son, Jesus Christ.

This song in sense is announcement of what will soon occur in prophetic sequence.

For shortly after this song of praise in heaven, Jesus will come to set up His glorious kingdom.

For 1900 years Christians have prayed in obedience to our Lord, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

That prayer will one day be answered when Christ comes physically to this earth to rule and to reign forever.

This prophetic fact should be cause of great rejoicing to all believers who understand and anticipate event.

Marriage Supper Of Lamb

Rev 19:7-10

Revelation 19:7-10

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. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.

10 And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

Marriage supper of Lamb is subject greatly misunderstood, not because of erroneous teaching, but because it is almost neglected in our preaching today.

Main source of information concerning this coming event is found in Rev 19:7-10, which falls into two main divisions:

(1) marriage of Lamb and

(2) marriage supper of Lamb.

Marriage Supper of Lamb

The marriage supper of Lamb was one of themes on which Jesus loved to dwell.

In many of His stories or parables, He spoke of marriage suppers.

For instance, in parable of ten virgins, He told about preparation for coming of bridegroom.

In Matt 22:1-14 He spoke of parable of marriage of king's son.

At this festive occasion king sent out servants to invite people to come to this blessed event.

Who Is the Bridegroom?

Question "Who is Bridegroom?" has but one answer.

Bridegroom can only be "king's son" of Matt 22:1-14, Jesus Himself.

In John 3:29, long after John Baptist had introduced Jesus as "Lamb of God, who taketh away sin of world" (John 1:29), John was asked to identify himself.

He made it clear that he was not Christ; in v 29 he referred to Christ as "the bridegroom," to himself as "the friend of bridegroom, who standeth and heareth him."

From this passage we see that Christ is referred to as Bridegroom and also as Lamb.

Thus we may conclude that Christ will be Bridegroom at marriage of Lamb.

Who is the Bride?

Answer to question "Who is Bride?" presents difference of opinion.

Some say that Bride is Israel, because in Rev 19:7 she is called "wife," just as in Isa 54:5 Israel is called wife of God.

Isaiah 54:5

But Bride cannot be Israel because bride is not called wife until after marriage has taken place.

Besides, there are two wives in Scripture.

OT wife was “cast off” because of spiritual adultery committed in worship of other gods. (Jer 3:1-20, Ezek. 16, Hos 2, 3:1-5)

It is this very difference that Paul had in mind in 2 Corinthians 11:2.

2 Corinthians 11:2

Church has been guilty of man sins in her 1900 years of existence, but spiritual adultery is not one of them.

Spiritual adultery can be defined in Scripture as worship of other gods.

One cannot be Christian, with Holy Spirit as witness in his heart, and worship anyone save Jesus.

This fact, of course, automatically becomes test as to genuineness of salvation.

One other verse of importance to consider here regarding identity of bride is Eph 5:32.

Ephesians 5:32

Apostle Paul, speaking to husbands and wives of their relationship together, likens husband to Christ and wife to Church.

He clearly indicates that perfect picture of relationship between Jesus and His church is that of bride and bridegroom.

Therefore when person accepts Christ, he becomes member of church, true invisible church, and is automatically espoused or engaged to Christ.

This engagement will be finalized in marriage at marriage of Lamb.

When and Where Will This Marriage Take Place?

Marriage of Lamb must take place in heaven, for in Rev 19:11, after marriage of Lamb and marriage supper of Lamb, we find Jesus coming in what we call “the glorious appearing” to set up His kingdom.

For this reason we must conclude that marriage and supper have occurred in heaven.

Their location in Rev 19 shows these events to have taken place at end of Tribulation, just before millennial reign of Christ upon earth.

Eph 5:27 indicates manner in which Bride will be presented to Christ.

Ephesians 5:27

This condition will exist only after judgment of Christ when believer has been completely cleansed and church is made whole.

For that reason we believe that judgment seat of Christ, which will take place during Tribulation, will precede marriage supper of Lamb, and immediately after judgment of reward has been presented to last believer, marriage of Lamb will take place.

All Christians who have trusted in Christ during age of grace, from day of Pentecost to Rapture of church, will make up His Bride.

How Does the Bride Make Herself Ready?

Years ago bride usually made her own wedding dress; in fact, it is not uncommon for brides to make them today.

Wedding dress, according to v 8, made of fine linen, is defined as righteousness of saints.

This word in Greek appears in plural number, “righteousnesses.”

On that basis, then, we find that bride makes herself ready through her righteous acts.

Inasmuch as this marriage comes after judgment seat of Christ, it would seem that position of individual, as member of Bride of Christ, would be determined by outcome of judgment by fire, when his works will be judged.

Therefore it behooves Christians in this age to be careful to do good works.

Titus 3:8

Jesus challenged Christians, “Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.”

Although Christians are reluctant to consider working for rewards, it should be borne in mind that our relationship to Christ as members of Bride of Christ will be determined by faithful service today.

Devil is master liar.

He tells unsaved, “Work for salvation.”

If his lies fail and individual accepts Christ, devil immediately whispers, “Now that you’re saved freely be grace, you don’t have to do anything.”

That does not agree with Eph 2:8-10; most Christians forget tenth verse.

Ephesians 2:8-10

Purpose of Christian is to be available to Lord for “good works.”

We may properly take periodic inventories to see if we are truly serving Christ.

In that day all unfaithful Christians will rue their unfaithfulness, for it will not only keep them from position with Christ they would desire, but will limit extent to which they rule and reign with Christ during millennial kingdom.

Attitude of Paul should characterize every Christian: “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?”

That kind of attitude will provide such motivation in believer that he will not only receive “full reward” but hear Savior say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant, Enter thou into the joy of the Lord.”

The Marriage Supper of the Lamb

Marriage supper, of course, is not marriage, but marriage feast of Lamb.

It seems particular honor to be invited to this feast, or marriage supper, for John was instructed to write in Rev 19:9:

Revelation 19:9

9 And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.

“Blessed” means happy or honored.

“Called” means invited.

Therefore we could read it, “Happy (or honored) are they who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.”

The identity of the Guests

That guests will appear at this marriage supper can be deduced from fact that some are called in addition to participants of marriage ceremony.

Bride is never invited to wedding supper; neither is bridegroom.

But friends of bride and groom are invited.

Now who are these friends, or guests?

It must be admitted that there are some differences of opinion here.

It could not be church, for church is bride.

Some try to identify parable of wise virgins and parable of marriage supper of king’s son as illustrations of guests at this wedding supper.

But these two parables only serve to illustrate prominence of marriage supper in thinking of Jesus.

It should be understood that both foolish virgins and guest who did not possess wedding garment were left outside wedding feast, whereas there is no place whatever for anyone to be left outside at marriage supper of Lamb.

These two parables are “kingdom of heaven” parables, teaching that one should be prepared for coming of Bridegroom.

John Baptist, one of last OT saints, indicated that he was friend of Bridegroom (John 3:29).

These OT saints will be in heaven and will have their rewards, but they are not church, not Bride of Christ.

They are friends of Bride and Bridegroom, who at this point can be seen as ones invited as guests to feast.

So then all believing dead from Adam until resurrection of Christ will be guests at feast.

In addition to them will appear those who have received Savior during Tribulation, both Jew and Gentile, many of whom will have been martyred for testimony of Christ.

These will comprise guests at feast.

Some would suggest that perhaps angels will be among guests.

However, I do feel this is probable.

Angels may be spectators at marriage supper of Lamb, but it should be noticed that supper is distinguished by use of sacrificial name of Lord – Lamb.

Angels have never been recipients of blessings of redeemed.

Only those who have lived human existence, have sinned, and have been redeemed by blood of Lamb will be in that number, either as Bride of Christ or as invited guests of Christ.

This is not to say that OT saints are inferior to church, or body of Christ, but merely to point out that this is special blessing for church.

Now Israel, or guests at wedding supper of Lamb, have promises and relationships to Him in which we shall not share; however, marriage supper of Lamb is experience reserved for church.

The Honeymoon of the Lamb

After weddings on this earth, wedding party customarily has celebration or reception, which has taken place in modern era of old-fashioned marriage supper.

But after marriage supper, bride and bridegroom usually change into their traveling dress and slip away on wedding trip;

It is more than just coincidence that immediately after marriage supper of Lamb, John tells us:

Revelation 19:11

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.

From this point he launches into description of glorious appearing of Jesus on earth, to set up His kingdom, when He shall come with His Bride, church.

Earth, which is former abode of church, from which church will have been raptured, and upon which Lamb Himself lived and died, then will become place of 1000 year-honeymoon.

The Believer and the Millennium

Immediately after descent of Christ to earth, millennial kingdom will commence.

Christ will set up His kingdom and believer will reign with Him.

2 Timothy 2:11-12

This clarifies that believer will reign with Christ.

Of course, that reigning is based on works of believer, for Paul said, "If we endure, we shall also reign with him."

Reigning According to Faithfulness

Luke 19:11-27 is parable of pounds.

This parable testifies to quantitative element in our Christian service.

Servant was given pound; he invested that pound, and at coming of his Lord he had earned ten pounds.

It is important to note commendation and injunction of Savior.

Luke 19:17

Because this servant had magnified his substance, he was given authority of ten cities during millennium.

Same is said in v 128 of second servant, who had taken his pound and gained five pounds.

To him was given to reign over five cities.

Unfaithful servant was given nothing; in fact, talent he had was taken away, which may well indicate that unfaithful servants of Christ, though saved, "yet so as by fire," but who do not have any reward, will rather vain and barren existence during millennium.

Faithful servant, however, will be given place of true leadership in His kingdom, position of leadership directly in proportion to degree of faithfulness in Christian service.

What challenge to believer to be faithful in whatever way he can in this life, for in his service for Christ he is laying up for himself treasures in heaven that will one day determine his station and position for 1000 years.

Hymn writer challenges us to "Work for the night is coming, when man's work is done."

Shades of night are falling rapidly; every Christian should be busy about Master's business, "redeeming the time," while some light still remains.

The Glorious Appearing of Jesus Christ

Revelation 19:11-16

Glorious appearing of Jesus Christ is easily most exciting event in all Bible prophecy.

Every Christian who knows anything about Bible looks forward to that blessed day when Lord will truly be glorified.

His coming in glory will be in marked contrast to His first coming, when He fulfilled prophecies of Savior.

ON that occasion HE came humbly, to be born in manger.

He suffered Himself to be abused and buffeted by men, even to point of permitting His creatures to spit on Him and crucify Him.

Revelation 19:10

10 And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

This is transition verse between marriage supper of Lamb and glorious appearing.

It could be considered in connection with either subject.

After vision John informs us that he “fell at his feet to worship him.”

Because pronoun “him” has no antecedent, we can assume from context and divine instruction that this was angel who revealed vision to John.

Like others who make mistake of worshipping anyone but God, he was immediately corrected with words. “See thou do it not: I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren.”

In resurrection Christians will evidently be equal with angels, for in Rev they are considered as fellow servants with angels, and all bear testimony of Jesus.

Then John received this specific command: “Worship God.”

This command of angel to “Worship God” in sense that it is used here excludes worship directed toward any other creature.

It is one of many illustrations that demonstrate consistency of Scripture.

This scene, almost at close of Rev, coincides with first commandment of Ex 20.

Ex 20:3

This teaches that God is only object of worship.

This consistency is also conveyed in establishing personal deity of Jesus.

He is only person in Scripture who freely received worship of men without rebuke.

Ten time in NT Jesus was worshiped, and not once did He restrain those who worshiped Him.

That brings us to one of most fascinating phrases in Bible concerning Bible prophecy:

“Testimony of Jesus is spirit of prophecy.”

Used in this connection, we find that “fellow servant of God” is one who holds or communicates testimony of Jesus.

Whether human or angelic, true servants of God work indirectly or directly toward testimony of Jesus.

Above expression gives finest definition of spirit of prophecy to be found in Bible, “testimony of Jesus.”

Prophecy is not solely prediction of future, as some say, nor is it only declaration of ethical principles, as others claim.

Prophecy receives its value and meaning from its relation to Christ, whether that relation be direct or indirect.

First prophetic utterance of God, Gen 3:15, to last prediction of Rev, heart of prophecy, has been directed to person of Christ.

Errors of interpretation of details may be inescapable, but there need be no error in understanding direction and purpose of prophecy; as whole, it points to Christ.

We tend to think of prophecy as revealing of future events, but in NT we find that prophetic gift is second only to that of apostles and is special form of teaching gift.

In reality, it is making known of divine will, and divine will is that men humble themselves and receive His Son, Jesus Christ.

Therefore, any prophecy or prophetic teaching should directly or indirectly reveal person of Jesus Christ.

Study of Bible prophecy has fallen into disrepute only when teachers have become involved in peripheral areas of date setting or rigid predictions of events that go beyond clear teachings of Scripture and all at expense of revealing “testimony of Jesus.”

Prophetic teaching, or preaching that testifies of Jesus, invariably warms heart.

Two disciples on road to Emmaus acknowledged after their encounter with resurrected Christ,

Luke 24:32

What caused their heart to burn within them?

V 27 gives answer

Luke 24:27

For that reason, study of Rev should cause our hearts to “burn within us,” because it is revelation of Jesus Christ, who forms heart of all prophecy.

One quality that makes Bible literary masterpiece is its unusual simplicity.

Rev 19:11

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.

This verse presents simple introduction to grand climax of ages.

For thousands of years it has been central to plan of God that His Son, Jesus Christ, should reign over earth and all things thereon.

This simple expression introduces event that shows our Lord gloriously coming to earth, fulfilling many prophecies concerning His appearing.

Since glorious appearing of Christ is such climactic event in Bible, we can expect to find many references to it.

In that expectation we will not be disappointed.

Before we examine text in Rev, it would help to examine other Bible references to this event so that we can compare Scripture with Scripture and more clearly establish proper sequence of events.

Christ Goes First to Edom

Isaiah 63:1-6

For some reason we find that our Lord will go first to Edom, where many Israelites have fled for safety from Antichrist.

He thus will vindicate promises of God as He triumphs over enemies of Israel.

This text also describes Him as arrayed in red garments and reveals that this is “day of vengeance.”

Men, having rejected mercy of God offered through sacrificial death of Christ on cross, will suffer judgment of God at hands of one they have rejected.

This, and other texts, make it clear that Christ’s glorious appearing will not be time of joy to unsaved but, on contrary, time of great sorrow because day of God’s wrath is come.

Matthew 24:27-31

28 For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

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.

31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

This prediction of Our Lord Himself concerning His glorious appearing is taken from Olivet Discourse. It reveals that He will come visibly and become object of attention.

Sun, moon, and stars will not give their lights, but all attention will be focused on “sign of Son of man in heaven,” after which “tribes of earth will mourn” because they have not prepared themselves for that day.

Then men will see Christ, who is light, “coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.”

At this moment second installment of rapture will occur, when Christ will gather together His elect from “four winds, from one end of heaven to other.”

The Second Installment of the Rapture

Psalms 50:1-6

See Jesus above earth, calling His saints to Him.

This would indicate that He will rapture tribulation saints still living and tribulation saints whose souls are under altar. (Rev 6)

This may include OT saints, whose resurrection may wait until end of Tribulation.

This event may take place just before marriage supper of Lamb previously discussed.

Now, having raptured all believers from all ages, He will come to exclusively unsaved earth.

Christ Comes to Execute Judgment With His Saints

Jude 14-15

This is only passage in Bible telling us that Enoch was prophet.

Somehow God had revealed to him that in unfolding of ages Christ would come with myriads of holy ones to execute judgment on men.

That judgment will begin with Antichrist and eventually will include nations of earth, as explained in Matt 25.

2 Thessalonians 1:7-10

1 Thess 1:7-10 describes Christ coming in judgment to destroy Antichrist, which parallels passage we will study in next chapter, in which Christ casts Antichrist into lake of fire.

Christ Will Stand on the Mount of Olives

Zechariah 14:3-5

Jesus ascended into heaven from Mount of Olives.

Acts 1:11

Jesus will not only come in “like manner,” meaning visibly and physically, but He will actually come to same place, Mount of Olives.

When His feet strike Mount of Olives, Mount will divide in two.

Some Bible commentators have indicated that natural division exists between two high points on Mount of Olives which will cleave in two, creating new passageway from Jerusalem down to Jericho at Jordan River.

There may be gigantic causeway from Jordan River out to Mediterranean.

Others speak of geological report, indicating fault under Mount of Olives that needs only slight earthquake to cleave it in two.

In any case, when Christ sets His feet upon Mount, His power will be manifested in that it divides into two parts.

All of above events, taking place in breathtaking moment of time, will highlight fact that Jesus has come.

These passages are only some of many that could be used to describe great event of Jesus’ glorious appearing.

The Glorious Appearing

Term “glorious appearing” is not found in Rev, but it is in Titus 2:13.

Titus 2:13

There it is used to describe physical, visible return of Christ to earth in distinction from that “blessed hope,” which is rapture of church or secret coming of Christ for His believers prior to Tribulation.

Of all descriptions of glorious appearing in Bible, none is more graphic than our text.

Revelation 19:11-16

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.

V 11 introduces this dynamic scene by telling us that John “saw heaven opened.”

This is second time John saw heaven opened.

First time was in Rev 4:1 where he was invited up into heaven and as representative of church looked down on scenes of Tribulation.

In Rev 19 Tribulation has been concluded and Christ is returning to earth, so we find heaven opened again. This time, instead of taking man up, heaven is opened to let rider on white horse out, accompanied by his armies. This rider is to be distinguished from rider on white horse in 6:2, who was Antichrist. This rider with eyes “like flame of fire,” from description can be none other than Jesus. Significance of white horse is typical of difference between this coming and Christ’s first coming. While on this earth Jesus fulfilled Zech 9:9, entering Jerusalem on lowly beast of burden.

Zechariah 9:9

Now His humiliation is done away and He will come in glory, properly using white horse to depict His power and glory.

Lest you think it strange that there are horses in heaven, we must remember that in 2 Kings 2:11 and 6:13-17 we find references to horses and chariots of fire.

Even more significant than what Jesus will do at His coming is how He is described here, for His eternal nature is revealed.

“Faithful and true” presents Jesus as contrast to unfaithful deceivers of men, Antichrist, and Satan.

Jesus has faithfully fulfilled all of His prophecies.

“A day with the Lord is as a thousand years” suggests that promise of God given thousand years ago is as though it were given yesterday.

Extent of His faithfulness, however, is not fully comprehended until He fulfills these promises.

Believers accept His faithfulness now by faith, but in that moment all men will see tangible evidence of His faithfulness.

Christ is truth; by contrast, Satan is big lie.

Christ is true way to God; Satan is false way, leading not to God but to hell.

The Righteous Judge

“In righteousness he judgeth.”

We have already seen that our Lord come to judge this earth on basis of what it has done concerning Himself.

He is pivot of all history and significant factor of ages.

The Righteous Warrior

“In righteousness he makes war.”

This world has known nothing but wars since it rejected God and His Son, Jesus.

During WWI total number of war-related deaths was 40 million.

It is estimated that total number of deaths caused by WWII was 60 million.

Most of wars of world have been unrighteous wars.

When Christ comes, His war will consist of only one battle.

He will consume all before Him, all that stand in opposition to Him, and bring every man into subjection.

This will be first righteous war in history of mankind.

Ability of Christ to wage righteous war is not only seen in His holy nature, but in that His eyes are “like a flame of fire,” indicating that He will judge according to truth.

Best judge on earth cannot know all facts of given situation because he is limited by human frailty.

Jesus Christ is not so limited.

He who knows end from beginning will be righteous judge, for His all-seeing eye will reveal all truth about every individual and nation.

The Righteous King

“On his head were many crowns.”

This symbolically means that He will come in much authority.

All through history crown on man’s head has symbolized authority.

Kings wore crowns, Popes wear triple crown, Antichrist’s kingdom is symbolized with crowns, even ten kings of Tribulation will have crowns; but when Christ comes, all power will be given unto Him a supreme king.

In fact, v 11-12 of our text reveal threefold nature of Christ in His glorious appearing.

For when He comes, He will be Warrior, Judge, and King.

“He had a name written, that no one knew, but he himself.”

Many have speculated on this name, but it seems rather unwise to do so.

Bible name reveals nature of person, and there are many names that reveal facets of nature of God and Jesus Christ.

However, since He is divine, it would only seem natural that some aspects of His nature are incomprehensible to our finite minds.

Therefore at least this one name will be unknown to man.

V 13 indicates, “He is arrayed in a garment sprinkled with blood.” (ASV)

This could well be reference to bloodshed caused by battle of great day of God Almighty as he brings forth triumphs, or it could be symbolic reference to fact that His garments were sprinkled with blood on Calvary’s cross so that we may wear robes of righteousness.

“And His name is called The Word of God.”

Apostle John was only writer of NT who used expression “the Word of God” to describe Lord Jesus Christ.

It is beautiful expression, coming from Greek word *logos* and literally meaning expression of God.

Just as word is an expression of thought, so Christ is expression of God.

As we reveal thoughts from one human mind to another through vehicle of words, so Christ, eternal Word of God, reveals God to men.

If men would know God, they need only study about His Son, Jesus Christ, for “he hath revealed him.”

The Armies of Christ

Revelation 19:14

9 And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. Armies of heaven consist of angelic hosts, OT saints, church, and tribulation saints.

Most significant truth, however, is garb of this army.

They are “clothed in fine linen, white and clean.”

Military men are issued fatigue uniforms for battle dress, not only for camouflage but also because war is so dirty that light-colored clothes would be severely soiled.

Here, however, Commander-in-Chief of heavenly forces clothes His army in white, practice unheard of in history of warfare.

Reason should not be overlooked by reader: no member of armies of Christ that come with Him in His glorious appearing will do battle.

Not one of us will lift finger, for battle will be consummated by spoken word of Jesus.

The Authority of the King of Kings

Revelation 19:15

10 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.

Sharp sword here has led some to believe that it is Sword of Spirit, Word or God.

But Dr. John Walvoord states concerning this expression:

The word for sword indicates a long Thracian sword, or one which is unusually large and longer than most swords. The same word is sometimes used to describe a javelin, a sword sufficiently light and long to be thrown as a spear. Here the word is used symbolically to represent a sharp instrument of war., with which Christ will smite the nations and establish His absolute rule. The expression of ruling “with a rod of iron” is also found in Psalm 2:9 and Rev 2:27, with a similar expression, “the rod of His mouth,” in Is 11:4. It represents absolute, unyielding government under which men are required to conform to the righteous standards of God.

Coming of Christ in His glorious appearing with heavenly armies will not only bring to consummation enmity of Satan, his Antichrist, False Prophet, and millions they deceive, but will usher in millennial kingdom; righteous reign of Christ upon earth.

This fact is seen clearly in name given to Christ in next verse.

Revelation 19:16

16 And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

A warrior goes into battle with his sword on his thigh.

Christ's sword will be His spoken word.

Word that called world into being will call leaders of men and armies of all nations into control.

Instead of sword on His thigh is His name, "KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS."

Christ Jesus, living Lord, will be established in that day for what He is in reality, King above all kings, Lord above all lords.

The truly will prophetic words of Isa 9:6 be fulfilled.

Isaiah 9:6

The Battle of the Great Day of God Almighty

Revelation 19:17-21

Rev 19:17-212

Rev 19:17-21 primarily deals with Christ as righteous warrior, for we see Him as He comes to do battle with host of Satan's armies in what is often called "the battle of Armageddon," but which in truth is war, or campaign, of great of God Almighty.

This war is necessitated by fiendishly evil ambitions of men and their evil source of power, Satan.

It is doubtless most horrible experience in annals of human history.

Matthew 24:29-31

From this we conclude that glorious appearing will take place "immediately after the tribulation of those days."

Therefore we find this even takes place at end of Tribulation and before millennium.

Jesus will time His coming at most dramatic point in all history.

Antichrist, False Prophet, and Satan will inspire armies of world to invade Palestine in gigantic effort to rid world of Jews and to fight against Christ.

This closing battle before Christ sets up His millennial kingdom is often called "the battle of Armageddon."

This is misleading expression because Armageddon means "Mount of Slaughter" and refers to beautiful valley to east of Mt. Megiddo, and word "battle" here literally means "campaign" or "war."

No war has ever been won by single battle.

In fact, it is possible to lose battle and still win war.

Actually, this war will encompass more than just Valley of Megiddo, but as we will see, it will cover practically all of land of Palestine.

This conflict, when Christ defeats armies of Antichrist, will be series of at least four "campaigns"; therefore it is more properly called "the war of that great day of God Almighty" (Rev 16:14).

Carnage and horror of scene are described only generally from our text, Rev 19:17-21.

In order to get full picture of this horrible period, we need to turn to several other passages in Word.

The Battle of Amrageddon

We have already seen in ch 18 that Christ will go first to Edom and soil His garments in bloody battle, in which He will rescue Israelites who have been persecuted by Antichrist and his armies.

Then He probable will go to Valley of Megiddo, where great armies of world will be gathered in opposition to Him.

It is impossible to predict exact sequence of battles in this war, but since everything culminates at Jerusalem, it would seem that He would go next to Valley of Megiddo.

This conflict could literally be called the battle of Armageddon and is described in Rev 16:12-16.

Revelation 16:12-16

We have already examined in Rev 16 how Euphrates River will dry up to make possible way of kings of east with their vast hordes moving like cloud to cover land.

Satanic trinity of Antichrist, False Prophet, and devil himself send out "three unclean spirits like frogs" out of mouth of beast and out of mouth of False Prophet, deceiving kings of earth to bring them into this great battle of Armageddon, where they will fight against Christ.

Importance of Valley of Megiddo for this conflict should not be overlooked.

"Armageddon," from translated "HarMagedon" in American Standard Version, comes from Hebrew which means "Mount Megiddo."

This place, mentioned only in Rev 16:16, will be final battleground between forces of good and evil.

Town of Megiddo guarded pass which formed easiest caravan route between Plain of Sharon and Valley of Jezreel, and low mountains around it were silent witnesses of perhaps more bloody encounters than any other spot on earth, continuing down to recent times.

It is therefore appropriate place for vast conflict pictured in Rev 16.

One commentator has stated that as far back as time of Napoleon that great valley was claimed to be most natural battleground of whole earth.

It has been noted that many great military generals have fought there.

There Satan and his hordes have met God before.

Three renowned mountains overlook this valley: Carmel, Gilboa, and Tabor.

It was on Mount Carmel that contest between Elijah's God and devil-possessed Baal-worshipping prophets of Jezebel took place.

One of mightiest conflicts in OT, it was not battle of one man versus nation, but God versus Satan, for on that day "the fire of the Lord fell" (1 Kings 18:38).

One day it will fall again, but on that day fire will be accompanied by Lord himself:

Zechariah 14:4

This great battle of Christ versus Antichrist will conclude in display of omnipotent Christ, for He will utterly destroy Antichrist and his armies.

Carnage of this battle is well described by Ezekiel in Ezek 39:17-22.

Ezekiel 39:17-22

Eze 38-39 primarily teach destruction of armies of God and Magog who come down against Israel, which will probably take place just prior to Tribulation.

Most Bible commentators call this battle of Armageddon, but they are probably wrong, for three reasons:

1. In Eze 38:1-39:16 Gog's armies come against Israel and are opposed by western confederation of nations. Armageddon will find all armies of earth united against Christ.
Ezekiel 38:13
13 Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof, shall say unto thee, Art thou come to take a spoil? hast thou gathered thy company to take a prey? to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take a great spoil?
2. In battle described in Eze, Israel is living in land of unwallled villages in time of peace, which will not be their lot in latter half of Tribulation.
3. Also, it takes seven years to burn implements of war left on ground after this great battle.

Ezekiel 39:9

This could not be carried out during millennium; therefore we conclude it is accomplished before Tribulation.

Whether this is before or after rapture of church is impossible to ascertain, because Bible does not teach conclusively that Tribulation begins immediately after Rapture.

Tribulation, begun by signing of covenant between Antichrist and Israel (Dan 9:27), may or may not commence immediately following rapture.

Therefor Eze 39:17-22 goes beyond that immediate battle when God's armies come down against Israel, for in this latter section it is all armies united together, as it will be at end of Tribulation.

Putting these passages together (Rev 16:L13-26 & Eze 39:17-22), we find that when Christ meets armies of Antichrist in Valley of Megiddo, they will come from east and west, north and south.

He then will slay them with sword that proceedeth out of his mouth.

Revelation 19:15

All that will be left of these armies is little more than gigantic feast for birds of prey and other parasites.

The Battle of the Valley of Jehoshaphat

Joel 3:1-17

In this great battle there are "multitudes, multitudes, in valley of decision.

For day of Lord is near in valley of decision.

These are more of armies of nations who will be brought into war by lying spirits described in Rev 16:13.

This battle is also described in Rev 14:14-20.

These passages show that battle will take place at time of God's judgment, for He will put in His sickle and reap judgment harvest upon nations of earth for their persecution of nation Israel.

As result of this conflict with Christ, “the blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles by a space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

The Battle of Jerusalem

Final battle in war of great day of God Almighty will be battle of Jerusalem.

Antichrist and what is left of his armies, or more properly advance guard of his armies, will storm Jerusalem.

This last conflict between Satan and Christ until after millennium will find Satan making one more fiendish effort to destroy promised seed.

Satan will order his armies to destroy entire city of Jerusalem, but Christ will come to deliver her at last moment, as clearly seen in Zechariah 12:1-9.

Zechariah 12:1-9

For details of fighting examine following Scripture, where more graphic details are given.

Revelation 16:17-21

The Return of Christ

This is most dramatic moment in world history!

After winning four successive battles, Christ will set His feet on Mount of Olives.

Zechariah 14:1-4

When Christ consumes all before Him through earthquakes, lightnings, and sword that proceeds out of His mouth, not only will Holy Land be destroyed but entire country will be literally bathed in blood of unregenerate, God-hating, Christ-opposing men.

It is hard for us to envision hordes of troops from all over world that will oppose Christ.

Who can conceive of time when blood of slain men will flow as high as horses’ bridles by space of 1,600 furlongs?

That is just about length of entire land of Palestine!

Naturally many skeptics and those who don not take Revelation literally find it difficult to believe that so much blood could be shed.

Point to be kept in mind is that part of destruction of troops around Jerusalem will include hailstorm.

Revelation 16:21

It is estimated that talent weighs 135 lbs.

Thus millions of pieces of ice will fall to earth weighing 135 lbs., melting in torrid heat of Palestine and mingling with blood of those slain until land of Palestine will be literally bathed in bloody liquid that is almost too horrible to describe.

What price men pay for rejecting Christ!

Men Feed Birds

Revelation 19:17-19

How like futility of man in his pent-up wrath and antagonism against God!

In one moment man stands in his physical might filled with hate and bitterness, attacking very headquarters of Christ.

Next moment his flesh is food for ravenous birds of heavens.

What picture of futility of man in pitting his will against Jesus.

Oh, that men might see that wisdom of man is foolishness with God, who will triumph through one He has ordained, Lord Jesus Christ.

None escapes wrath of Jesus as described in v 21:

Revelation 19:21

Not one man will escape warrior Christ in this last great battle.

Those who resist Him during Tribulation will be slain by Him in His glorious appearing.

They will then have lost whatever chance they had for eternity.

Satan Bound in the Bottomless Pit

Rev 20:1-3, 19:20

Revelation 20:1-3

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.

Revelation 19:20

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.

Evils in this old world are caused by devil.

No living creature in known history of universe has brought more misery to both natural and supernatural beings.

1/3 of angels in heaven and a majority of adult population of earth have followed him in his rebellion against God. This will earn them eternal separation from God in what Jesus described as “everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matt 25:41).

Revelation is not only book of prophecy, unfolding future, but book of ending.

This chapter contains doom of Antichrist, False Prophet, and Satan

Have you ever wondered whether or not devil is really individual or just figment of imagination?

In educational circles today it is considered unrealistic to assert that there is supernatural power conveying evil to this earth.

Many would admit that only devil is devil within you; others would say with Goethe when he spoke through mouth of Mephistopheles, “I am the spirit of negation.”

Popular idea of devil, or Satan, is caricature showing him in red suit, long tail, horns on his head, and pitchfork in his hand.

Others present him in similar fashion in hell, shoveling stokers for all workers of iniquity when they suffer torments of damned.

These humorous presentations of Satan are, no doubt, at his instigation in effort to minimize his importance, thus giving people false security concerning his danger.

Like other subjects of great interest to minds of men, particularly those that delve into spiritual realm, Satan can be understood only through authoritative Word of God.

It is obvious from Scriptures that Satan is not just figment of imagination, but living personality.

35 times he is called “devil”; 52 times he is called “Satan” (which means enemy or adversary).

Matthew 13:19

Matthew 13:39

(It is interesting to note that these two statements are not taken from parable, but from Jesus’ own interpretation of parable.)

Peter believed in personal devil, for in Acts 5:3.

Acts 5:3

1 Peter 5:8

Obviously Peter not only believed that he was living person, but that he was adversary on march.

John believed in personal devil, for in he wrote in John 13:2:

John 13:2

Apostle Paul also taught personal existence of devil when cautioning Christians to “put on the whole armor of God,” taking adequate precautions “to stand against the wiles of the devil.”

It is obvious from these and many other passages in Bible that Satan is living personality.

If you disagree, you must step over Jesus, Creator of all things.

John 1:3

You also step over Peter, John, and Paul who were used of God to write 20 of 27 books in NT.
Big question is, where did he come from?

The Origin of Satan

Since Satan is living person, he must have been created.

God created all things, but how could holy God create wicked creature like Satan?

That is one of philosophical questions of ages.

If we turn to philosophers, we will die in confusion, for like their conclusions on other subjects, only thing in which they are consistent is their disagreement.

We are thus obliged to attend to source of wisdom, Word of God.

Ezekiel 28:1-19

Eze 28:1-19 furnishes picture of background of Satan.

First ten verses comprise oracle directed against king of Tyre.

Next oracle, however, beginning in verse 12, obviously goes beyond king of Tyre to supernatural being, for it attributes to him things that are beyond capability of mortal man.

For example, v 13 obviously refers to and describes Eden that is even foreign to Adam and Eve.

It is not vegetable garden, with which they would have been familiar, but rock garden.

It is not uncommon for world rulers to be indwelt by Satan himself.

History records scores of rulers who sought to make up government contrary to will of God.

This is embodiment of devil's plan, pitting his will against will of God.

Ezekiel 28:3

This v indicates that king of Tyre was indwelt by supernatural power.

It is known fact that Daniel was one of wisest living men in Babylonian Empire, or to him was given gift of determining hidden secrets.

He was able to recall Nebuchadnezzar's dream and interpret it when none of soothsayers, astrologers, or wise men of Chaldean court could do so.

In addition to this, as righteous man he had power of God upon his life, giving him wisdom, yet king of Tyre also had this power, and in great abundance.

Reason? King of Tyre was indwelt by Satan himself, which clarifies why kingdom was so blessed economically, for by craftiness in knowing future, he could guide country in its economic plans.

So we see that this oracle is divided between that which speaks against king of Tyre himself and that which censures power or person within king of Tyre, devil.

It is to latter part of oracle we direct our attention.

Ez 28 twice speaks of Satan's creation: "the day that thou wast created" (v 13) and "Thou wast perfect in the ways from the day that thou was created . . ." (v 15).

Hebrew word translated "create" means "to bring into existence that which has had no prior form or substance."

God alone has power to create.

Thus there must have been time when Satan was not, before God brought him into being.

Satan is usually considered greatest created being.

Even archangel Michael was reluctant to bring against him any railing accusations.

Jude 9

Satan was created "the anointed cherub that covereth" (Ez 28:14).

This implies leadership of angelic host in presence of Shekinah Glory of God.

It seems that Satan was not just angel, but leader of cherubim, for he was "the anointed cherub that covereth."

Covering referred to here connotes "protector" or "shading."

As cherubim stand in presence of God today, so Satan once stood in charge of them.

Abode of Satan in that day was Eden, garden of God, as described in Ez 28:13, where He walked up and down in midst of stones of fire.

This mountain of God is, no doubt, heaven that Jesus referred to.

It is headquarters of God.

Although God is omnipresent, He nevertheless maintains headquarters where Jesus exists today, seated at His right hand.

Satan, then, was created perfect (V 15).

Not until later was iniquity found in him; v 16 adds, "Thou has sinned."

Like all God's creatures to whom is given treasure of free will, Satan sinned because he chose to.

The Fall of Satan

Ezekiel 28:16-17

This teaches that Satan sinned and was judged for that sin.

V 17 indicates that it was pride, pride of his beauty and wisdom, that caused him to sin.

More detailed description of this sin is found in Is 14.

Here we find another oracle delivered against earthly king, on this occasion, king of Babylon.

After he had dealt with king living at that time, Isaiah went on to describe person and experiences that transcend any mortal man, again referring to Satan within king.

In v 12 we find that Satan at one time had been called "O, Lucifer, son of the morning¹ how art thou cut down to the ground."

Then we note his pride, for he said:

Isaiah 14:12-15

The Problem of Evil

We now return to problem of evil.

Since God is Holy and could not create evil, who did?

To ascribe power of creation to Satan would tend to make him god.

There is no indication in Scripture that Satan can create anything (making something from nothing), but like other of God's creatures equipped with free will, Satan can manufacture items from things God has created.

Satan evidently took forces of God that were given perfect, combined them in imperfect manner, and "manufactured evil."

Force of evil in world today, directed by person of Satan and his cohorts, is misapplication of perfect forces and creation of God.

This can be illustrated in chemical world, composed of over one hundred elements which, when improperly combined, can become disastrous.

For example, common table salt is made up of sodium, one of necessities of life, but by changing mixture and introducing other elements, sodium can become basis for deadly poison.

In this sense Satan did not create evil any more than chemist creates poison.

He merely manufactures poison out of those things which God has already created.

Evil is matter of will.

Basic sin in force of evil is selfishness or pride, both stemming from same root.

Satan said, "I will ascend," "I will make my throne as the throne of God."

I will, I will.

His will, in opposition to will of God, constituted great sin, and it is so still!

Man who pits his will against will of God commits evil and brings on himself judgment of God.

It is contrary to will of God not only for men to sin, but for men to reject Jesus Christ.

Word tells us that "it is not the will of your Father, who is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish" (Matt 18:14).

Likewise, "The Lord is not . . . willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet 3:9).

Are you like Satan, in rebellion against God's will, or are you submitted to God's will?

He sinned willingly against light he possessed. Have You?

The Conflict of the Ages

"Misery likes company" is popular expression aptly describing Satan's activities against God's special creature, man.

God created man perfect (in His likeness) with free will for his pleasure.

Revelation 4:11

He placed him in ideal garden, filled with trees containing delicious fruit and two very special trees.

One was called “tree of life,” other “tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”

Man was invited to eat of every tree in garden, but forbidden to eat of “tree of knowledge.”

Actually, this was test of man’s obedience to God.

Had he eaten of “tree of life,” test would have been over.

Instead, he was tempted by Satan (Gen 3) and disobeyed God, introducing sin into human race.

But God immediately promised remedy for man’s sin, Redeemer through seed of woman (Gen 3:15).

From that time on Satan has tried to destroy that seed of woman in attempt to defy God and hinder Him in fulfilling His will.

He has also tried to incite men to do his will by urging them to do their own will, regardless of what God has said.

Many illustrations could be given of this conflict down through ages.

He had Cain murder Abel, thus eliminating first two sons of Eve.

He so polluted human race through sin that by time of Noah, some 1600 years after Adam and Eve, only eight people were truly seeking God.

After flood we see such evidence of this conflict as Pharaoh’s attempt to exterminate Israelites and Haman’s anti-Semitic attempt to exterminate all Jews during Medo-Persian Empire.

Many times before and during life of Christ, true seed of woman, Satan tried to destroy Him: Caesar Augustus’ decree of taxation that carried pregnant woman, great with child, 90 miles away to pay taxes; Herod’s edict to kill all babies two years of age and under; his three temptations of Christ, seeking to make Him stoop to his fallen level; storm on Sea of Galilee when Jesus lay sleeping in ship; and many others.

Failing to stop Christ’s perfect sacrifice for redemption of world, he has done everything he can to thwart church of Jesus Christ.

Although he has kept her from fulfilling her perfect role, he has not destroyed church because our Lord has kept His promise.

Matthew 16:18

Church history reveals that after three centuries of incessant attempts to destroy church through persecution and burning all copies of Word of God, church was so powerful that she supplanted paganism as state religion of Rome in 312 AD.

At this point Satan stumbled upon his most effective tool – indulgence or endorsement.

During next 13 centuries church gradually lost her light and her spiritual power by adopting some of satanically inspired practices of paganism contrary to Word of God.

As these practices increased, Bible light decreased, bringing on what is called Dark ages.

No jailer ever kept his prisoner more confined than did church of Rome keep Bible for hundreds of years.

Not until Reformation were people again exposed to Word of God, but again Satan made attack.

Superstitious concepts of Roman Catholic church that by this time were little more than modernized pagan thoughts turned many intellectuals during Age of Enlightenment against Christianity.

History affirms that many skeptics and rationalists were educated in Jesuit colleges.

Being thus exposed to characterization of Christianity through Catholic dogma and never exposed to living Christ, these men turned to atheism and its resultant humanism that has deified man until he is proud, arrogant creature.

Difference between John Wycliffe, John Calvin, Martin Luther, Tyndale, and other Christian intellectuals and such men as Voltaire, Rousseau, Weishaupt, Mirabeau, and other atheistic thinkers was Word of God.

Had latter group been exposed to living Christ through pages of Bible, history may well have been different and world today far better place in which to live.

For more than 400 years Satan’s attack on humanity in general and Christianity in particular has taken many forms until today church seems surrounded by host of different attacking armies of evil.

French skepticism of Voltaire and Rousseau that ultimately produced French Revolution spread through Germany and became German Rationalism.

Other evil forces and concepts stemming from it were evolution, psychiatry, illuminism, Nietzscheism, socialism, communism, liberalism, and Nazism.

Modern college professors ridicule those who believe in “conspiratorial view of history,” which is to deny both events of history and power of Satan to accomplish his devious attempts.

Who can truthfully deny that he is subverting society by destroying Christianity in order to set up his blasphemous religion headed by Antichrist, whom men will worship instead of God?

Who can question that he is trying to destroy all national governments in favor of one-world government which he will head through beast, or Antichrist?

Antichrist and the False Prophet Doomed

Revelation 19:20

According to this verse Satan’s two henchmen, Antichrist and his False Prophet, will be thrown bodily into lake of fire.

This should not seem strange, for if two witnesses can be taken into up into heaven, our Lord can certainly throw two wicked tools of Satan into lake of fire.

Satan Bound a Thousand Years

Revelation 20:1-3

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.

Rev 20 introduces marvelous reign of Christ on earth.

This period of time is utopia man has yearned for and never found.

That coming kingdom age is to be age of righteousness.

History proved that only means to secure righteous era is for Satan to be bound; as long as he is loose, man will have trouble.

Naturally there are those who ridicule idea of literal angel and chain and literal binding of Satan.

As one seminary professors said, “How big a chain would it take to bind Satan and how heavy should it be? We can’t take this passage literally or we introduce many problems we cannot solve.”

Really? What does it matter how big or heavy chain?

Is anything too hard for God?

Dr. Walvoord, another seminary professor and president, has noted, “The four instances in Scripture of the word for ‘chain’ in Rev 20:1 give no reason for interpreting work in other than its ordinary sense.

Whatever physical character of chain, obvious teaching of passage is that action is so designed as to render Satan inactive.

Binding of Satan will restrict him from doing thing he does best, for third verse says that he should deceive nations no more till 1000 years shall be fulfilled.

During millennium Satan will not deceive men about themselves, God, Christ, or eternity.

For this reason we conclude that majority of people living then will be believers.

But Satan will be released at end of period for one last bit of deception, after which he, too, will be cast into lake of fire.

Satan’s Final Doom

Revelation 20:10

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.

Meaning of this verse is too clear to be questioned.

God, by His supernatural hand, will take Satan and cast him forever into lake of fire.

This lake of fire is synonymous with Gehenna, which Jesus referred to as eternal abode of lost.

Detailed description of Satan being cast into hell is found in Is 14:9-17.

Isaiah 14:9-17

Satan will be ridiculed by kings of earth, who will be cast into lake of fire later.

He who was so great and had deceived them now shares their state.

Many have jokingly presented Satan as ruling over hell.

This, of course, is not true.

No king of hell is “tormented day and night forever and ever.”

We should understand that hell is eternal – forever and ever.

Those who refuse to believe in hell must remember that Jesus believed in hell, for he said, in

Matthew 25:41

Unquestionably Son of God believed and preached that there was hell to shun.

Someone will say, “Well, for the devil and his angels, yes, but not mankind.”

Ah, that is tragedy!

Mankind will suffer in hell all torments prepared for supernatural creatures, for I call again your attention to 20:10 where, at end of millennial kingdom, after 1000 years, beast and False Prophet are still in torment.

They were not burned up, but are still there, obviously alluding to fact that one does not cease to exist in hell.

Also Rev 20:11-15 makes it clear that all men whose names are not written in book of life will be cast into this lake of fire.

Revelation 20:11-15

11 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.

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.

14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

Devil, as master of deceit, is doing everything he can to keep men from believing in hell, but hell is literal state of existence that will be plight of all those who reject Jesus.

Don't aid Satan in making mistake that will damn your soul for eternity.

Receive Jesus while there is still time.

Call upon Him while He is near.

Good news of Gospel of Jesus offers remedy for sin, escape from hell.

Jesus is Savior from sin.

John 5:24

The First Resurrection

Revelation 20:4-6

Revelation 20:4-6

One of most treasured subjects in whole Bible is its indisputable presentation of life after death.

Practically all men dream of walking from death to eternal state of bliss, but only Bible gives authoritative details about it.

In fact, it is mentioned so frequently that if there is no resurrection of dead, Bible becomes unreliable.

Every promise to believers concerning afterlife is predicated on bodily resurrection.

Expression “the resurrection from among the dead” is found 49 times in Scripture.

Rev 20:4-6 is only passage which labels believer’s resurrection.

It is important to understand that just as there are two phases to Christ’s second coming,

(1) the Church

(2) seven years later OT saints, and finally

(3) the tribulation saints.

John merges them all together when he says “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection.”

Church Age Saints – Phase I

Saints of church age will be resurrected in first phase of first resurrection, as outlined in 1 Thess 4:13-18.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

This passage describes rapture of church, when all Christians will be resurrected.

This resurrection, according to Paul’s writing, will concern only “the dead in Christ” and those “who sleep in Jesus”; thus it will be limited to church age.

Consisting solely of those who are born-again believers, rapture will include no OT saints.

“In Christ” is uniformly used in NT wherever it has theological meaning as reference to those who have been baptized by Spirit into body of Christ and is used in reference to saints after day of Pentecost.

Old Testament Saints – Phase 2

Dr. Walvoord notes that OT seems to place resurrection of Israel after Tribulation.

In Daniel 12, immediately after description of Tribulation in preceding chapter, deliverance is promised Israel at close of Tribulation.

Daniel 12:1-2

Suggestion that Israel will be resurrected prior to tribulation saints results from comparison of Rev 19:7-9 with Psalm 50:1-6.

Revelation 19:7-9

Psalms 50:1-6

At marriage supper of Lamb, Israel will be in attendance as friends of Bridegroom.

Since marriage supper will occur just prior to glorious appearing, we may assume that Israel will be resurrected *before* glorious appearing, tribulation saints **during** or *at* His glorious appearing.

Tribulation Saints – Phase 3

Rev 6:9-11 presents picture of tribulation saint who have been martyred for testimony of Lamb, waiting for resurrection, for they were told to wait “yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also . . . should be fulfilled.”

This is obvious reference to end of Tribulation, at which time, when Christ comes in His glory to set up His millennial kingdom, tribulation saints will be resurrected.

Revelation 20:4

In order to live, tribulation saints must be resurrected; this evidently will take place while angel is bidding Satan, just prior to or at beginning of millennial kingdom.

The Happy and Holy Ones

V 6 describes eternal state of those taking part in first resurrection as “blessed and holy.”

“Blessed” means “happy”; caused by blessing of God, such happiness is linked with holiness.

Man cannot enjoy uninterrupted blessing today because of sin.

All those resurrected in first or believer's resurrection will be resurrected holy.
 Thus blessing of God, His original intent for man, will never be withheld, because man will live eternally holy and therefore eternally happy.
 Those who partake of this first resurrection will be unusually happy because, according to v 6, "on such second death hath no power."
 Fear of death is one of primary causes of present unhappiness.
 Man today can escape mentally from it or try to amuse himself until he is unaware of it, but if he thinks at all, it disrupts his happy state of mind.
 No Christian should fear death.
 Revelation clarifies that Jesus holds keys of death and hades, and thus second death, or lake of fire.

Revelation 1:18

Revelation 20:14-15

His participation in first resurrection has made him impervious to second death.

The Unbelieving Dead

Who are these who are called "the rest of the dead"?
 About this there is no question.
 They are unbelievers of all ages.
 Luke 16:19-31 demonstrates that upon death they exist in hades.

Luke 16:19-31

We shall see in last part of ch 20 that they will be brought out of hades and judged, then cast alive into lake of fire, which is second death.
 Chart below sharply contrasts nature of two resurrections.

The First Resurrection

The Second Resurrection

Involves witness of Jesus (Rev 20:4)

Involves those deceived by Satan (Rev 20:8) and unbelievers (Rev. 21:8)

Will occur before the millennium (Rev 20:4)

Will occur after the millennium (Rev 20:11)

"And they lived: (Rev 20:4)

"The dead" (Rev 20:12)

Judged (Rev 20:4)

Judged (Rev 20:13)

Become priests and rulers with God and Christ (Rev 20:6)

Tormented day and night (Rev 14:10, 11)

God's sons (Rev 21:7)

There was found no place for them (Rev 20:11)

Over them the second death has no power (Rev 20:6)

Cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death (Rev 20:14, 15)

Enjoy life eternal (Matt 25:46)

Suffer everlasting punishment (Matt 25:46)

Happy and holy (Rev 20:6)

Weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt 25:30)

What Determines Your Resurrection?

Answer to this question signifies clearly your relationship to one who does resurrecting.

We must not consider 1 Thess 4:13-18 without pointing out condition of v 14, "if we believe that Jesus died and rose again . . ."

Condition of being part of this resurrection of believer rests in personal acceptance of Christ's death for our sins according to Scripture and His resurrection on third day according to Scriptures.

Right here it would be good to ask yourself, "Am I ready for that resurrection?"

Have I met condition?"

"Will I be part of it?"

If your answer is negative, you need to accept Christ now.

Call upon Him, assured of His promise that "whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom 10:13).

Just as John announced, "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection," so it follows that tragic and horrible is he that has part in second resurrection.

For to have part in second resurrection is to be eternally lost.

At any cost, avoid that resurrection by calling upon Jesus today that you might partake of first resurrection – that you might be one of Christ's at is coming.

I can't imagine anyone I would rather belong to than Jesus when I think of all these momentous events taking place at end of time.

The Millennium and Church History

Revelation 20:1-6

Rev 20:1-6

20th ch of Rev is one of most controversial chapters in Bible, not because it contains anything essentially complex, but because it touches on subject of preconceived bias.

The Kingdom of Christ in Relation to His Coming

First seven verses of 20th chapter refer six times to kingdom of Christ lasting “one thousand years.”

This has triggered major controversy, not because there is any question about accuracy of original text, but because it conflicts with concepts held by many theologians down through years.

This is only place in Bible that establishes length of time for coming kingdom of Christ.

That there is to be kingdom age during which Christ will rule on earth is really unquestioned by sincere Bible students who believe Bible to be Word of God, for it is one of most frequently mentioned subjects in entire Bible. This kingdom period is often labeled “the Millennium,” term derived from Latin word *mille* (1000) and *annum* (year).

It is unfortunate that term “millennium,” meaning 1000 years has replaced more scriptural term “kingdom.”

This period of time will literally fulfill prayer Jesus taught His followers to pray, “Thy kingdom come.”

Point of controversy throughout church history regarding kingdom essentially concerns whether Christ will come before kingdom is ushered in or whether world will get better and better and Christ will come to righteous earth.

By spiritualizing Scripture, some have even tried to explain away millennium.

Three concepts, known as premillennialism, postmillennialism, and amillennialism, define area of conflict.

Before examining nature of kingdom itself, we must first review content of these views, note when they were introduced into church, and examine them in light of Scripture.

Premillennialism – the Oldest View

The premillennial view is the view that holds that Christ will return to earth, literally and bodily, before the millennial age begins and that, by His presence, a kingdom will be instituted over which He will reign. In this kingdom all of Israel's covenants will be literally fulfilled. It will continue for a thousand years, after which the kingdom will be given by the Son to the Father when it will merge with His eternal kingdom. The central issue in this position is whether the Scriptures are to be fulfilled literally or symbolically. In fact, this is the essential heart of the entire question.

(Dwight D. Pentecost, *Things to Come*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958), p. 372

Generally speaking, man's view of interpreting Scriptures determines whether or not he is premillennialist.

For most part, all who believe Bible to be literal are premillennialists.

Some Bible scholars, however, separate prophecy from other passages.

They interpret rest of Bible literally, but when whenever they come to prophecy, and particularly Rev, they tend to spiritualize it.

Only in taking Bible other than literally can person be anything but premillennialist.

Early Christians were almost unquestionably premillennialists.

NT itself indicates that apostles expected Lord to return and set up His kingdom in their lifetime.

In Acts 1:6, just before their understanding: “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?”

Lord did not deny that He would set up kingdom, but He told the,

It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.”

So we find disciples and those whom they taught anticipating return of Christ and establishment of His kingdom.

Many of detractors of premillennial position suggest that it is relatively new theory, having come on scene during days of John Darby and others. Truth of matter is that premillennialism held sway during first three centuries of early church and was known as “*chiliasm*.”

Dr. Pentecost quotes Sperry Chafer in his Systematic Theology:

Chiliasm, so named from . . . (*chilioi*) – meaning “one thousand” – refers in a general sense to the doctrine of the millennium, or kingdom age that is yet to be, and as stated in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (14th ed., S.V.) is “the belief that Christ will return to reign for a thousand years . . .” The distinctive feature of this doctrine is that He will return before the thousand years and therefore will characterize those years by His personal presence and by the exercise of His rightful authority, securing and sustaining all the blessings on the earth which are ascribed to that period. The term *chiliasm* has been superseded by the designation *premillennialism*; and . . . more is implied in the term than a mere reference to a thousand years. It is a thousand years which is said to intervene between the first and second of humanity's resurrections. . . . In this thousand years . . . every

earthly covenant with Israel will be fulfilled. . . . The entire Old Testament expectation is involved, with its earthly kingdom, the glory of Israel, and the promised Messiah seated on David's throne in Jerusalem.

An additional definition of premillennialism appears in the writings of John Walvoord,

Premillennialism generally holds to a revival of the Jewish nation and their repossession of their ancient land when Christ returns. Satan will be bound (Rev 20:2) and a theocratic kingdom of righteousness, peace, and tranquillity will ensue. The righteous are raised from the dead before the millennium and participate in its blessings. The wicked dead are not raised until after the millennium. The eternal state will follow the judgment of the wicked. Premillennialism is obviously a viewpoint quite removed from either amillennialism or postmillennialism. It attempts to find a literal fulfillment for the prophecies in the Old and New Testament concerning a righteous kingdom of God on earth. Premillennialism assumes the authority and accuracy of Scriptures and the hermeneutical principle of a literal interpretation wherever this is possible.

(John F. Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1959), p. 5, 6*)

Some in early church taught that since there were six literal days of creation after which God rested, so there would be 6000-year periods of time given to man upon earth, after which he would rest for 1000 years of peace.

This view was revived somewhat during 19th century but has not been given wide acceptance, probably because modern science teaches that there are millions of years of human history.

Toward end of 3rd century spiritualizing and allegorizing of Scripture began to take over theological thought, and together with merging of ecclesiastical and governmental Rome under Constantine, premillennialism fell into disrepute.

With advent of Augustine and other Catholic theologians, theology and philosophy supplanted study of Scriptures. Dark Ages are well named, for Word of God, which is light of life, was hidden from men by church that was entrusted with responsibility of propagating it.

As light of God's Word was extinguished, hope of church, literal return of Christ to earth, was eclipsed.

Not until after Reformation was there revival of premillennialism.

First generation of reformers, such as John Calvin and Martin Luther, did not pursue study of second coming particularly but were heavily influenced by theology of Augustine.

Martin Luther had been priest of Augustinian order prior to his withdrawal from Rome, and thus his interpretation was affected by his previous training.

Second generation of reformation Bible scholars saw rise in literal interpretation of Scripture, which in turn produced reemphasis on ancient "chiliasm," now given more modern title of premillennialism.

J. Dwight Pentecost refers to some of great post-Reformation scholars holding premillennial view.

Even critics of premillennialism suggest that Brethren Movement arising in England and Ireland during first part of 19th century was largely responsible for popularizing dispensational view of Lord's return.

It was sometimes called "Darbyism" because of popular and practical writings of John Nelson Darby (1880 – 1882), one of its leaders.

After turn of century, Bible institutes sprang up throughout America with heavy emphasis on literal interpretation of Bible.

These schools have overwhelmingly advocated premillennial view – not by premeditation, but because they are biblical literalists.

No doubt most important influence in popularizing premillennial viewpoint has been *Scofield Reference Bible*.

According to Dr. Walvoord,

This edition of the Bible, which has had unprecedented circulation, has popularized premillennial teachings and provided ready helps of interpretation. It has probably done more to extend premillennialism in the last half century than any other volume. This accounts for the many attempts to discredit this work . . . The reputation of the Scofield Bible is curious because each succeeding writer apparently believes that his predecessors have not succeeded in disposing of this work once and for all. This belief apparently is well-founded, for the Scofield Bible continues to be issued year after year in greater numbers than any of its refuters.

It is probable that premillennial view, though subject to many attacks, will remain dominant influence upon church until Lord returns.

Amillennialism

Amillennialism holds that there will be no literal millennium on earth following second coming of Christ.

It tends to spiritualize all prophecies concerning kingdom and attributes to church those prophecies relating to Israel.

Its adherents are divided on whether millennium is being fulfilled now on earth (Augustine) or whether it is being fulfilled by saints in heaven (Kliefoth).

It may be summed up in idea that there will be no more millennium than there is now, and that eternal state immediately follows second coming of Christ.

This view believes that Satan was bound at first coming of Christ.

Those who hold amillennial point of view concede that it was first suggested by Augustine, who is said more than other to have “molded the doctrines of the church of the Middle Ages.”

Augustine was preceded by dangerous philosophy introduced into church by Clement of Alexandria and his student, Origen, who trained Dionysius.

Together these 3 established Alexandrian emphasis on spiritualizing Scriptures.

Due to Greek emphasis on Platonic philosophy and Plato’s allegorical teaching methods learned by these Alexandrian scholars, third century ended in serious controversy.

Although these men did not teach amillennialism, they did condition brilliant-minded Augustine with spiritualization of Scripture, and he produced it.

His view of amillennialism became accepted viewpoint of church of Rome, which eventually took over most of church and thus propagated his view.

In his book, *The City of God*, Augustine presented present age as state of continual conflict between “City of God” and “City of Satan.”

This was ultimately to climax in victory of church over world.

He felt that Satan was bound on earth by Christ, according to Luke 10:18, and he considered Roman government’s endorsement of Christianity as state religion evidence that church was winning conflict in his day.

When this was completed, Christ would return and eternal order would be established.

In arriving at his conclusion regarding millennium Augustine used principle of spiritualizing Scripture freely.

Augustine is widely regarded as brilliant theologian and thinker by evangelical Christians.

That his teachings have left indelible mark on church cannot be doubted, but that it has been mark for good can very well be questioned.

His view of what City of God is led him into teachings that have given rise to unspeakable misery, very greatness of his name accentuating harmful effects of error he taught.

He, beyond others, formulated doctrine of salvation by church only, by means of her sacraments.

This doctrine, plus his amillennialism and his conception of extreme predestination at choice of God, would certainly give us right question true value of Augustine’s contribution to Christianity.

Naturally amillennialism during age of Rome’s dominance of Christian scene waxed supreme.

Early reformers took their cue from Augustine and similarly adopted amillennialism.

This view was accepted by Calvin, Luther, and many others.

Amillennialism flourished during early Reformation, particularly in formalistic churches, until today it is “without question majority view of professing Christians.

Dr. Walfoord points out that large number of amillennialists at present come from three sources: those who have become disenchanted with postmillennialism, those who came out of church of Rome, and those identified with 20th century liberalism.

It is not right to say that all amillennialists are liberal, but it is correct that all liberals are amillennialists.

One cannot hold amillennial point of view without unusual spiritualization of Scripture, which is most dangerous interpretation to follow.

Postmillennialism

Postmillennialism, most recent of three major views concerning establishment of millennium, is almost extinct at present time.

Postmillennialism basically suggests that world will get better and better until whole world is Christianized, at which time Christ will return to kingdom of peace.

This view was originated by Daniel Whitby (1638-1726), Unitarian controversialist in England.

Although he was censored for some of his heretical views, particularly on subject of Trinity, many conservative theologians rapidly embraced and propagated his viewpoint on millennium.

Although this view was quite popular before turn of century and was given some impetus during great revival movement of Wesleys, Finney, Moody, and others, it has been almost eliminated as result of two great world wars, great depression, and overwhelming rise in moral evil.

LaHay quotes one theological professor he heard years ago, "The postmillennialist does not have a post to lean on."

Many of those who once held postmillennial view have changed to amillennial position.

Reasons for Accepting the Premillennial View

There are many reasons for accepting premillennial view of Jesus's return to this earth.

Dr. Clarence Larkin, in his book Dispensational Truth, offers following evidence.

1. When Christ comes He will raise the dead, but the Righteous dead are to be raised before the Millennium, that they may reign with Christ during the 1000 years, hence there can be no Millennium before Christ comes. Revelation 20:5.
2. When Christ comes He will separate the "tares" from the "wheat," but as the Millennium is a period of universal righteousness the separation of the "tares" and "wheat" must take place before the Millennium, therefore there can be no Millennium before Christ comes. Matthew 13:40-43.
3. When Christ comes Satan shall be bound, but as Satan is to be bound during the Millennium, there can be no Millennium until Christ comes. Revelation 20:1-3.
4. When Christ comes Antichrist is to be destroyed, but as Antichrist is to be destroyed before the Millennium there can be no Millennium until Christ comes. 2 Thessalonians 2:8; Revelation 19:20.
5. When Christ comes the Jews are to be restored to their own land, but as they are to be restored to their own land before the Millennium, there can be no Millennium before Christ comes. Ezekiel 36:24-28.; Revelation 1:7; Zechariah 12:10.
6. When Christ comes it will be unexpectedly, and we are commanded to watch lest He take us unawares. Now if He is not coming until after the Millennium, and the Millennium is not yet here, why command us to watch for an event that is over 1000 years off?

These are only some of reasons why we anticipate coming of Christ before millennium.

In addition, it is clear teaching of Bible.

Rev 19 pictures Christ coming literally to earth, slaying Antichrist, and casting him alive into lake of fire.

After Satan is bound, Christ will rule with His saints.

Literal interpretation of Scripture will invariably point one to premillennial return of Christ to earth.

The Coming Kingdom of Christ

There can be no doubt as to scriptural evidence for coming kingdom of Christ.

There are literally hundreds of verses in Bible that predict earthly kingdom of God on this earth, ruled by Son of God and superseding all kingdoms of world.

Most of prophets treat this subject at length, often holding it out as source of encouragement to children of Israel in their most desperate days.

We will seek to give exposition of some of longer passages.

Following chapter will contain description of millennium from some of shorter passages: then texts will be briefly compared in order to develop composite picture of life during millennium.

The Kingdom According to Daniel

In Dan 2:31-35 we find vision of Nebuchadnezzar recalled by Daniel, great prophet.

He sums up this description of four world empires with these words:

Daniel 2:31-35

Interpretation of this vision is provided by Daniel in v 36-35.

After describing parts of great image as four world kingdoms

1. Head of gold as Babylon
2. Breast and arms of silver representing Medo-Persian Empire
3. Belly and thighs of bronze representing Greek Empire, and
4. Legs of iron signifying Roman Empire.

He describes ten toes and feet of iron and clay as representing ten kingdoms that will cooperate in establishing Antichrist in his power during Tribulation.

In V 44 we find interpretation of stone cut without hands, which grinds to power rest of image.

Daniel 2:44-45

From this prophecy and interpretation we see that coming kingdom will pulverize all known kingdoms of world and expand until it "consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever."

This can be none other than kingdom of God, for God shall "set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed."

This, then, is kingdom of God ruled over by Christ, who is symbolized in Bible as rock.

His kingdom will be firmly established, filling whole earth.

We have already seen in Rev 17-18 that nothing is more detrimental to humanity than religion and government.

Man looks on government as panacea to solve all of his ills.

By contrast, Bible teaches that government without benevolent despot of supernatural origin as its leader cannot be happy experience, but source of man's misery.

Utopian kingdom predicted in this passage will be kingdom established earth when Christ, only truly benevolent despot who has already demonstrated His love for mankind, shall return.

The Coming King

Psalms 2

Psalm 2, written by David under inspiration of Holy Spirit, prophesies day when world's leaders will become so atheistic and antagonistic to God that they will pit their wills against Him in gigantic atheistic, anti-Semitic conflict.

Reaction to God, however, is laughter; He holds them in derision.

This event evidently will take place in middle of Tribulation, when man's pride is so filled with his own importance that he thinks he can actually defy God.

In so doing, he will incur wrath of God, but first he will incur laughter of God (V 4).

V 5 predicts His anger in these words: "Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his great displeasure. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." (Ps 2:5-6)

God will establish His king in His holy place in His due time, regardless of atheistic antagonism of men.

V 7-9 speaks of absolute kingdom stretching to uttermost parts of earth.

He will rid world of all those kings who oppose Him.

V 10-12 conclude with God's challenge to world leaders concerning their present attitude.

If world leaders responded that way today, this world would be entirely different place in which to live.

Ezekiel's Prophecies of a World Kingdom

Prophecies of Ezekiel take on logical progression when in Ch 36-37 we find restoration of nation of Israel to land of Palestine.

Ch 38-39 contain abortive attempt of Russia to come down against Israel in latter days just prior to Tribulation. (or whoever is living in what is now currently old USSR)

In Ch 40-48 we encounter description of millennial kingdom, particularly temple and conditions for worship during 1000 year period.

Ezekiel goes into great detail regarding matter of worshiping in temple, even pointing out that sacrificial systems will be reestablished.

These sacrifices during millennial kingdom will be to nation Israel what Lord's Supper is to church today: reminder of what they have been saved from.

No meritorious or efficacious work will be accomplished through these sacrifices.

Instead, they will remind Israel repeatedly of their crucified Messiah, just as Passover Feast reminded nation of Israel for centuries that God delivered them from land of Pharaoh by blood.

The Millennial Kingdom According to Zechariah the Prophet

Zechariah 14

These verses make it clear that Jerusalem will serve as headwaters for religious life of people, source of waterways of world: "living waters shall go out from Jerusalem" (v 8)

This refers to "living waters" that Jesus promised woman at well in Samaria, indicating that way of redemption and new life would be supplied from Jerusalem, headquarters of King.

It also refers to physical waters provided during that age from Jerusalem.

It will be, then, headwaters for both spiritual and physical waters.

V 16 indicates that all people will come to Jerusalem to worship king every year.

Not to do so will be to incur animosity of God "in the form of a plague."

V 20 refers to holiness of kingdom.

We have already seen that Satan will be bound during this millennial kingdom (Rev 20:1-3); when Christ rules, it will be true kingdom of holiness.

World has never known era of holiness when standards were not established through practices of men but by mandate of God.

During those days God's standards will be law.

Violators of that law will be severely punished.

The Millennium According to the Prophet Isaiah

Prophet Isaiah referred to coming kingdom of Christ many times.

Last two chapters in Isaiah contain specific information concerning that period.

Isaiah 65:17-25

This passage reveals some of most descriptive details.

Such information is given to show that Jerusalem will be place of rejoicing; no more weeping will be heard within city.

Jerusalem has known much heartache throughout its many centuries.

One of its walls is famous today as place of wailing – wailing for future restoration of greatness of Israel.

This will be fulfilled during millennium.

V 20 indicates that life span of man will be increased as in days before flood.

Believers will evidently live until end of millennium, some almost 1000 years.

However, unsaved people will be given 100 years in which to receive Christ.

If they reject Him, they will die on their 100th birthday.

Economic stability will be standard during that period.

For instance, men will not build houses and let others occupy them due to death or sickness.

It will be stable time when people can enjoy fruits of their efforts.

Isaiah 65:23

Text also indicates that God will answer His people speedily during millennial kingdom, even while they are in midst of praying, and sometimes “before they call.”

God will anticipate needs of people, supplying those needs in many cases before they call upon Him.

Curse will be lifted from animals, who will enjoy peace one with another, for the wolf and the lamb shall feed together.”

Only exception seems to be serpent, which will continue to crawl on his belly and eat dust.

The Renovation of the Earth by Fire

Most prophetic teachers acknowledge that earth will be renovated by fire, but for some reason they insist locating event at end of millennium.

Isaiah 65:17

V 17 precedes description of millennium, indicating that God will “create new heavens and a new earth” *before* kingdom is established.

That means He will create new atmospheric heaven around earth and reestablish earth on far better basis.

We learn from other passages that waste areas of world will be recreated.

Today $\frac{3}{4}$ of earth is wasted by water, making much of earth unusable.

At that time vast mountain ranges will be leveled, and earth will enjoy complete resurfacing before millennium.

Same period of time is referred to in 2 Peter 3:1-16.

2 Peter 3:1-16

Apostle predicted that in last days scoffers would come, “walking after their own lusts” and suggesting that since no changes have occurred in creation since beginning, there is no reason to believe fact of His coming.

They reject change of flood and destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Apostle pointed out to believers that they are not so limited by such biased concepts.

He further stated that “one day is with the Lord as a thousand years,” meaning that God’s promises over 2,000 years ago are only two days old.

Then he predicted day of Lord would usher in time of cataclysmic change upon earth.

His terms indicate that earth will be dissolved, meaning surface of earth in day of Lord.

Day of Lord, then, will dawn with destruction of this old earth and refurbishing of its surface, upon which God will establish His kingdom of righteousness.

Times described by Peter are upon us.

Certainly every child of God today should heed His words in 2 Peter 3:11-12.

2 Peter 3:11-12

Satan’s Final Conflict

Revelation 20:7-10

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.

9 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.

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 have already seen that at beginning of millennial kingdom Satan was bound by great angel in bottomless pit. (Rev 20:1-3)

That means that men will not be tempted by Satan for 1000 years.

Today there are three forces of temptation: world, flesh, and devil.

During millennial kingdom men will only be tempted by flesh.

Because world will be kingdom of righteousness, administered by Lord, righteous judge, no lewd, suggestive, worldly temptations can mislead men.

Neither will they be tempted of Satan, for he will be chained.

Therefore only source of temptation will be flesh.

In such environment overwhelming number of people will no doubt be saved.

Isaiah 65:20

This verse suggests that believers will live after birth to end of millennium, since man will be reckoned child when he is 100 years old.

But it also indicates that if person reaches 100 years of age and is not believer, he will be accursed, or die.

In other words, those living during millennium are given 100 years to make decision to receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

If they do so, they will continue living to end of millennium, paralleling age of man before flood.

Of they do not receive Jesus Christ, they will die at 100 years of age.

If we add to this absence of worldly temptation and absence of satanic temptation, plus fact that whole world will know Gospel of Christ in that day, we can reasonably conclude that this will be most ideal environment in which to raise children.

Like Adam and Eve and others after them until flood, couples in millennium can have children not only first 100 years but for 100s of years thereafter.

Since it will be time of unprecedented blessing and food supply, couple will conceivably have as many children as they desire.

Conclusion seems justifiable, then, that overwhelming majority of people on earth during last 900 years will be Christians.

Of course, many born during that age will reject Christ and die by their 100 birthday.

And even though they die at 100, there will be ample time for these unsaved to propagate generation of unbelievers to follow Satan when he is released at end of kingdom age.

Revelation 20:8

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.

Statement “the number of whom is as the sand of the sea” does not necessarily mean that overwhelming majority of world population explosion will occur during millennium and that many born during last century will follow him.

Comparatively speaking, this will be youth movement, since all who follow Satan in his last rebellion will be under 100 years old.

The Massive Millennial Soul Harvest

It is most encouraging to realize that many times more people will be converted during millennial kingdom than will be lost.

Because millennial population will undoubtedly exceed total world population during whole of biblical history, and since majority living at that time will be Christians, it follows that here will be more people in heaven than in hell.

Consequently, God will achieve His grand purpose for majority of mankind – their salvation.

2 Peter 3:9

Another truth revealed in V 8 concerns consistency of work of Satan in every generation.

After being incarcerated for 1000 years, he will immediately proceed to do what he has done for centuries – *deceive the nations*.

Satan is master deceiver of men.

His conflict-of-the-ages program, as previously outlined, is just sample of extent of his consistent deception.

He will inspire Antichrist to be master deceiver during Tribulation.

2 Thessalonians 2:9-10

This deception always finds itself in opposition to will of God.

Whenever man rebels against God, whether he be Cain, Lamech, Nimrod, Pharaoh, Judas, Voltaire, Thomas Paine, or Robert Ingersoll, he is deceived by devil.

In practical sense Satan tries two basic approaches with man today: he either gets him to turn against Christ because he loves unrighteousness, or he gets him to rebel against God by willfulness.

It is most practical here to pause and ask you, reader, if you have received Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior.

If you have not, then you are deceived by devil.

You may dress up your deception with host of excuses and long list of reason, but it is nothing more than Satan's deception.

It would be sell for you to contemplate final outcome of Satan's own rebellion lest you share it with him.

Revelation 20:10

God, in His infinite wisdom, did not cast Satan into lake of fire and brimstone at time He cast in his two chief tools, beast and False Prophet.

They were cast in at end of Tribulation, before millennium began.

Revelation 19:20

He saved Satan out of that judgment because He wanted to give last generation who would not live to be 100 final choice.

This will make unanimous experience of all men who have ever live, from time of Adam and Eve to very end of human history.

All men have been tempted of Satan and have had to decide whether to respond to God or Satan.

All men have sinned, but God through gift of His Son, Jesus, on Calvary's cross has given men second chance.

That second chance, available only on this earth, involves acceptance of God's gift of salvation in person of His Son.

If you have never made that decision, you are making contrary decision right now.

It should be pointed out here that although beast and False Prophet, or Antichrist and False Prophet, were cast into lake of fire 1000 years before devil, they remained there, for passage says, "where the beast and the false prophet are."

Since these are men, suffering torments of damned for 1000 years, we may clearly discern capability of man to suffer that length of time.

Plight of Satan for eternity as given in V 10 is same plight as that shared by all those who have been deceived by him: he "shall be tormented day and night for ever."

There is no reason to symbolize these simple words.

Same words used to describe eternal blessings of those who receive Christ and eternal nature of God are used to describe plight of lost – "forever and ever."

If God is eternal and believers will enjoy Him eternally, why should we arbitrarily suggest that it is not possible for man and Satan to be tormented day and night forever and ever?

The Great White Throne

Revelation 20:11-15

You have just read most awesome passage found anywhere in Bible.

It confronts man with sobering truth of his ultimate encounter with God.

Story is told of great statesman Daniel Webster, toward twilight of his life, attending luncheon meeting with some younger government leaders.

Chairman of group turned to Mr. Webster and asked, "What is the greatest thought that has ever passed through your head?"

Quick as flash Webster replied, "My accountability to God."

Nowhere is man's accountability to God more clearly defined than in this passage.

One truth must be emphasized at outset of this study: **this ultimate judgment of Great White Throne is for unbelievers only.**

Who are these "dead, small and great"?

They are dead now in trespasses and sins because of their rejection of Jesus Christ, and they will be resurrected in order to appear at this judgment.

Revelation 20:5

It is noteworthy that in V 12 dead are referred to as "small and great."

This would mean "small and great" intellectually, physically, financially, positionally, and in every other way.

This group will include all dead without Jesus Christ.

V 13 adds further information.

Revelation 20:13

Sea will give up all those who were drowned or buried at sea, never having accepted Jesus.

Death represents grave, hades, place of torment where their spirits have gone.

What these two verses teach is that we may expect physical resurrection uniting dead, whether their ashes are in grave, in mausoleum, on earth, or in sea.

Those ashes will be resurrected and united with soul and spirit as they arise from place of torment and in this resurrected form they will stand before throne.

The Book of Life Opened

At this point we find set of books and book being opened.

Revelation 20:12

For identity of these books we must look beyond our immediate text to another passage in Word.

Galatians 3:10

This is description of second book by which man will be judged.

Those who have lived under hearing of law of God will be judged by it.

Unless man accepts mercy of God in person of His Son, there is no way he can be found righteous, because "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23).

Rev 20:12 indicates that some of books at this Great White Throne Judgment will be books of man's works, for "the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."

Same thing is in latter part of V 13.

In some way every man must have recording angel who in this life is tabulating everything he does.

In connection with this thought it is well to consider Ecc 12:14.

Ecclesiastes 12:14

In the final hour books of man's works, or his deed, will be open.

If man today is able by means of photography to capture action of man's life and by means of plastic recordings to record man's voice, certainly Almighty God can play His divine film and recording at judgment.

Not only will actions and words of man be recalled at this judgment, but "every secret thing."

This would indicate that God has special x-ray camera that takes photographs of thoughts and intents of heart, which will be revealed in that day.

D.L. Moody, famous evangelist, used to say that if man ever invented camera that could take picture of human heart, he would starve to death, for people would refuse to have this revealing picture exposed.

In that awesome day all secret thoughts and intents of heart will be revealed by projection of God's special x-ray, taken from books of man's deeds.

V 12 indicates not only that dead will be judged out of books according to their works, but that another book is opened, which is Book of Life.

N.T. refers to this Book of Life eight; and although OT does not call it Book of Life, three times it mentions book in which names are written.

To properly understand Book of Life, you must realize that there are really two Books of Life.

One is called Book of Life, other, Lamb's Book of Life.

These are definitely not same!

Book of Life contains names of living.

Lamb's Book of Life is book belonging to Jesus, "Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."

Book, then, is His.

Jesus came into world to save sinners and, as He repeatedly said, "to give unto them eternal life."

Very clearly, then, Lamb's Book of Life is book of Jesus Christ in which are entered names of those who have received His eternal life.

Revelation 13:8

I am personally inclined to believe that in this book will appear only names of believers who have lived since cross.

Rev 13:8 indicates that during Tribulation people who will worship Antichrist are those whose names are **not** written in Book of Life of Lamb slain from foundation of world.

Rev 21:7 tells us that only people who will enter into Holy City are "they who are written in the Lamb's book of life."

Revelation 21:7

It is therefore absolutely essential that one have his name written in this book.

There are two major differences between two books.

First, Book of Life seems to contain names of all living people, whereas Lamb's Book of Life includes only names of those who call upon Lamb for salvation.

Second, and without doubt most important, it is possible to have one's name blotted out of Book of Life, but not out of Lamb's Book of Life.

Revelation 3:5

Overcomer here is one clothed in white garments of Christ, for he is believer to whom is imputed righteousness of Christ.

Therefore his name will not be blotted out of Book of Life.

Exodus 32:33

It is therefore possible to have one's name blotted out of Book of Life because of sin.

But it is impossible to have one's name removed from Lamb's Book of Life.

Revelation 22:19

Some try to tell us that this reference to God taking away man's "part" out of Book of Life suggests that anyone who detracts from book of Revelation and its prophecy will lose his reward; but this cannot be, for only "part" we have in Book of life is our name.

We have no indication in Scripture that anything but our name is written in Book of Life, for deeds of man are not recorded there, but in books of our works.

WE see, then, that there are three reasons for having one's name blotted out of Book of Life:

1. for sinning against God
2. for not being clothed in righteousness of Christ through new birth
3. for taking away from words of book of this prophecy.

Revelation 20:15

This verse establishes importance of Book of Life.

In sense this is God's double check at Great White Throne Judgment, for as man comes forward, he will be judged by book of law, by Lamb's book of life, and by deeds done in flesh taken from books of his works.

Then, just before he is cast into lake of fire, he is given double check.

Recording angel will look through this book, "and whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

This double check in Book of Life points out consistent scriptural principle – that there are only two kinds of people.

Bible repeatedly refers to believing or unbelieving, saved or unsaved, condemned or not condemned, righteous or unrighteous, just or unjust, wise or unwise.

This principle is maintained here: there are those whose names are written and others whose names are not written in Book of Life.

In that hour there will be no hesitation, no indecision, for either man's name is written or it is not written in Book of Life.

It must be one way or other.

One does not need to have his name entered in Book of Life, for if he is alive it is already there; God is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

But to keep it there, he must also have his name written in Lamb's Book of Life.

John 6:35

Jesus repeatedly invited men to come to Him, for He alone is way, truth, and life.

John 5:24

Steps of salvation here are very clear:

1. "he that heareth my word"
2. "believeth on him that sent me."

That means trusting in Him.

Trust that Jesus is way of salvation, one who has come to seek and to save that which was lost, including you.

Man who trusts has everlasting life.

Those whose names are written in Lamb's Book of Life are those who have received this everlasting life.

Have you?

Rev 20:11-15 includes two books of vital importance.

Your name is already written I Book of Life, but is it written in Lamb's Book of Life?

That depends entirely on what you have done with Jesus.

If you have accepted Him, it is; if you have not accepted Him, it is missing.

Answer to question determines your eternal destiny.

The New Heaven and New Earth

Revelation 21

Rev 21 introduces eternal future planned by God, ultimate purpose of God for man.

Not much space in Scripture is given to this eternal state, but enough is revealed to assure every believer's heart about future.

Rev 21-22 provide more details of this state than can be found anywhere else in Bible.

Seven New Things

There are seven new things revealed in these two chapters that form fitting introduction to eternal future God has prepared for those who love Him.

A new heaven (21:1)	a new paradise (22:L1-5)
A new Jerusalem (21:1)	a new source of light (22:5)
New Jerusalem	a new place for God's throne (22:3)
New things (21:5)	

The Destruction of This Earth

Three destructions of earth are described in Bible, one past and two yet to come.

First destruction came when flood covered earth 1 day of Noah, sparing only eight just persons (Gen 6-8).

In one of best-known promises in OT, however, signified by rainbow, God promised Noah that He would never again destroy earth by flood.

Nevertheless, two passages in Bible predict that God will yet destroy earth.

One destruction will come by fire, after which He will restore all things.

Isaiah 65:17-20

Is 65:17-20 speaks of restored earth.

2 Peter 3:4-14

2 Peter 3:4-14 describes judgment of fire reserved or kept in store "against the day of judgment."

Other destruction is described in Rev 21:1.

Many Bible scholars seem to identify Is 65:17-20 and 2 Pet 3:4-14 with Rev 21:1.

This presents some very serious problems.

Thorough examination of two passages would suggest that since death appears in Is 65, Isaiah was obviously not talking about eternal order, but millennial kingdom.

And since 2 Peter 3:10 refers to day of Lord, LaHaye said he is inclined to believe that he meant second catastrophic event that will come upon earth, producing refurbished earth to begin millennium.

We have already examined Rev 20 concerning final insurrection of Satan, when again heaven and earth will be polluted by rebellion of Satan.

Therefore words of Jesus, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matt 24:35), evidently will be fulfilled when prophecy of Rev 21:1 is completed: "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."

The Destruction of Heaven

Why will God destroy heaven?

Very simply, because atmospheric heavens are filled with evil.

Whenever we read about heaven in Bible, we should keep in mind that there are three heavens:

1. atmospheric heaven around earth;
2. stellar heaven, which contains great galaxies that we view on starry night; and
3. third heaven, or throne of God, as referred to in 2 Corinthians 12:2 and Rev 4 & 5.

2 Corinthians 12:2

Our text in no way indicates that God will destroy stellar heaven, or place of His headquarters, but atmospheric heaven, which is abode of Satan.

Ephesians 6:12

Eph 6:12 indicates that Satan, who is "god of this earth," and his emissaries are performing spiritual wickedness in heavenly places.

Therefore, after final rebellion of Satan, God will destroy this earth that is so marred and cursed by Satan's evil. He will include atmospheric heaven to guarantee that all semblance of evil has been cleared away.

The New Heaven and the New Earth

Because it is God's plan for man to inhabit earth forever in fulfillment of His promises, after He does away with this planet as we know it, He will create new heaven and new earth better than anything this world has ever known, including Garden of Eden.

Many changes will be made, as seen in V 1.

Revelation 21:1

2/3 of present earth's surface is covered with water; remaining 1/3 includes large area rendered worthless due to mountains and deserts.

Thus only small percentage of earth's surface is inhabitable.

Nothing in text indicates new earth limited to 25,000 miles in circumference and 8,000 miles in diameter of present earth.

It may be much larger; Bible just does not say.

But one thing is certain – new earth will be Christian's heaven.

When Christian talks about going to heaven, he means in soul state, provided he dies before Rapture.

After resurrection of body, believers will come to earth to reign with Christ during millennium.

After 1,000 years we will live forever on new earth described in our text.

Although it will have river and abundance of water, it will not have land surface wasted by seas.

Revelation 21:2

Holy City which Jesus went to prepare for His saints will come down from heaven to this earth.

This is new Jerusalem, fully described here in ch 21, will be city of righteousness, prepared by God for enjoyment of His people.

Expression "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" is symbolic reference to preparation of virtuous young woman for day of her marriage.

God has been preparing city for almost 2,000 years.

Since Christ instantly called worlds and universes into being, one can scarcely imagine glories of this city which has been so long in preparation.

"Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them."

Another outstanding characteristic of this new city is that God's tabernacle will no longer be in third heaven, for He will move His headquarters to new earth and will literally take up His abode in new Jerusalem.

We simply do not have mental capacity to comprehend significance of living in economy where God Himself exists.

"And they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God."

People who inhabit new eternal earth will be those who voluntarily received Christ by faith – before flood, before Abraham, before Christ, during church age, throughout Tribulation and millennium.

As indicated in our study of millennium, far more people will inhabit heaven than hell.

God has special love for mankind.

That love will have all eternity to express itself upon His obedient creatures.

To true Christian heaven is not just place where all things are new, but place where he can enjoy unbroken fellowship with God.

"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

Wiping away of all tears, means that normal reaction of present life, sorrow, will be eliminated.

As Job tells us, "Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward" (Job 5:7).

Trouble produces sorrow, sorrow produces tears.

But these tears will be wiped away.

Passage may also indicate that we will lose power to remember loved ones who rejected Jesus.

With keenness of mind which we will possess in resurrection, doubtless compassionate heart of God's people would burst with sorrow and heaven would be ruined were they to contemplate lost plight of their loved ones condemned for eternity.

God in His marvelous mercy will wipe away all tears from their eyes.
That probably means He will erase all remembrance of unsaved from minds of believers.
“There will be no more death.”

Specter of death, natural result of sin, will at last be removed.

“ . . . neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.”

Since sin produces death and sickness, sinless eternity will not admit these miseries.

“And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new.”

This is almost certain indication that God will enter into dimension that we cannot yet comprehend.

He plans entirely new way of life for us.

For instance, many have wondered about marital status of Christians during millennium, but I think that whatever remorse we experience when thinking of life for eternity without marriage can easily be offset by faith when we accept fact that all things will be new.

As marvelous as good Christian marriage is today, it will be totally eclipsed by sheer delight and unquenchable joy during eternal future in whatever experience that newness possesses.

The Lord Reiterates His Earthly Offer

Revelation 21:6

John 7:37-38

38 He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

John 4:14

Jesus is same yesterday, today, and forever.

2,000 years after He made these promises we find Him prophetically reiterating same thing to man.

“I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life *freely*.”

Man’s Thirst for God

Anyone who has ever traveled will testify that ancient civilizations and present cultures are extremely religious.
Man’s religious inclination is a testimony of his thirst for God.

Man will not thirst in eternal state, but will be satisfied over and above all that he can ever ask or think.

His thirst will be supplied by Christ Himself.

If nothing else, this speaks of complete satisfaction of place that lasts forever.

Only Believers Will Inhabit Eternal Order

Revelation 21:7

One of most wonderful concepts in Bible is father-son relationship between God and Christian.

This verse indicates that it will go on forever in heaven as on earth.

The Eternal State of the Lost

Revelation 21:8

Since God has been talking about eternal state of blessed, He contrasts that with eternal state of lost, described more fully in 20:11-15.

Here He refers to them as those that have part in second death.

These are individuals who through fear or unbelief or lust for sin rejected Jesus.

Location of V 8 in eternal plan of God should be carefully examined.

It once and for all repudiates suggestion of many that there is second chance for sinners after death.

This unscriptural concept is made to appease conscience of those libertines who have rejected Jesus and prefer sin.
But not one shred of evidence in Bible substantiates it!

And certainly location of this verse pronounces everlasting death sentence on idea.

Here in eternal order men are pictured already in their eternal state as based on their own personal decision about God; He refers to them one last time, revealing that they will have their part in “lake with burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

Only Two Kinds of People

V 7-8 confirm consistent presentation throughout entire Bible that God sees only two kinds of people, believers and unbelievers.

Either they are overcomers who part with God eternally or unbelievers who have their part in lake of fire.

You who read this chapter should examine yourselves to see which kind of person you represent.

Are you one who has trusted Jesus and thus through Him will inherit all things, or are you among those who have rejected Him?

If so, you will have your part in lake of fire.

It is not too late to heed Savior's call: "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely."

He will receive you right now if you will call on Him.

If there is any question in your mind as to whether you have ever invited Jesus into your life, may I urge you to get down on your knees right now and ask Him to save you.

The New Jerusalem

Rev 21:9-27

Dazzling glory of new city of Jerusalem that is to come down from God out of heaven is beyond man's ability to comprehend.

It is pictured in Revelation as ultimate preparation of God for man's habitation.

This same difficulty of comprehension may be observed in ministry of many of our missionaries.

As they live amid primitive tribe for period of time and try to communicate to them scenes of outside world, natives look at them in bewilderment.

How can one describe electric stove to native who has never seen anything but open wood fire?

How can one describe refrigeration to native who has known nothing but cool of mountain stream that runs by his thatched hut?

Only by comparing unknown with known is missionary able to convey facts of outside world or, more importantly, eternal truths of God.

Thus it is with us as we try to comprehend glories God has prepared in Holy City for them that love Him.

He has used terms and descriptions with which we are familiar to describe things that are beyond our finite frame of reference.

The New Jerusalem – the Bride of Christ.

Revelation 21:9-11

Inviting John to high mountain, angel showed him Bride, Lamb's wife.

But Bride is described in V 10 as great city, holy Jerusalem.

This does not suggest that Bride of Christ is city.

Since Ch 19 described marriage of Lamb to Bride, we find that Bride is not physical city but Church.

Holy Spirit here is telling us about that city which Lord promised His disciples in John 14 when He said, "I go to prepare a place for you."

Now that prepared city is coming to earth, and inhabitants of it are members of Bride.

When this city comes to earth, it will be people-filled city – people in their resurrected bodies after millennium, prepared to dwell with Christ for eternity.

That is why this city, which surpasses splendor of anything comprehended by man, is called Bride, Lamb's wife.

City is more than buildings and streets, for these are merely means of providing for inhabitants which compose real city.

As we shall see, others will be permitted into city, but city, which will be capital of eternal order of God, is "the bride, that great city, the holy Jerusalem."

"Having the glory of God."

This city is crowning feature of creation of God, unique habitation of redeemed for eternity.

To emphasize glory of God, verse pictures dazzling light "like a jasper stone, clear as crystal."

Someone has suggested that perhaps city will be surrounded with ball of crystal light; just as earth is round, this square city would have round sphere of light.

Certainly it will reflect glory of God.

The City Foursquare (Rev 21:12-21)

Revelation 21:12-21

Great wall around this city suggests that it will be exclusive city.

I will not be built for protection, of course, since no enemies will threaten in eternal order, but it will stand as visual reminder that all men do not have access to God.

Obviously twelve gates takes on great significance in this city.

Since Bible is inspired by God, we can expect, in spite of various authors and length of time engaged in its writing, that there would be unusual, even supernatural continuity in use of numbers.

Students of Bible numerology point out this thrilling thread of consistency that attests to divine authorship.

For example, it is suggested that number *one* stands for unity, *two* for union, *three* for Trinity; *four* is number of earth (four directions: east, west, north south), *five* divisional number (five wise and five foolish virgins), *six* number of man.

Everything in Bible that has to do with man seems to be in realm of *six*.

For instance, “Six days shalt thou labor.”

Height of average man is about six feet.

Antichrist uses his number three sixes, called number of man.

Seven seems to be perfect number, or God’s number.

He instructed Solomon to put seven steps in throne of temple.

He established divine calendar on basis of seven days and He has described seven millennia of time relating to man’s activity on earth.

Twelve seems to be governmental or administrative number.

Thus we find multiples of twelve in administration of God’s universe – twenty-four thrones around altar and one hundred forty-four thousand outstanding Christians, as described in Rev 14, who will probably gain special leadership positions during millennial kingdom.

Note many references to twelve in this picture of Holy City that will come down from heaven.

Twelve gates. Twelve entrances will always be open for God’s people to have access to city.

V 13 indicates there will be three gates on each of four sides of this gigantic city.

Twelve angels. Again we see relationship of angels in eternal order and their work with man.

Names of twelve tribes. These indicate clearly that children of Israel will have ready access to this splendid heavenly city.

Since angels are mentioned, it seems that each of tribes has its angel, just as each of churches, according to Rev 2-3, has its angel.

Twelve foundations. Foundation walls will be magnificent beyond comprehension.

In V 19-21 they are described as

garnished with all manner of precious stones.”

Dr. Walvoord described twelve foundations as follows:

The various foundations are represented as layers built upon each other, each layer extending around all four sides of the city.

Jasper – gold in appearance but like clear glass in substance, namely, glass with a gold cast to it;

Sapphire – a stone similar to a diamond in hardness and blue in color;

Chalcedony – an agate stone from Chalcedon (in Turkey), thought to be sky blue with other colors running through it;

Emerald – introduces a bright green color;

Sardonyx – a red and white stone;

Sardius – refers to a common jewel of reddish color, also found in honey color which is considered less valuable. The Sardius is used with Jasper in Rev 4:3 in describing the glory of God on the throne;

Chrysolyte – a transparent stone, golden in color, according to the ancient writer Pliny, and therefore somewhat different from the modern pale green Chrysolyte stone;

Beryl – is sea green;

Topaz – is yellow-green and transparent;

Chrysoprasus – introduces another shade of green;

Jacinth – is a violet color; and

Amethyst – is commonly purple.

Though the precise colors of these stones in some cases are not certain, the general picture here described by John is one of unmistakably beauty, designed to reflect the glory of God in a spectrum of brilliant color. The light of the city within shining through these various colors in the foundation of the wall topped by the wall itself composed of the crystal-clear Jasper forms a scene of dazzling beauty in keeping with the glory of God and the beauty of His Holiness. The city is undoubtedly far more beautiful to the eye than anything man has ever been able to create, and it reflects not only the infinite wisdom and power of God but also his grace as extended to the objects of His salvation.

“ . . . and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.”

Foundation stones contain names of apostles, indicating that Holy City will contain redeemed by blood of Christ, who heard Word through faithful witnessing of servants of God in first century, apostles.

Gates of city contain names of twelve tribes, clearly indicating that they were vehicles through which oracles of God were revealed in OT days, and to whom Messiah came.

Both OT saints and Church will have access to this city, but each time they enter they will be reminded of their debt to nation Israel and to apostles.

Revelation 21:15-16

Most Bible scholars agree that root meaning of Greek word for furlong indicates that each side of this city is approximately 1,500 miles long.

Thus city itself would stretch from about eastern seaboard of U.S. to Mississippi River on one side and from Canadian border to Gulf of Mexico on other.

In addition to length and breadth, city will be same in height.

Bible scholars do not agree as to whether this will be square-shaped or a pyramid-shaped city.

Even though pyramid concept seems more in keeping with our understanding, literal interpretation of text would suggest that it will be square.

Great size, of course, will afford sufficient space for habitation of saints of all ages.

Can you imagine view from your apartment house overlooking Holy City and extending as far as eye can see from elevation of 1,500 miles?

Revelation 21:17-21

“And the twelve gates were twelve pearls.”

Every gate will be one pearl, large enough to cover gateway to this huge city, so they will be larger than men.

In addition, streets of city will be “pure gold, as were, transparent glass,” clearly indicating that we will walk on gold.

In our mind’s eye, gazing at this city with its fantastically beautiful and expensive stones for foundations, its gigantic pearl gates, and its gold streets, we are impressed with superiority of this city over anything known to man.

Today we use concrete and stone for foundations, scarcely most beautiful material on earth, but selected because of its durability, supply, and low cost.

Our streets are made of concrete or blacktop for same reasons.

By comparison, Holy City of God will be so magnificent that we will literally walk on precious metals that today are used for costly bracelets, necklaces, and rings.

City’s foundation will consist of precious stones that today are used for ornaments only and, due to their expense, are very small.

This presentation, when taken literally, emphasizes phenomenal omnipotent power of our God.

No Temple in the City

Revelation 21:22

From very beginning of man’s creation God has chosen to fellowship with man.

He fellowshiped with Adam and Eve before they sinned.

After fall, place of sacrifice had to be established.

In Gen 4, we find that Cain and Abel both knew about building altar on which to place sacrifice.

Antediluvian and postdiluvian patriarchs also used this approach to God through sacrifice.

In days of Moses God established tabernacle, where He would come to tabernacle in midst of people in what is known as Holy of Holies.

Under reign of Solomon this was transferred to temple, but due to Israel’s apostasy they lost this choice position with God.

Finally Jesus came to tabernacle with men and to become complete sacrifice.

When He departed, He sent His Holy Spirit to tabernacle in bodies of believers.

IN millennial kingdom memorial temple will provide place for men to worship God because they will still be in deciding process, exercising their free will to worship God or reject Him.

However, in eternal order there will no longer be need for “temple,” or dwelling place of God, as Greek work implies.

Instead, God Himself will be there with His Son and with Holy Spirit.

This would make not only Holy City one grand and glorious temple or place of worship but eternal earth.

This coincides with Heb 11:9-10 where Abraham specifically is described as looking for city, meaning heavenly Jerusalem.

Hebrews 11:9-10

This will be realized by Abraham and sons of Abraham who have responded to Jesus their Messiah.

Hebrews 12:22-24

One can scarcely visualize Holy City without resurrected Abraham because of that passage of Scripture.

This certainly indicates that though Holy City is referred to as Bride of Lamb, it will be inhabited not just by Church, but all those who have been redeemed through His blood.

God Is the Light of the City

Bible teaches us that “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5).

1 John 1:5

Therefore sun and moon will no longer be needed in eternal order.

God Himself will provide sufficient light by His very presence.

Several times this text declares that God will be light of this city.

One of most beautiful statements on this subject was written by Dr. Lehman Strauss.

In that city which Christ has prepared for His own there will be no created light, simply because Christ Himself, who is the uncreated light (John 8:12), will be there . . . The created lights of God and of men are as darkness when compared with our Blessed Lord. The light He defuses throughout eternity is the unclouded, undimmed glory of His own Holy presence. In consequence of the future of that light, there shall be no night.

Think of it! No darkness forever!

Everyone Has Access to the Holy City

Revelation 21:24-26

Some have suggested that because nations and kings are referred to here, during eternal order God will continue to separate people by nations.

This could well be His intent and meaning, fully in accord with His planned purpose for man since Gen 10.

However, hundreds of years transpired before flood when He apparently did not interject difference of nationalities.

Word “nations” comes from root word “Gentiles” and is so translated in many places in Bible.

Therefore this reference could be to Gentiles who have received Christ.

Kings would be saved men who were kings or world leaders, men of renown, who during eternal order will come into Holy City and give their glory to Christ.

If this is interpretation, it would concern men who have come to God, not on basis of being kings, but as poor lost sinners who need Savior.

I am inclined to believe that this is best interpretation, indicating that Holy City will contain OT saints and Church, plus tribulation saints who are redeemed from every tongue and tribe and nation (Rev 7:9).

It will also include people of many nationalities who become believers during millennial age.

This could reach back into days of Israel, when God had His witnesses in other nations of which we have little or no record.

Many of these people no doubt responded to God but, knowing nothing of Israel, were thus not Jewish proselytes. One of fascinating things about this city is that there will be no night there and that gates of it shall not be shut at all by day.

No time will be wasted in sleep, but we will be able to enjoy all eternal ages to come.

There will never be closing of pearly gates, for man will forever have access to presence of God and Holy City.

Those Excluded From the Holy City

Revelation 21:27

As reminder of God’s consistent pattern in dealing with men, those who reject His Son will not be admitted to His city.

For we learn that “anything that defileth” or “he that worketh abomination, or maketh a lie” will not be admitted.

That would include everyone in human history who has not received Christ.

Thus all those who die in their defilement and lies and abominations are excluded from city.

In essence, only by acceptance of Jesus does man have access to ultimate blessing that God has prepared for him. This closing scene of ch 21, with its inspired presentation of glories that God has established for men in eternal order, should inspire every man to receive Jesus and thus have his name written in Lamb's Book of Life.

Heaven on Earth

Last chapter of Rev contains final description of that heavenlike earth which God has prepared for them that love Him.

It also contains final challenge of loving Savior who came into this world to die for sins of man and has consistently sent His Spirit through His servants to convey His loving Gospel message to them.

It is fitting way to end not only this greatest of all books on prophecy, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, but also library of God's Word.

Bible opens and closes with basically same type of setting.

In first two chapters of Gen we encounter God's description of creation and heavenlike conditions on earth prepared for man.

That last two chapters of Rev describe eternal heaven that God will reestablish for man.

All chapters between contain great conflict of ages as man turns his back upon God and as He seeks to draw man unto Himself.

In all these books man is consistently presented with opportunity to worship God freely by faith or reject Him by rebellion of will.

First five verses of Rev 22 contain six challenging descriptions.

Revelation 22:1-5

As you bear in mind heavenly city and new earth described in ch 21, we turn now to additional details to make this utopian state even more ideal.

V 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.

Man cannot live without water in this life or seemingly in life to come

Study of history shows that man has always looked for water.

Ideal fortress cities of world have been located on high points of ground which had adequate water supply.

Many have died and nations have had to change their homeland because there was no adequate water supply.

In eternal paradise God has planned for man, abundance of water will proceed out of throne of God Himself, indicating that God will be source of that life-giving substance.

V 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. When Adam and Eve sinned, God forbade them to eat of Tree of Life.

Genesis 3:22-24

This text clarifies that eating of Tree of Life makes man live forever.

Man was forbidden to eat of that tree because he had first taken of Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, but in eternal future he will be able to eat of it; this testifies of eternity of man's blessed future state.

Fruit of this tree will spring forth all year.

In our backyard we have two avocado trees that yield fruit alternately every six months.

In paradise of God trees will continually bring forth fruit twelve months of year, possibly with variety of fruit.

These two verses make it clear that we will be able to eat and drink in eternal future.

Whether we will eat meat or not isn't mentioned, but we will be able to eat fruit.

One aspect of Tree of Life has brought some controversy relative to expression "and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations" (22:2).

It would be better to translate word "healing" as health, not indicating that anyone will be sick during eternal order, but that Gentiles or nations that have been inhuman to each other throughout their know history will be healed in their relationship toward each other and will thus live equitably and fairly.

Revelation 22:3

Curse that God placed on earth as result of sin of man in Garden of Eden will be partially lifted during millennium, but completely lifted during eternal order.

Therefore, unlimited potential of planet God gave to man will be realized for first time.

As proof that it will be uncursed earth, God will place His throne here.

His angelic hosts and men will be with Him as His servants.
No rebellious servants of God will exist in eternal order.

Revelation 22:4

Seal of God in forehead of man is indication that he is blood-bought child of God through faith in Jesus.
Superiority of future status of man in relationship to God is seen in fact that man will actually be able to see God.
Today we know that “no man has seen God at any time”; in that order we will literally see God.

Revelation 22:5

As expressed in ch 21, God Himself, who is light, will be light of that eternal order, suggesting consistency of heat and light.

Today we are dependent on sun for light and heat, changing our apparel or place of residence or habits of agriculture in accordance with cycle of sun.

At that time we will not be limited to external objects, for God Himself will provide consistent pattern of light that is ideally suited for man.

These first five characteristics bring beauty and warmth into heaven-like condition of new order.

Description in ch 21 of stone city with golden streets, pearl gates, and rock foundations does not suggest warmth that water, vegetation and light described in this chapter convey.

This indicates that it will not be cold city, like some of our concrete jungles, but city furnishing warmth of natural life that is so advantageous to human beings.

Ecology-minded Christians will be happy to know that.

Just as we rule with Christ for 1,000 years, so we will reign with Him forever.

Since Bible does not in any one passage offer complete presentation of God’s plan for man’s activities during eternal order, it would be good to examine characteristics delineated by Dr. Pentecost in his book *Things to Come*.

A. *A life of fellowship with Him*

1 Corinthians 13:12

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.

1 John 3:2

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.

B. *A life of rest*

Revelation 14:13

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.

C. *A life of full knowledge*

1 Corinthians 13:12

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.

D. *A life of holiness*

Revelation 21:27

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.

E. *A life of joy*

Revelation 21:4

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.

F. *A life of service*

Revelation 22:3

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:

G. *A life of abundance*

Revelation 21:6

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.

H. *A life of glory*

2 Corinthians 4:17

17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

I. *A life of worship*

Revelation 19:11

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.

Revelation 7:9-12

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.

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.

Christ's Last Message to Man**Revelation 22:6-9**

V 6-9 take us back to early part of Rev, when faithful and true witness told us that He would send his angel to convey His message concerning things that must come to pass.

For second time John bowed before angel but was forbidden to do so in V 9, for consistent pattern in Word of God is that men worship God only.

Again we remind you that Lord Jesus would have to be God or crass imposter, for ten times He accepted worship of man without rebuking him.

Since angels refuse to accept worship of man, certainly only excuse Jesus would have for accepting their worship is that He is Son of God.

Revelation 22:7

Three times we find this expression in last verses of Rev.

Some have been confused about literal meaning of expression because it was uttered almost 2,000 years ago.

It would have been more accurately translated, "Behold, I come suddenly."

It does not refer to appointed time soon to come but means that His coming will take place suddenly and without warning.

Significant details are given in association with each of these promises of our Lord.

V 7 contains promise, "Blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book."

This could be reverence to Rapture of church.

"Happy are those" who are sufficiently aware of prophecy of this book to be ready when that day arrives.

Revelation 22:12

Added to His promise of second coming, this verse proclaims reward by way of judgment, standard part of state of believers after resurrection.

On basis of this reward men will reign with Christ forever.

Revelation 22:10

How different is commandment of God to John from that which He gave to Daniel at close of his book.

Daniel 12:4

Reason for difference in instructions is that one lived after time of Christ's crucifixion, other before.

In John's day it was possible to see unfolding of events prophesied.

In Daniel's day they were long way off.

A Severe Warning to Detractors From This Prophecy**Revelation 22:18-19**

This is one of most awesome challenges in Word of God against tampering with Holy Writ.

Far too many glibly ridicule, detract from, and cast disparaging remarks upon holy Scripture.

This is their day of opportunity, but their judgment will come upon them swiftly in God's good time.

It is fearful thing to disbelieve God, and it is unbelief that causes man to detract from His Holy Word.

Although this is not reference to Bible-believing commentators of Word who mistakenly translate some passage and inadvertently minimize it, it does serve as soul-stirring challenge to those of us who have taken in hand to write and preach on this marvelous book.

We can appreciate attitude of late Dr. Joseph A. Seiss, who wrote in his book, *The Apocalypse*:

With an honest and ever-prayerful heart, and with these solemn and awful warnings ever before my eyes, I have endeavored to ascertain and indicate in these lectures what our gracious Lord and Master has been so particular to make known and defend. If I have read into this Book anything which he has not put there, or read out of it anything which he has put there, with the profoundest sorrow would I recant, and willingly burn up the books in which such mischievous wickedness is contained. If I have in anything gone beyond the limits of due subjection to what is written, or curtailed in any way the depth and measure of what Jesus by his angel has signified for the learning of the churches, I need not the condemnation of men to heap upon me the burden of censure which I deserve. If feebleness, or rashness, or overweening confidence in my own understanding has distorted anything, I can only deplore the fault, and pray God to send a man more competent to unfold to us the mighty truths which here stand written . . . If I err, God forgive me! If I am right, God bless my feeble testimony! In either case, God speed His everlasting truth!

The Lord Jesus' Last Invitation to Man

Revelation 22:17

Jesus, ever concerned for souls of lost men, closes His great revelation to churches with challenge for individual men to call upon His name.

He indicates that there are two who invite men to come to Him, "Spirit" and "bride."

In addition, He will even use "him that heareth."

God Holy Spirit will use printed page as well as men who are just repeating what they have heard but may not even believe what they are saying.

He also uses "bride," which indicates that primary ministry of church of Christ during entire church age is to tell men about Savior.

All Christians everywhere should be engaged in saying to men, "Let him that is athirst, come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Jesus Christ, of course, is water of life.

Closing verses of Bible make it perfectly clear that salvation is matter of will.

Whosoever *will* may come.

This would clearly imply that whosoever wills *not* to come is lost.

This teaching abounds throughout Scriptures.

In contrast to those who reject Christ, we encounter state of blessed described in V 14.

Revelation 22:14

Those who have washed their robes in righteousness of Christ have right to Tree of Life and thus are entitled to live forever.

He describes their state as "blessed," meaning "happy."

Every individual wants happiness.

Way to eternal happiness is to receive Christ as Lord and Savior, which entitles you to entrance into holy city, access to Tree of Life, and marvelous blessings of loving God.

If there is any question in your mind as to whether or not you have received living Christ, I urge you, on basis of His challenge, to change your will and receive Him as your Lord and Savior today.

Revelation

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Based on

Revelation

Illustrated and Made Plain

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