

PREACHING THROUGH REVELATION

By John Stacy

Published by

J.C. CHOATE PUBLICATIONS
Winona/Singapore/New Delhi

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J. C. CHOATE PUBLICATIONS

Art Work, U. S. A.
Typesetting, Kaye Hayes
First Printing, 2000 Copies
Printed in U. S. A.

Order From:

J. C. Choate Publications
Burton Drive
Route 2, Box 156
Winona, Mississippi 38967
Phone (601) 283-1192

INTRODUCTION

The book of Revelation to many is so dark and mysterious that they won't even read it, much less try to understand it! Yet, it is the only book of the Bible that promises a blessing to those who read it (Revelation 1:3).

All my preaching life, I have been interested in the book of Revelation. I studied Revelation on a college level for the first time at Harding Graduate School in Memphis. Dr. W. B. West, Jr., was my instructor. He opened my mind to many great truths, that ultimately led to this book.

These sermons were preached with the conviction that God's people must have a basic, overall understanding of a book that has become a breeding ground for many false doctrines.

I make no claim to understand the Apocalypse completely. Yet, I do think that Christians can comprehend enough of it to keep from being swept away into the false doctrines that are associated with this great book.

The author does not make any claim for total originality for the thoughts contained in these lessons. I have given a partial bibliography that points to some of my major source material. There are ideas incorporated into these sermons that I cannot document for credit's sake.

This volume is not meant to be a scholarly commentary on the book of Revelation. It is meant to be a book of practical sermons that can be read and preached.

John Stacy
January 14, 1983

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

John Stacy was born February 5, 1942 in Columbus, Ohio. After graduating from high school in 1959, Mr. Stacy served in the Navy for three and one-half years. During this time he served as a Leadership Training Instructor.

He attended Pensacola Junior College, Freed-Hardeman College, A. A., Oklahoma Christian College, B. A., Alabama Christian School of Religion, M. A., and The International Bible Institute and Seminary, MTh., D. Min., Lit. D.

He has served as evangelist for churches of Christ in Homestead and Key West, Florida; Dyer, Dyersburg and Rutherford, Tennessee; and Lake Station, Indiana. He also serves as one of the English speakers on "The Voice of Truth" radio broadcast in India. Mr. Stacy has preached the gospel in fourteen nations throughout Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Caribbean.

He is the author of *Exhort Brother!, Now Abideth These Three, Citizens of Eternity, Sermons on the Ten Commandments, Sermons on Heaven and Hell, Stacy's Sermons in Series, God's Message for Man Today, Vols. I, II, The Ancient Gospel, Recipe for Revival and Other Sermons, and Preaching Through Revelation*. He has also published *Harvest Time Sermons* by Jim Huffman.

He is the owner and operator of Stacy Publications and Book Service. His books have been distributed all over the world.

He is married to the former Hilda Smith. They have one son named John Troy.

DEDICATION

This volume is dedicated to Dr. W. B. West, Jr. He was the professor who taught me Revelation at the Harding Graduate School of Bible and Religion in Memphis, Tenn. He helped me to see the book of Revelation through "first century glasses." His scholarship made the book of Revelation come alive. He filled my head with all kinds of sermon possibilities.

Dr. West is not only a scholar, but he is a true Christian gentleman. He is one of the most Christ-like men I have ever met.

Thank you, Dr. West, for the many impressions for good that you have made on my life. May God grant you many more years of fruitful service in the kingdom of God.

PUBLISHER'S STATEMENT

Few preachers take the time to study the book of Revelation to the point that they can use it as preaching material, especially in a series of sermons, taking it chapter by chapter. Brother John Stacy is one of those exceptions. He has not only taken the time to study the text itself, but has gone to many commentaries, guides, and study materials for their opinions and ideas on this book.

Although many conclusions and theories have been reached and advocated by the students of Revelation, you will note that Brother Stacy primarily stays with the text and the general period in which and for which it was written. He often goes to other books of the Bible and to specific passages of scripture to define and explain certain words and statements that are generally figurative in nature. Where there are a number of opinions and explanations of some text, he often presents several views but then leaves it to the reader for further study.

This material has not been written and presented to put an end to all of man's questions that have been raised concerning this text, but it is hoped that it will encourage further study, preaching, and Christian growth.

While many go to the book of Revelation to attempt to confirm their erroneous teachings based on the return of Christ and the end of the world, all of us need to go to it to see the real truth on these subjects and many others. We are likewise enriched when we study and learn lessons from Christ's dealings with the Seven Churches of Asia, the eventual triumph of God's kingdom (the church), and how God still reigns supreme.

PUBLISHER'S STATEMENT

With these few thoughts we commend the author and his work to you with the prayer that it will be a blessing in your life and through you that others will be blessed. Don't be afraid to learn from it but fear a misuse of it. As John wrote, "Blessed is he that readeth . . ."

J. C. Choate
Winona, Mississippi
January 5, 1983

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Revelation One	
Pictures of Christ	1
Revelation Two	
The Loveless Church (Ephesus)	10
Revelation Two	
The Poor Rich Church (Smyrna)	21
Revelation Two	
Satan's Throne (Pergamos)	29
Revelation Two	
The Church of Jezebel	38
Revelation Three	
Tombstone Territory (Sardis)	46
Revelation Three	
The Church of the Open Door (Philadelphia).	54
Revelation Three	
The Church That Made God Sick (Laodicea)	62
Revelation Four	
The Throne of God	70
Revelation Five	
Worthy Is The Lamb	78
Revelation Six	
The Execution of Judgment	86
Revelation Seven	
The Militant and Triumphant Church	92
Revelation Eight and Nine	
The Power of God	99
Revelation Ten and Eleven	
Down But Not Out!	106
Revelation Twelve	
The Radiant Woman	112
Revelation Thirteen	
The Evil Trinity	119

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Revelation Fourteen Judgment Is Coming	126
Revelation Fifteen and Sixteen The Wrath of God	136
Revelation Sixteen The Battle of Armageddon	145
Revelation Seventeen and Eighteen The Fall of the Great Harlot	154
Revelation Nineteen God in Control	165
Revelation Twenty The Binding of Satan	172
Revelation Twenty The Blessed Saints of God	182
Revelation Twenty The Ultimate End of Satan	189
Revelation Twenty The Final Judgment	195
Revelation Twenty-One All Things New	202
Revelation Twenty-One Who's Who in Hell	208
Revelation Twenty-One The New Jerusalem	215
Revelation Twenty-Two Paradise Regained	222
Revelation Twenty-Two There Is More	229
Bibliography	237

*"Books are strange things. Although untongued and dumb,
Yet with their eloquence, they sway the world:
And, powerless and impassive as they seem,
Move o'er the impassive minds and hearts of men,
Like fire across a prairie. Mind sparks.
They star the else dark firmament."*

REVELATION CHAPTER 1

Pictures Of Christ

INTRODUCTION: Revelation is a book about the person of Jesus Christ.

1. The first words of this book are not "The Revelation of Saint John The Divine." But rather, they are "The Revelation of Jesus Christ!"
2. Christ is more fully and uniquely revealed in Revelation than in any other book.
3. In the Gospels we see Jesus serving and suffering. In Acts and the Epistles we see Jesus alive and at work among the churches. In Revelation we see Christ as the supreme conqueror.

I. THE PROLOGUE (1:1-3)

- A. By "prologue" we mean, "a preface or introduction."
- B. In verse one, we see the order of God's revelation. He (God) revealed his will to Christ. Christ revealed it to an angel. The angel then revealed Christ's will to a man. This man was a servant named John. Revelation 22:6 also says, "... and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angels to show unto his servants the things which must shortly come to pass." Here again we see the same order of revelation. We also see in this text the order of the universe. "... the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God" (I Corinthians 11:3).

- C. Notice that this revelation “must shortly come pass.” The word “must” means, “of necessity.” This part of verse one must also be linked to the latter part of verse three which says, “the time is at hand.” These statements give one the impression that this book will have its primary application to the world of John’s day. Of course we must keep in mind that the time frame here is God’s. II Peter 3:8 says that a day with the Lord is as a thousand years and a thousand years is as a day.
- D. Verse three gives us one of the seven Beatitudes that are found in Revelation. Like those found in the Sermon on the Mount, they promise a blessing. Revelation is the only book in the Bible that promises a blessing to those that read it. The verbs read, hear, and keep are all in the present tense. In order to be blessed, we must keep on reading this book. By the way, the word “read” means, “to read aloud.” We must also keep on hearing and keeping the things that are written in this book.

II. ADDRESSING THE SEVEN CHURCHES (1:4-11)

- A. In verses four and five we see the three “froms.” The book is “from him who is and who was and who is to come.” This is God the Father. It is “from the seven Spirits that are before his throne.” This is probably the Holy Spirit. Finally, it is “from Jesus Christ.” Here we have all the members of the Godhead or trinity.
- B. Christ is called the “faithful witness.” He is trustworthy or reliable. We can believe that which he acknowledges. He does not lie about that which he has seen or heard on a firsthand basis (Hebrews 6:18; Titus 1:2).

- C. He is described as "the firstborn from the dead." The word "firstborn" means, "priority to, pre-eminence, or superiority of position." In other words, "Christ existed before those who are dead." It means that he has preeminence or superiority over the dead, in the sense that he died and rose from the dead never to die again. Christ was not the first person to be raised from the dead but he was the first to die and the first to be raised, never to succumb to death again! How unique is this one who is being unveiled in this book!
- D. Christ is the "ruler or prince of the kings of the earth." Christ is ruling now! He is not going to come back and engage in the so-called thousand year reign. He is king now! In fact he is the King of Kings (Revelation 17:14). Let us say of Christ that which was written by Paul, he is the blessed and only potentate . . . (I Timothy 6:15). John the Revelator summed it up in Revelation 11:15 when he said that the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ!
- E. Verse five tells us that Christ "loveth" us. The verb is present tense and literally means that he keeps on loving us. God is love (I John 4:8). He loved the disciples to the end (John 13:1). He will keep on loving Christians until the end of their lives and the end of the world.
- F. Christ also "washes or looses us from our sins by his blood." The word "washed or loosed" is a past tense word. It must refer to the act of conversion. Why? Well, Christ continues to cleanse us or wash us from our sins by his blood as we walk in the light (I John 1:7).

1. Christ's blood washes us from our sins. Sin is something that the sea cannot drown, fire cannot burn, mountains cannot hide, and tears cannot wipe away!
2. Paul said, "without the shedding of blood there can be no remission" (Hebrews 9:22). There can be no release from the bondage of sin without the blood of Christ. Christ shed his blood for the remission of sins (Matthew 26:28). It redeems us (Acts 20:28). It is that which makes our robes white (Revelation 7:14). The blood of Christ is WHAT washes or looses us from sins. Baptism is WHEN sins are washed away. Paul was told by Ananias, "And now why tarriest thou, arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16).

G. The sixth verse tells us that Christ "made us kings or a kingdom." The King James has the statement that Christ made us "to be kings or a kingdom." The tense of the verb is present. We are a kingdom now. John was in the kingdom (Revelation 1:9). The kingdom was not something to be established during the so-called thousand year reign. The church and kingdom are used as interchangeable terms (Colossians 1:13; Matthew 16:18-19). Seek ye first the kingdom of God. This is what Jesus taught (Matthew 6:33). It is a valuable treasure or a pearl of great price worth any sacrifice to possess.

H. Christ also would have us to be "priests." We are royal and holy priests, that should offer up spiritual sacrifices to God in the temple, which is the church (I Peter 2:5, 9; I Corinthians 3:16).

- I. It is worth noting that God made of Israel a kingdom of priests (Exodus 19:6).
- J. The second coming of Christ is described in verse seven.
 - 1. He will come with clouds as he ascended with clouds (Acts 1:11).
 - 2. Every eye shall see him. This was predicted in Zechariah 12:10.
- K. The next verse begins with "I am." There are five "I ams" in Chapter One.
 - 1. Christ is the "Alpha and the Omega." These were the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. They refer to the fact that Christ is the first and the last, the beginning and the ending. He is then eternal. Isaiah 9:6 calls him "Everlasting Father." That is, Christ is the father of eternity. He is the originator or eternity. He is provider in eternity. He is protector in eternity.
 - 2. Christ is also called the "almighty." Here we see his omnipotence. Again in Isaiah 9:6 Christ is "Mighty God."
 - 3. These then are attributes of deity. Christ is God. He is the Word that became flesh (John 1:1-3, 14).
- L. In verses nine through eleven John has a vision. He calls himself their brother. He is their brother in the Lord. He and the seven churches have this spiritual kinship. He is a "companion" or "partaker" with them in "tribulation and patience

which characterize those in the kingdom.” He is now on Patmos, an island in the Aegean Sea. He is there “for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.” “He was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day.” God the Holy Spirit enabled him to see the vision. This took place on Sunday of the first day of the week. It is “the Lord’s day” because it was the day of his resurrection. The church began on this day. Christians are to eat of the Lord’s Supper and give of their means on this day (Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 16:1-2).

III. THE PERSON OF CHRIST

- A. In verse thirteen Christ is walking “in the midst of the candlesticks.” The candlesticks were the churches (Revelation 1:20). See also Revelation 2:1. Christ promised that where two or more were gathered together, he would be in the midst of them (Matthew 18:20). He is described as “the Son of man.” This was an oft used phrase to emphasize Christ’s humanity. His clothing and girdle were that which was worn by a priest and king. The prophet Zechariah foretold that Christ would be a priest on his throne (Zechariah 6:13). Christ indeed, then, is the King of Kings and our High Priest (Revelation 17:14; Hebrews 4:15).
- B. In the next verse Christ’s head and hair is white as snow and wool. This reminds us of Isaiah 1:18, “Come now, let us reason together saith the Lord, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” Thus, the phrase, “white as snow and wool” stands for “purity.” But in Daniel 7:9 we are told that the Ancient of Days had a head and hair as pure

as wool. Thus, not only is Christ pure, he is ageless, deathless, and eternal!

C. The eyes of Christ are like "a flame of fire." See also Revelation 19:12. This of course stands for the "omniscience" of Christ. His eyes can read the hearts of men. Hebrews 4:13 says, "There is no creature that is not manifest in his sight, for all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do." His eyes were often red with tears. He wept over Lazarus and Jerusalem (John 11:35; Luke 19:41). Now they are red with judgment.

D. Now in verse fifteen, we come to the feet of Christ. His feet were beautiful because they brought the gospel, as he walked up and down the dusty roads of Israel (Romans 10:15). His were the feet that were washed by the tears of Mary. They had been also transfixed by the spikes of perdition to the old rugged cross. Now they are like "fine brass." This stood for "strength and endurance." Christ is indeed almighty.

E. His "voice was like many waters" (vs. 15). The voice of Jesus, think about it. His voice cried out to Mary in the night as a child. His voice revealed the will of the Father, as no other. Man heard the voice of his humanity for the last time as he spoke seven times from the cross.

1. In verse ten his voice was "great and like a trumpet."

2. He turned (John) to see the great voice that spoke to him (vs. 12).

3. His voice was as “waters.” Waters in Revelation stood for “peoples, nations, and multitudes” (Revelation 17:15). His voice then was as the roar of the crowd.
- F. From his mouth there came “a sharp two-edged sword” (vs. 16). This description is also found in Revelation 2:12, 16; 19:16.
1. The sword is the “Sword of the Spirit which is the word of God” (Ephesians 6:17).
 2. It is a sharp two-edged sword in the sense that it can lay bare the thoughts and the intents of the heart (Hebrews 4:12).
 3. It is sharp and two-edged in the sense that it can save or slay. It can discipline or destroy (I Corinthians 1:18).
- G. The “countenance of Christ was as the sun when it shined in its strength.” This makes us think of the transfiguration of Christ. His face did shine and his garments were like lightning (Matt. 17:2). Christ is the light of the world (John 8:12). He is the bright and morning star (Revelation 22:16). This passage in my judgment points to the glory of Christ.
- H. Finally in verses seventeen and eighteen, we see the authoritative Christ. John said, “And I saw him.” John saw Christ while on earth. He saw him heal the sick, raise the dead, and feed the multitudes. But he never saw anything like this. “He fell as a dead man” at Christ’s pierced feet. Other Bible characters did the same when they saw manifestations of God. “The right hand” of Christ was placed on John to comfort him.

The right hand was the hand of authority and power. We often talk of a "right hand man." Christ ascended back into the heavens and sits at the right hand of the majesty on high (Hebrews 1:3; Ephesians 1:20).

In conclusion, we have learned that Christ continually loves us. He wants to wash us or convert us from our sins by his blood. He promises to make us then a kingdom of priests. One day the King of Kings, the High Priest, the Pure, Ageless, Deathless, Omniscient, Omnipotent, and Glorious Christ will come again. It will be a day of great sorrow to the lost. Those who are saved will rejoice at his coming!

The Loveless Church (Ephesus)

INTRODUCTION: The city of Ephesus was the fourth largest city in the Roman Empire. It had a population of anywhere from two hundred and fifty thousand to six hundred thousand people.

1. It was the capitol of Asia Minor.
2. Three major trade routes came through Ephesus.
3. Ephesus had one of the seven ancient wonders of the world. It was the Temple of Diana. It was four hundred and twenty-five feet long and two hundred and twenty-five feet wide. It had one hundred and twenty-seven pillars. Each was donated by a king. The temple was sixty feet high. It had a stairway made of one solid vine from Cyprus. It took one hundred years to build this temple. The temple was considered so sacred that valuables were stored within. Thus, it became the world's first bank. Criminals could find safety if they could get within two hundred yards of this temple. Charms were sold around the temple. They were supposed to have some magical quality.
4. The people of Ephesus were fickle, immoral, superstitious, and wicked.
5. Ephesus became the home of Mary the mother of Christ. It also was the home of

Timothy, Aquila and Priscilla, and John. Paul of course called it home for three years while preaching in this city.

6. In fact, Paul founded the church of Ephesus during his second missionary journey (54-57 A.D.). He returned for a visit in A.D. 58 on his third missionary journey. He wrote the Ephesian letter in A.D. 62. He made one more visit to this city and to the church in A.D. 63.
7. Thus, by the time Christ wrote this letter through the pen of John, the church in Ephesus was about forty years old.

I. THE AUTHOR OF THE EPHESIAN LETTER (vs. 1)

- A. Revelation 1:1 says, "The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave unto him to show unto his servants, even the things which must shortly come to pass . . ."
- B. In Revelation 1:5 Christ the author of this letter is called, "the faithful witness and the firstborn of the dead." We can rely on the testimony of Christ. He has preeminence over the world of the dead. He died and rose again. Even those like Lazarus who were raised from the dead had to die again. Christ is the firstborn of the dead in that he existed prior to their coming into being. You see Christ is eternal (John 8:58).
- C. The author is also called the Alpha and the Omega in Revelation 1:8. Yes, he is the beginning and the end. Why? Because he once again is eternal. This verse also describes him as almighty.

- D. Revelation 1:13 calls Christ the Son of man. He was man and yet God. He is the God-man. His hair is white as wool and snow. His eyes are like a flame of fire. His feet are as brass and his voice like the waters (Revelation 1:14-15). These words describe his omniscience and omnipotence.
- E. In Revelation 2:1, Christ is described as having the seven stars in his right hand and he is pictured as walking in the midst of the seven candlesticks. Revelation 1:20 teaches us that the stars are the angels. The candlesticks are the seven churches. The word "hold" means, "to grasp the whole object." Christ has them in complete control. Let us not forget that "walking" stands for the fact that Christ is ever present among his churches (Matthew 18:20).

II. THE ANGEL OF THE EPHESIAN CHURCH (vs. 1)

- A. Who is this angel? Well, this has been a matter for discussion for many years.
- B. Some say that this angel is a guardian angel. Many scoff at the idea of a guardian angel but the scriptures do give some credence to this concept. In Daniel 12:1, Michael seems to have been assigned to protect Israel. See also Matthew 18:10. Personally, I don't believe this view has merit in the context.
- C. Since the word "angel" means, "messenger", there are some that think that the word is used to denote brethren sent to John. These Christians would then carry these letters back to the churches. Well, I think this is a possibility.

- D. My personal view is that the angel stands for the eldership. All churches when scripturally organized have elders and deacons (I Timothy 3:1-13). The church at Ephesus had elders (Acts 20:17, 28). It is inconceivable to me that the letter would not have been directed to them. The fact that the singular is used in reference to the angel makes some think it was addressed to the so-called Bishop of the church. This view alludes to the doctrine of the monarchical episcopacy. I deny that this doctrine which elevated one elder above the others had taken place at the writing of Revelation (95-96 A.D.). The singular stands for the plurality of the eldership. Thus, the eldership as a whole is considered in the term angel.

III. THE COMMENDATION (vss. 2-3, 6)

- A. "I" stands for Christ.
- B. "Know" comes from the Greek word *oida*. It denotes, "perfect or divine knowledge." Christ then knew all about these Ephesian Christians. All things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do (Hebrews 4:13). See also Proverbs 15:3.
- C. Christ knew about their "works". I think he is talking in general about their way of life. They were doing things and were getting results. Christ himself declared, "I must work the works of him that sent me for the night cometh when no man can work" (John 9:4). See also Matthew 7:21; Luke 6:46; Philippians 2:12; James 1:22; 2:17, 26.

- D. Someone has suggested that there are three kinds of workers in the church. There are the “shirkers” who do nothing. Then there are the “jerkers” who get off to a good start and then like the old automobiles, they start jerking and simply stop. But there are the “workers”. These are the people who get the job done in each local church.
- E. Notice the word “and”. It is very expressive in the Greek. It means, “even or by that.” Thus, Jesus was saying, “I know thy works, even thy labor.” Others have rendered this, “I know thy works, by that I mean thy labor.” The word “labor” means, “to toil to the point of weariness or exhaustion.”
- F. Christ also praised this church for its “patience.” This word means, “persistence, triumphant fortitude, and steadfastness.” It is a word that means that we take misfortune and take the “mis” off of it and turn it into fortune. Patience takes a stumbling block and turns it into a stepping stone. I think that part of verse three serves as a good commentary on patience.
1. Jesus noted that they did bear up for his name’s sake. They hung on to their beliefs about his authority, majesty, rank, and character. They taught others about these things and would not deny them, even under duress (see Acts 5:41).
 2. They did not grow weary or faint. Paul said, “Be not weary in well-doing, for in due season ye shall reap, if ye faint not” (Galatians 6:9). See also Hebrews 12:1-4; I Thessalonians 5:14.

- G. Jesus also commended them for not bearing evil. Even under the old law, God's people were not to follow the multitude to do evil (Exodus 23:2). If evil characterized some of God's people, these Christians did something about it. They did not act as if it were not going on. They did not operate on the basis that it was none of their business. They did not sweep it under the rug or claim that these evil brethren had disfellowshipped themselves from the church! They disfellowshipped all who would not be restored (II Thessalonians 3:6; Galatians 6:1). Someone has said that if the church has too little influence in the world, it is because the world has too much influence in the church! Christians can not leave the world (John 17:15). But though we are in the world, we are not to be of the world. We must avoid Satan.
- H. The Lord commends them also for trying those who claimed that they were apostles and they were not. They knew the qualifications of an apostle. They are found in Acts, Chapter One. You had to have been with Jesus at the beginning of his earthly ministry and you had to have been an eye witness of the resurrection. These brethren did not swallow hook, line, and sinker everything that came their way. They knew that there were false teachers and they put them to the test (I John 4:1). They proved all things and held to that which was good (I Thessalonians 5:21). Like the noble Bereans, they searched the scriptures daily to see if those things were so (Acts 17:11).
- I. Finally, Christ praised them for hating the doctrines of the Nicolaitans. Who were they? Some

say that they were the first to lay a nickel in the contribution plate! Seriously, others believe that they were followers of Nicolas of Antioch, who may have been one of the first deacons in the Jerusalem church (Acts 6:5). Another view is that the words Balaam and Nicolaitan refer to the same thing. Thus, the Nicolaitans were doing the same thing that Balaam was able to get Israel to do. They were engaging in fornication and idolatry. The Apostolic decree that went out from Jerusalem to the Gentile churches urged them to abstain from the pollution of idols, fornication, things strangled, and from blood (see Revelation 2:14-15).

IV. THE CONDEMNATION OF THE EPHESIANS (vs. 4)

- A. Christ did not condemn them for heresy or for some shameful sin such as immorality.
- B. These Christians were condemned for their loveless spirit. They had left their first love. Christ said that as time progressed the love of many would wax cold (Matthew 24:12).
- C. What was the first love of the church at Ephesus? It was Christ! We are to love him with all our soul, mind, heart, and strength (Mark 12:29-30). We, like the Macedonians, must first give ourselves to the Lord (II Corinthians 8:5). Christians are to love Christ to such an extent that they are married to Christ (Romans 7:4). If a man will not love Christ, he will be accursed (I Corinthians 16:22).
- D. Do you remember your first love? Remember how excited you were? You could never do enough for that boy or girl. You talked about

them and thought of them every moment of every day. You might say that you had a wreckless enthusiasm. Remember then that you showed your love not only by words but also by deeds. The same is true with our love for Christ. If we love him, we will show it. "This is the love of God that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous" (I John 5:3). Christ said, "If ye love me keep my commandments" (John 14:15, 21, 23). The Ephesian Christians had apparently stopped doing those things that showed that Christ was the first love of their life.

E. What pulled them away?

1. It could be that they got so involved in heretic hunting, that they became hard, critical, fault finding, and self-righteous.
2. Maybe like Demas, some fell in love with the world (II Timothy 4:10). God has expressly forbidden this (I John 2:15-17; Matthew 6:24).
3. Some think that secret sin or ill will may have driven Christ out of their lives.
4. A home without love is just a house. A church without love for Christ is just a pile of bricks, mortar, and a list of names. This is what happened at Ephesus, though I doubt that they met in a church building.

V. THE SOLUTION TO LOVELESSNESS (vs. 5)

- A. Christ said, "remember." Some have forgotten how it was when they were babes in Christ. This

word literally means, "keep on being mindful." They were to remember from whence they had fallen. At one time they were on a spiritual mountain peak, now they had fallen into the muck and mire of sin. Yes, Christians can fall from grace (Galatians 5:4; Hebrews 3:12).

- B. "Do first works." They had to recapture that special zeal that they had when they first obeyed the gospel and were on fire for Christ. Though we cannot be saved by works, they are important. The dead shall be judged out of the books according to their works (Revelation 20:11-12). See also II Corinthians 5:10; Matthew 25:31-46; Revelation 22:12; Ephesians 2:12.
- C. "Repent!" Change your mind, your will, your way of life. This is what repentance is. It is motivated by godly sorrow and the goodness of God (II Corinthians 7:10; Romans 2:4). The terror of the Lord also plays a role in moving a man to do right along with the love of God (II Corinthians 5:11, 14; I John 4:19). Jesus told these brethren to repent OR ELSE!
- D. What was the "or else?" Christ threatened to remove the candlestick or church out of its place. The church would not survive if it continued in this loveless condition.
- E. It is tragic to note that Christ had to tell five out of seven churches of Asia to repent or else. I wonder if the percentage would be much different in 1983? I doubt it. Note also that the church is described as a "candlestick." It is the obligation of the church to be a light in a world filled with the darkness of ignorance, superstition, sin, and idolatry. Are our candlesticks on

a lampstand or under a bushel? (Matthew 5: 14-16). Are we as Christians shining forth as lights in the world? (Philippians 2:15). I fear that lights are going out just when the world needs them the most.

- F. Consider further the fact that Christ said this was all going to happen "except ye repent." This is the second call for repentance. Christ had had enough and set a dead line. We need to remember that the patience of God will wear thin and run out! (Genesis 6:3; Romans 1: 24, 26, 28).

VI. THE PROMISE (vs. 7)

- A. Christ held out a promise to motivate the church. He offered a reward. God is a rewarding God (Hebrews 11:6).
- B. "He that overcometh" is literally, "he that keeps on overcoming." One victory is not enough. We must fight the good fight of faith daily and be a consistent winner. It can be done if we will put on the gospel armour found in Ephesians 6:10-18. See also I John 5:4.
- C. "The tree of life" is something we first come across in Genesis 3:22. Those who ate of it would live forever. In Revelation 22:2 the tree of life is on either side of the river of life. It bears twelve manner of fruits. Its leaves are for the healing or salvation of the nations.
- D. The tree of life is "in the midst of the Paradise of God." Originally it was in the paradise known as the garden of Eden. Now it is in heaven (II Corinthians 12:4).

In conclusion, we have learned that religious action and zeal without love calls for repentance. These brethren were straight as a gun barrel doctrinally but just as empty spiritually. Their conduct was icily pure but they had a form of religion that left out their hearts. We must love Christ first (II Corinthians 8:5; II Corinthians 5:14; Ephesians 4:1-5). The candlestick has been removed and now there is only Islam! What about us? Would we fare any better under a close examination by the Son of God?

The Poor Rich Church (Smyrna)

INTRODUCTION: Smyrna had a population of about 250,000 people.

1. It was a city of commerce, science, and medicine.
2. It was so beautiful that it was called "The Glory of Asia."
3. It had many temples. Aphrodite, Asklepios, Apollos, and Zeus were worshipped there.
4. This was a city of wide boulevards. It had a stadium, a library, and was known as the birth place of Homer.
5. Smyrna was also a place of Caesar worship. Rome used this to unify the empire. After all, the people enjoyed many benefits under Roman rule. The highways had been cleared of robbers. The seas were cleared of pirates. The Romans built some outstanding roads and had a good postal system. Worship consisted of burning incense and calling Caesar Lord. This was considered a test of loyalty to the Roman government. A certificate was given to show that this had been done once each year.
6. Christians could not do this! Christ alone is Lord of Lords and King of Kings (Revelation 17:14). Thus, it was very dangerous to be a Christian in Smyrna.

7. Christians also suffered because of a large Jewish population in this city. The Jews gathered sticks on the Sabbath day that were used to burn Polycarp to the stake. He was a martyr like Antipas (Revelation 2:13).
8. This letter is the shortest of the seven. It contains nothing but praise.

I. A DESCRIPTION OF THE AUTHOR (vs. 8)

- A. Christ is the “first and the last.” In Revelation 1:8 Christ is “the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the ending . . .” These statements point to the eternal nature of the Son of God. These Christians were facing an enemy called Rome. Rome was supposed to be eternal. We know that it was not. Jesus knew it also and tried to comfort these saints with the fact that he was eternal and was around before Rome and would live on after the Roman empire fell. See also Genesis 1:1 and John 1:1-3.
- B. Christ “was dead but is alive.” The Caesars would come and go but not Christ. He died but will never die again. He was raised from the dead. As a result, he has the keys or authority over death and hades (Revelation 1:17-18). His resurrection had proven him to be the Son of God (Romans 1:4). It guarantees our own resurrection (I Corinthians 15:20). Christ will outlast all the Caesars. Christians need not fear them or death because Christ controls the world of the dead.
- C. I am told that in Moscow, you can see the body of Lenin which is encased in a crystal casket. A

sign beside it says that Lenin WAS the Lord of new humanity. He WAS the greatest leader of all time. Notice that he was spoken of in the past tense. When we speak of Buddha, Mohammed, Confucius, Zoraster, or any other founders of the world religions, we must speak of them in the past tense. Jesus, though is the same yesterday, today, yea, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). The resurrection separates Christ from all others who have ever lived.

II. CHRIST AMID THE CANDLESTICK (vs. 9)

- A. Revelation 2:1 says that Christ is in the midst of the candlesticks. That is, Christ is present with his people. He said, where two or more are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of you (Matthew 18:20). Remember the candlesticks were the churches (Revelation 1:20).
- B. Christ said, "I know." That is, he has perfect knowledge of what is going on in the church at Smyrna.
 - 1. Christ knew about their "works." From the letter to the Ephesian church, we learned that Christ was aware of their "labor." This word means, "to toil to the point of weariness." John wrote that the dead will be judged by the things that are written in the books according to their works (Revelation 20:11-12).
 - 2. Christ also knew about their "tribulation." This word does not refer to the ordinary trials of life. Some Christians think that if they have a headache on the Lord's day that they are bearing a cross for Christ! The word

“tribulation” means, “a sore trial, to be hard pressed, affliction, or grave trouble.” These Christians were being physically, materially, and spiritually abused.

3. Jesus never promised that we would live without tribulation. “In this world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). We rejoice at trials, said James. They will make us more steadfast and mature (James 1:2-3). Peter declared that Christians should not think that fiery trials are some strange thing. They are part of the Christian life because they try us (I Peter 4:12). Job said, “when he trieth me, I shall come forth as gold” (Job 23:10). Tribulation is a blessing, if like gold, we come out of the fire cleansed from all dross and impurities!
4. Christ was also aware of their “poverty.” This word means, “destitute.” No doubt these brethren, like the Hebrew Christians, suffered from the spoiling of their possessions (Hebrews 10:34). How could they endure such a loss? I think they kept Luke 12:15 in mind. Jesus said, “Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth.”
5. Note though that even in utter poverty, these Christians were declared “rich” by Christ. This word means, “an aristocrat or filthy rich.” They had little of this world’s goods but they were laden with spiritual riches (Romans 8:17; James 2:5; Matthew 6:19-21).

They were the poor rich church! In Laodicea the church was rich in the world's goods but poor spiritually!

6. It is hard to preach on this church in 1983. We are so well-clothed, housed, and fed. It is difficult for us to put ourselves in the place of these Christians. The truth of the matter is, we are more like Laodicea. We are rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing. What does it cost us to be Christians today?
7. The Lord was also knowledgeable concerning the "blasphemy" that these disciples faced. It came from those who claimed to be "Jews but who were not." They were not the people of God. They were followers of Satan, who is the god of this world (II Corinthians 4:4). The real Jews were those who had not the circumcision of the flesh but the circumcision of the heart (Romans 2:28). Paul addressed the Galatian churches as the "Israel of God" (Galatians 6:16). How did these Christians bear up under the assault of the tongue? Well, maybe they kept in mind that Christ taught, "Woe unto you when all men speak well of you" (Luke 6:26).

III. CHRIST OFFERS COMFORT, ENCOURAGEMENT, AN ADMONITION, AND A PROMISE (vss. 10, 11)

- A. "Fear none of those things that thou shalt suffer." Why? Jesus in Matthew 10:28 declared, "Fear not him who is able to kill the body but is not able to kill the soul, but rather fear him who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell." Christ has promised that he will in no wise

forsake us or leave us. Thus, we should not fear what man shall do unto us (Hebrews 13:5-6).

- B. Satan was going to cast some of them into prison. They were to have tribulation for awhile. This really was a compliment to them. The late G. C. Brewer used to say, "If you are not being fired at, you are not on the firing line." These brethren were on the firing line. They were preaching the gospel and were waging an all out war against Satan.
- C. Jesus tries to encourage them with this familiar statement. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Revelation 2:10). Literally, we must keep on being faithful. If we do so, we will receive a "crown of life." The word for "crown" is not diadem which is a royal crown. It is the word *stephanos* which denotes, "a crown of victory and joy." The *stephanos* was given to the victor in an athletic contest. It was also given to one who conquered a foe. It was also given during festivals as a symbol of great joy.
- D. Our crown is not a crown of gold or diamonds. It is a crown of "life." James 1:12 states, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." Paul, in I Corinthians 9:25 wrote, "And every man that striveth in the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to receive a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible." Christians strive not for a crown of leaves that will soon wither away. We strive for eternal life.

- E. Jesus then admonishes the church to keep on hearing what the Spirit says to the churches. The Spirit spoke then, as he speaks now, through the word of God, whether written or spoken! (Romans 8:16; John 16:13; II Tim. 3:16-17; II Peter 1:20-21).
- F. Christ finally offers a promise. If these Christians would keep on overcoming, they would not be hurt of the "second death." No person can escape the "first death." "It is appointed unto man once to die . . ." (Hebrews 9:27). "As in Adam all die" (I Corinthians 15:22).
- G. What is the "second death?" It is the lake of fire and brimstone.
 - 1. Revelation 20:14
 - 2. Revelation 21:8

Conclusion: What have we learned from this letter?

- 1. We have learned that the church can conduct itself in such a way as to please God and win his praise.
- 2. We learn much about the nature of Christ.
- 3. We learn that Christians will have tribulations or trials.
- 4. Our real enemy is Satan (I Peter 5:8).
- 5. We need to listen to the Spirit speak through the word of God.
- 6. We must not give up. Winston Churchill spoke to a graduating class. They expected

a long oration. He stood up and said, "Never, never, never, never, give up." Then he sat down. The students were astounded. What sound advice. No matter how dark the circumstances, Christians must never give up!

7. Christians can escape hell and go to heaven. We must be daily overcomers or victors if this is to be.

Satan's Throne (Pergamos)

INTRODUCTION: The city of Pergamos had a population of 160,000 people.

1. This was the home of the famous physician Galen.
2. It had a medical center which was connected with the god Asclepios. This god was also called "soter" which means, "saviour." The emblem of this school was of course the serpent. Often people would come and spend the night in this temple. Tame snakes were turned loose. If one touched a snake in the night, he supposedly came in contact with a god.
3. This city had temples where Asclepios, Zeus, Athena, and Caesar were worshipped.
4. One of the remarkable things about Pergamos was that it contained a library of 200,000 volumes.
5. Parchment was also invented here.
6. Let us now look at our text of Revelation 2:12-17.

I. JESUS COMMENDS THE CHURCH (vss. 12, 13)

- A. Christ begins his commendation with a description of himself.

- B. He has a “sharp two-edged sword.” The Romans carried a small two-edged sword. It symbolized their authority and power. They had the power to save life or take it. Christ also has power and authority. He has all there is in heaven and earth (Matthew 28:18). He has power over life and death because of his resurrection (Revelation 1:17-18). The power of Rome was nothing compared to the omnipotence of the Son of God (Revelation 1:8; 19:6).
- C. The “sharp two-edged sword” is a familiar part of the description of Christ in the book of Revelation (Revelation 1:16; 19:15). Obviously, the sharp sword is the word of God that is mentioned in Hebrews 4:12. Here Paul wrote, “The word of God is living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joint and marrow, and is quick to discern the thoughts and the intents of the heart.” The sword of the Spirit is the word of God (Ephesians 6:17). Peter pricked the hearts of the Jews on Pentecost when he preached the gospel to them. Three thousand obeyed the Apostolic commands to repent and to be baptized. They received the remission of sins, the gift of the Holy Ghost, and were added by the Lord to the church (Acts 2:37-38, 41-47). Stephen took the sword and cut the hearts of his hearers. They gnashed on him with their teeth and stoned him to death (Acts 7:54-60). Christ exercises his authority over man in life through the gospel and will use his word to show his authority over man on the day of judgment (John 12:48; Romans 2:2; John 17:17).
- D. Christ knew about their “works or toil.” Paul said that we were created in Christ Jesus, for

good works, which God afore ordained that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:10). Though we cannot save ourselves by works (Titus 3:5), we know that when the books are opened on judgment, we shall be judged according to our works (Revelation 20:11-12). Works are our expressions of faith and love for God (I Thessalonians 1:3; I John 5:3). Through works we appropriate salvation made possible through grace.

- E. Christ knew “where thou dwellest.” That is, Christ knew where they lived and worked. This was their permanent home. They could not or would not run away from Pergamos.
- F. Where did these Christians live? They lived “where Satan’s throne is!” Satan is no figment of man’s imagination. He is real. He is the fourth person of importance in this universe. Only the three members of the Godhead stand above him! Pergamos was so evil, wicked, sin filled, error laden, and idolatry saturated that Satan made his headquarters here! Satan and his angels were cast out of heaven. They made the earth their home (Revelation 12:9). While on earth Satan has been busy sowing tares among the wheat (Matthew 13:24-30). He has been busy stealing the seed of the word out of the human heart, so that men will not believe and be saved (Luke 8:12).
- G. What a place for the church. They were living in the midst of a decaying society. Yet, Christians were just what that city needed. Christians are the salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13). God’s people needed to get out of their salt shaker and

they needed to be rubbed into that decaying carcass of a city called Pergamos. These Christians lived in a city of darkness. Christians are the light of the world (Matthew 5:14-16). They needed to shine forth as lights in their world (Philippians 2:15).

- H. Could the church have any impact in a city like this? Yes. Satan is not omnipotent, omnipresent, or omniscient. John said, greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world (I John 4:4).
- I. Then Christ said that "thou holdest fast my name." They could not call Asclepios savior. Only Christ could be addressed in such a fashion! Nor could they call Caesar Lord! Jesus is the Lord of Lords (John 4:42; Revelation 17:14). These Christians held the name of Jesus fast by wearing it (I Peter 4:16). They held it fast by respecting its authority (Colossians 3:17). They knew that there was no other name under heaven, given among men whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:12).
- J. Then Christ praised them by saying, "thou hast not denied my faith." "My faith" is the same thing as the "one faith" of Ephesians 4:4. The word faith is used here in an all inclusive sense. It refers to the doctrines that make up the Christian religion. We are to contend earnestly for "the faith" (Jude 3). In Bible times there were not many faiths such as we see in the denominational world. All Christians were united in the one faith. This is what Christians in the church of Christ are pleading for today. If we deny Christ or the faith, he will deny us (Matthew 10:32-33; II Timothy 2:12).

- K. Next, Christ singles out "Antipas as his witness, martyr, or faithful one." Antipas was a faithful Child of the King. He must have been someone special for Christ to have singled him out. The Lord honored him by putting his name in sacred writ. He literally gave up his life for the Lord. Jesus had said earlier in Revelation 2:10, "Be thou faithful even unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life." While on earth the Christ said, "He that findeth his life shall lose it and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" (Matthew 10:39). Tradition says that Antipas was roasted to death in a brazen bull.

II. CHRIST'S CONDEMNATION (vss. 14, 15)

- A. Christ had a few things against this church. There were those who held "the doctrine of Balaam." The story of Balaam can be seen in Numbers 25:1-3; 31:16; II Peter 2:15-16, and of course in other verses. Balak of Moab tried to get Balaam to curse Israel. Yet, instead of cursing Israel, he blessed the Jews! Finally, Balaam's greed was so great that he deceived Israel. Perhaps he told them that once in covenant relationship with God, always in a covenant relationship with God. Thus, no matter what you do, you are God's people and will not be lost. The men of Israel then attended a feast for Baal. They ate things sacrificed to idols and committed fornication. As a result, twenty-four thousand Israelites died.
- B. Balaam was a tragic figure. He wanted to die the death of the righteous, even though he lived like the unrighteous (Numbers 23:10). He wanted the best of both worlds. He ran with the hare and hunted with the hound.

- C. Apparently there were Christians at Pergamos who wanted the best of both worlds. But Acts 15:28 tells us of a decree issued by the Apostles at Jerusalem. Gentile Christians were to abstain from idols, blood, things strangled, and from fornication. Christ said that we cannot serve God and mammon at the same time. We will either hate the one and love the other, or we will hold to one and despise the other (Matthew 6:24). I have always loved the ocean. I love ships. In fact, I have always wanted to take an ocean voyage. A ship in the water is a beautiful thing. But water in a ship is a tragedy! A Christian functioning in the world as salt and light is absolutely fantastic. But to see the world in a child of the King is the tragedy of tragedies!
- D. Christ also pointed out that there were those who held the doctrine of the Nicolaitans which he hated. Many think that the doctrines of Balaam and the Nicolaitans are the same. There must be some difference according to this text. Some believe as we stated in the Ephesian letter that these Nicolaitans were followers of Nicolas of Antioch, who may have been one of the first deacons in the Jerusalem church (Acts 6:5). Yet, others believe they advocated a perverse view of Christian liberty, that led them to believe that they could indulge in the works of the flesh and not be harmed by it. We may never know just who these people were. But we know that Christ hated them. They were evil. Many in Pergamos were following in their footsteps and it had to be stopped.
- E. Not all followed Balaam or the Nicolaitans. But they permitted others to do so. They were lax.

They tolerated these people. They fellowshiped them! Paul said, "Abhor that which is evil" (Romans 12:9). The word "abhor" means, "to actively oppose evil." They should have disfellowshipped those who would not repent (II Thessalonians 3:6). II John 9-11 reads, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him Godspeed. For he that biddeth him Godspeed is a partaker of his evil deeds." The Christians in Pergamos who did not follow these doctrines were partaking of their evil deeds because of their toleration of them!

III. CHRIST'S WARNING (vs. 16)

- A. Christ told them to "repent." Like John the Baptist, Christ wanted to see fruits of repentance (Matthew 3:8).
- B. It was "repent or else!" What is the "or else?" Jesus said, "I will come quickly." Did this mean the second coming? No. It did mean that he would take action against them.
- C. What was that action? Christ said, "I will fight against them with the sword of my mouth." The sword is the word of God. God's word would condemn them and would of course be the source of their ultimate downfall. Some think that Christ meant some supernatural intervention. This is not an unthinkable position. God sent death to Ananias and Sapphira when they died. They dropped dead at the feet of the Apostles

(Acts 5:1-11). Christ also threatened some in the church at Thyatira with death (Revelation 2:23). There may well have been some divine intervention in Corinth (I Corinthians 11:17-34).

- D. Looking at the text a little closer, let us observe that Jesus said, repent or else I will come unto "THEE." This word stands for those who were tolerating these false teachers. Then Christ said that he would fight THEM with the sword of his mouth. The word "them" refers to followers of Balaam and the Nicolaitans.
- E. In Ephesus the problem was lovelessness. In Pergamos it was being too lax or broadminded. They failed to understand that a little leaven will leaven the whole lump (I Corinthians 5:6). Christ was saying that if these Christians did not deal with sin in their ranks, he would!

IV. THE PROMISE OF REWARDS (vs. 17)

- A. God is a rewarding God. He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him (Hebrews 11:6). He will reward us according to our works (Revelation 22:12).
- B. Christ promises "hidden manna" to those who overcome. God sustained his people with manna in the wilderness for forty years. Manna was a wafer that tasted like honey (Exodus 16:15). Christians would be given that which they needed to sustain their souls as they journey through the wilderness of this world. John 6: 31-34 teaches us that Christ is that manna. He is the bread of life.
- C. Christ also promises a "white stone." We read in

Revelation of white robes, white thrones, and white raiment. The white stone was given to a warrior to symbolize his victory. It was given to a man who had been acquitted in a court of law. It was given to a slave that had been freed. Thus, the white stone symbolizes our spiritual freedom in the world to come. We will be free from death, sin, sorrow, tears, mourning, crying, and pain. The first things are passed away (Revelation 21:4). It will symbolize our victory over Satan (Revelation 12:9-11).

- D. Those who overcome will also receive “a new name written, which no man knoweth, save he that receiveth it.” We read about a new song, a new Jerusalem, and new heavens and a new earth. But what is the new name? Some think it is the new name spoken of in Isaiah 62:2. This of course was the name Christian (Acts 11:26; 26:28; I Peter 4:16).
- E. In Revelation 3:12, Christ told the faithful in Philadelphia that he would write upon them the name of his God, and the city of his God which is the new Jerusalem. Revelation 22:4 says that God’s name would be written on our foreheads. Whatever the name is, it denotes a change of relationship.

Conclusion: What have we learned? We have learned that a Christian can be faithful in the most wicked of places. We cannot blame our environment for our failure to live for the Lord on the day of judgment. We learned that we may have to die for the Lord. Christ also taught us that he will not tolerate false teachers and he will not tolerate those who are lax in dealing with them. We have learned that Satan is our worst enemy. We have been made aware of some of the rewards that God will give to those who overcome. Surely heaven will be worth it all!

The Church Of Jezebel

INTRODUCTION: This is the longest letter. It is sent to the smallest and least important city.

1. This was the home of Lydia (Acts 16:14).
2. Thyatira had a woolen industry. It was also known for its dyes. This dye came from the throat of the shellfish called a Murex. It was also extracted from the madder root. It was extremely expensive. It cost \$200.00 a pound.
3. Thyatira was also known for its guilds or trade unions.
4. Apollo was the god of this city. There was also a temple for Artemis.
5. Sambathe, who was a female oracle, lived there. She was really nothing more than a fortune teller.
6. Our text is Revelation 2:18-29.

I. A DESCRIPTION OF CHRIST (vs. 18)

- A. He is called the "Son of God." This may be a play on the idea of Apollo, who was considered the "sun god." Notice that Christ was not called a prophet or an apostle but the Son of God.

1. Psalm 2:7 says, "thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." Verse eight says, "kiss the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish in the way."
 2. Christ is the "only begotten Son of God" (John 3:16).
 3. God speaks to us in these last days through his Son, who made the world (Hebrews 1:1-2).
 4. We must all confess that Jesus is the Son of God in order to honor the Son (I John 4:15; John 5:22-23).
- B. His "eyes are like a flame of fire." That means that Christ is omniscient (Hebrews 4:13).
- C. His "feet are like fine brass." This description refers to his omnipotence (Revelation 1:8).

II. CHRIST COMMENDS THE CHURCH (vs. 19)

- A. "I know thy works." There is nothing unknown about their labors.
- B. The word "and" is the "epexegetic and." It does not merely add something to what has gone before. It explains and defines what has gone before. It means, "even or by that I mean."
- C. I know thy works; by that I mean your "love."
1. They loved one another (John 13:34-35).
 2. They were motivated by love (I Corinthians 13:1-3).

- D. Christ knew of their “service.” This word means, “ministry.”
1. Christ came to minister (Matthew 20:28).
 2. Christians must minister or serve (I Corinthians 16:15; Ephesians 4:12; Galatians 6:10; Titus 3:1, 8, 14).
- E. Jesus pointed also to their “faith.” This word could also mean, “faithfulness.”
1. Faith gives substance to our hopes and includes believing in that which we cannot perceive with the senses (Hebrews 11:1).
 2. James 2:24, 26; Hebrews 11:6.
- F. The “patience” of these Christians impressed Christ. That is, they were characterized by “stead-fast persistence or endurance.” Paul and James teach us that patience is developed by tribulation or trial (Romans 5:3; James 1:2).
- G. Finally, the Lord praised them because, “the last works were more than the first.” This of course was the exact opposite of the Ephesian church (Revelation 2:4-5).

III. CHRIST’S CONDEMNATION (vss. 10-23)

- A. They were “suffering” or they “kept on permitting” a woman by the name of Jezebel to “keep on teaching and to keep on seducing” the Christians in Thyatira. She was able to do this because she called herself a prophetess. She involved Christians in idolatry and immorality. In Ephesus there was sound doctrine but no love. In Thyatira there was love but no sound doctrine.

B. But who was this Jezebel?

1. Certainly she was not the Old Testament Jezebel. That Jezebel was the daughter of the King of Sidon. She married Ahab. She introduced idolatry to Israel by bringing in Baal and Astarte. She was responsible for the murder of Naboth and the theft of his vineyard. She of course came to a tragic end (II Kings 9:30-37).
2. Some translators render the word "woman" as "thy wife." Thus, some think that she was the wife of the preacher or one of the elders!
3. Others think she was Lydia. Many think that Lydia started the church in Thyatira. She was a very rich and powerful business woman. Her influence may have been great. I personally doubt this.
4. Many suggest that Sambathe the oracle of Thyatira got into the church and was the woman Jezebel.
5. I believe that she was an evil sister in the church. I doubt that her name was Jezebel but she acted like it! She may have been involved in the guilds. These guilds had idols. Part of the meetings of the guilds included meals and offerings to these gods. She may have convinced these disciples that, "you have got to go along, if you are going to get along." There were many economic pressures applied to God's people in these days. Christians though could not do this. The Apostolic decree issued from Jerusalem would forbid the sins listed in our text (Acts 15:20). All of

this should not have happened. Women should remain silent in the assemblies (II Timothy 2:12-15; I Corinthians 14:34).

- C. This church seemed to be trouble free from the outside. There was little threat from idolatry. There was no Caesar worship here. The real trouble for this church came from within.
- D. Christ gave Jezebel and her followers a chance to repent.
 - 1. II Peter 3:9, 15.
 - 2. Romans 2:4; Luke 13:3.
 - 3. She refused to repent.
- E. God then said that he would cast her and her followers into a "bed of tribulation." This was not a bed of adultery. The word "bed" here is used to describe, "a bed of sickness." It is even used to refer to a "banquet couch." Thus, Jezebel and her followers may have been struck down while feasting.
- F. Christ said he would "kill them." He would send "death." People did lose their lives in Bible times. See Acts 5:1-11. Yes, Ananias and Sapphira dropped dead at the feet of the Apostle Peter, after lying to the Holy Spirit. They will certainly die spiritually, if they do not repent (Ezekiel 18:20; Romans 6:23; James 1:15).
- G. Christ said that he would do this "so that all the churches would know." He wanted the church universal to see and learn an important lesson.

- H. He wanted them to know that he “searches.” Literally, “he keeps on searching, following up, or tracking down.” He searches two things:
1. The “reins” stand for the kidneys. According to Hebrew psychology this is where the “emotions” dwell.
 2. Christ also searches the “heart.” He looks then at the “intellect.”
 - a. God then is very concerned with what is going on in the inner man. (See I Samuel 16:7; Proverbs 4:23; 23:7).
 - b. Christ then said that he would “give to each one of you according to your works” (Galatians 6:7-8; Hosea 8:7; II Corinthians 5:10; Proverbs 22:8).

IV. CHRIST OFFERS AN ADMONITION (vss. 24, 25)

- A. He addresses “the rest.” He of course is speaking to those who do not follow Jezebel.
- B. He describes them as those “who do not know the depths of Satan.” There were those who said that the only way you could understand wrong was to engage in it yourself. Others like the Gnostics believed that Christians who were really mature had to have “deeper knowledge.” They added things like psychology to Christianity to make it suit their intellectual fancies.
- C. Christ said that he would “put no other burden upon them.” I think he meant the same thing as the Apostles in Acts 15:28-29. They would put

no other burden on the Gentile Christians, save to abstain from idols, blood, things strangled, and fornication. Christ wanted these Christians to abstain from the evils of Jezebel and her followers.

- D. Then the Lord asks them “to hold fast, till I come.” Literally, Christ commands them to hold on at all cost.

V. FINALLY, CHRIST OFFERS THE PROMISE OF A REWARD (vss. 26-29)

- A. This reward will be given to those who “keep on overcoming” and to those who “keep on working.”
- B. Christ promised that Christians would be given, “power over the nations.” They would “rule them with a rod of iron.”
- C. This promise is very familiar. It was the promise offered to Christ by the Father in the second Psalm. This is one of the many Messianic Psalms. Christ would receive the nations for his inheritance. Clearly this is a missionary statement that refers to the carrying out of the great commission or the evangelization of the world (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:47). Christ is ruling the world now. Even now, he is reigning as the Lord of Lords and King of Kings (Revelation 17:14). Christians share in that reign now (Romans 5:17; I Corinthians 6:2; II Timothy 2:12). We will share in the triumphant glory of Christ, when this world comes to an end (Romans 8:17).
- D. Christ also promised to give them “the morning star.” The morning star is Venus, which is smaller than the earth. This of course could not be literal.

1. Some think he means that he will give us the victory over "Lucifer" which means, "the morning star."
2. Many think this refers to Daniel 12:3, where we are told that the righteous shall shine as the brightness of the firmament. Those who turn many to righteousness will shine as the stars forever.
3. My personal view is that the "morning star" is Jesus. Revelation 22:16 says, ". . . I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright, and the morning star."

Conclusion: What have we learned from this epistle? Our biggest challenges will come from within. We can defeat all of our enemies who are outside. If the church is destroyed it will be from decay from within. We learn that God will not tolerate false doctrine. Christians must actively oppose all false doctrine. We learn again that Satan is our enemy. He is often mentioned in these letters. We learn that God will not allow sin to go unpunished. God, we learn, is constantly concerned about our inner selves. We learn even more about the eternal rewards of the faithful. We need motivation and have all that we need from our God. Heaven will be worth all the battles and sacrifices that we have to go through.

Tombstone Territory (Sardis)

INTRODUCTION: Sardis was an old city. It was characterized by luxury, immorality, and slavery. It was in a word, decadent.

1. It was a self-governing city. Roman justice was dispensed there.
2. Sardis was the home of King Croseus, who was legendary for his wealth.
3. The first coins minted in Asia Minor were minted in Sardis. Cyrus the Persian took six hundred million dollars from Croseus when he conquered Sardis.
4. Flowing down from Mount Tmolus was a stream that contained gold dust. It ran right through the marketplace of the city.
5. Sardis had a woolen and dye industry.
6. The people worshipped Cybele. It was a wild, frenzied, and hysterical affair.
7. Sardis was destroyed by an earthquake in A. D. 17. Tiberius Caesar abolished all taxes for five years. He also contributed over six hundred thousand dollars to rebuild the city.
8. Sardis had a glorious past but was for all practical purposes dead as a city.

9. Revelation 3:1-6

I. A DESCRIPTION OF THE CHRIST (vs. 1)

- A. Christ has “the seven Spirits of God.” There are three basic interpretations of this phrase:
 - 1. Some say it refers to the seven characteristics of the Spirit found in Isaiah 11:2.
 - 2. Others say that it refers to having the Spirit without measure (John 3:34).
 - 3. Yet, Revelation 5:6 has John saying, “I saw a Lamb standing as though it had been slain. It had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent forth into all the world.” The horn has always stood for power. The eyes for the knowledge of God. Thus, Christ is all powerful and all knowing.
- B. Here is a good example of the Bible being the best commentary on the Bible.

II. CHRIST’S CONDEMNATION (vss. 1, 2)

- A. Frankly, there is little to praise about the church at Sardis.
- B. “Thou hast a name that thou livest, but thou art dead,” said the Son of God. They had a good reputation. Perhaps they had large numbers and a membership filled with important people. They probably had plenty of money. They had gospel meetings, vacation Bible schools, business and committee meetings. But these and other things that might have been going on were only grave clothes that were wrapped around a corpse.

C. Sardis was dead and did not know it! They were like Sampson. He thought that he could do as always. Judges 16:20 says that he did not know that God had departed from him! Many are dead but do not know it. All of the dead are not in the cemetery. Many are walking around on two legs.

1. Matthew 8:22
2. I Timothy 5:6
3. Luke 15:24
4. Ephesians 2:1
5. Matthew 22:32

D. The problem with the church in Ephesus was lovelessness. In Pergamos and Thyatira it was false doctrine. Sardis was tombstone territory. They had no problems with the Jews. There was no Caesar worship there. There was no internal heresy. They were simply at peace. But their peace was the peace of the dead!

E. But why?

1. Perhaps they were living in the past. In other words, they were resting on past achievements (Revelation 2:4-5).
2. Maybe their heart just was not in their religion (Matthew 15:8-9).
3. A failure to practice what they preached may have been the problem (II Timothy 3:5; Titus 1:16).
4. Their motives may not have been right (II Corinthians 5:14).

5. Finally, they may have been placing the material over the spiritual (Matthew 6:33; Revelation 3:17).
- F. Christ told them to “be watchful.” In other words, “wake up.” Paul told the Ephesians, “Awake thou that sleepest and rise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light” (Ephesians 5:14).
1. They needed to watch for wolves that would enter the flock (Acts 20:29-31).
 2. They need to watch for temptation (Matthew 26:41).
 3. They needed to watch for Satan (I Peter 5:8).
 4. Christ could come again. They needed to watch for this (I Thessalonians 5:2, 6).
- G. They must “strengthen the things that remain.” These things were “ready to die.” There were a few embers that had not gone completely out. They needed to be stirred up into a flame again.
- H. One of the most devastating indictments Christ made was that he had found no works of theirs perfected or completed. Notice also that these works were before God. God knows all. He sees all. It is one thing to start a race and it is another to finish. Christ wanted them to hoe their rows to the end. Christ in Luke 14 teaches us that we need to count the cost before we follow him. Many will start to build and will not be able to finish. They will be laughingstocks. We must endure to the end if we are to be saved (Matthew 24:13). We must not grow weary in well doing.

We must not faint by the wayside (Galatians 6:9). Those who are faithful until death receive the crown of life (Revelation 2:10). Christ is held up as our example in Hebrews 12:1-4.

I. Next, Christ tells this church to “remember.” Remember what?

1. Remember what you received. The word received is in the perfect tense. They received it in the past and they still had it.
2. Remember what you have heard. What had they received and heard? The gospel (I Corinthians 15:1-4).
3. Then Christ commanded the church in Sardis to “repent.”
4. That command was followed by a warning. If you do not watch, I will come on thee as a thief. The city of Sardis was naturally fortified. Yet, Cyrus the Persian and his men found a way to take the city. Christ was saying, whether you believe I can do it or not, I will take care of your situation. I will do it when you least expect it.

III. THE REDEEMER’S REMNANT (vss. 3, 4)

- A. There were “a few names” in Sardis that “did not defile their garments.”
1. There has always been the Redeemer’s Remnant. Christ said, many would be called but few would be chosen (Matthew 22:14). Where two or more would gather together, Christ promised to be in their midst. The

Master's Minority can be seen in Matthew 7:13-14 which says that many will walk the broad road that leads to destruction. On the other hand, only a few will walk the narrow road that leads to life.

2. The matter of "defiling garments" may be an allusion to the woolen industry of Sardis. Among the worshippers of Greek gods, it was considered a sacrilege to worship with soiled garments. Under the Old Testament law the priest could not enter the presence of the true and living God without being purified. God will not accept the worship of men today, who are stained, spotted, and soiled with sin. Christians are to be unspotted from the world (James 1:27). We are to be pure in heart if we want to see God (Matthew 5:8). The church is to be a body of people who have been sanctified, cleansed, and made holy. Christ wants his bride to be glorious, not having spot or wrinkle (Ephesians 5:26-27). Nothing unclean will enter heaven (Revelation 21:27). The bride of Christ will be arrayed in fine linen that is bright and pure. The linen is the righteous acts of the saints (Revelation 19:8).

3. These few were the spiritual among the worldly. They were the pure among the vile. They were the active among the non-active. They were the victors among the defeated. They were the few among the many!

B. They will "walk" with Christ. The word "walk" means, "to live." Ephesians 4:1 speaks of the need to walk worthily of our calling. Amos 3:3

asks, can two walk together except they be agreed? These few Christians in Sardis were living in agreement with Christ's will.

1. Christ said that they would walk with him in "white." White has always stood for joy, purity, and victory.
2. The reason that these Christians would walk with Christ in white was that they were "worthy." Perhaps this is an allusion to Revelation 7:14. This text talks about those who had come out of the great tribulation. They had washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Thus, their suffering made them worthy.

IV. THE PROMISE OF REWARD (vs. 5)

- A. Christians must "overcome." Christianity is a religion that will lead one into battle. The Christian life is a struggle (II Timothy 2:3-4; 3:12; Ephesians 6:10-18).
- B. Those who overcome will receive "white robes." Again these were worn by military victors. They were worn during festive occasions. They were also worn as symbols of purity.
- C. Furthermore, those who overcome will "not have their names blotted out of the book of life."
 1. Moses asked God to blot his name out of the book if Israel was going to be lost (Exodus 32:32-33).
 2. Daniel says that those whose names are in the book will be delivered (Daniel 12:1).

3. Malachi 3:16 speaks of a book of remembrance that God has before him.
 4. Christ told the Apostles to rejoice that their names had been written in the book of life.
 5. Those whose names are not found written in the Lamb's book of life will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, which is the second death (Revelation 20:15).
- D. Finally, Christ promises to "confess their names before the Father and his angels."
1. Christ will confess us, if we will confess him (Matthew 10:32-33).
 2. If we are ashamed of him, he will be ashamed of us (Mark 8:38).

Conclusion: From this epistle, we have learned that Christians can so sin as to be lost. We must be careful to observe that a church can look okay from the outside and be dead from within. Many of God's people today are dying spiritually. They need to wake up, finish what they started, and remember. We learn also that among the people of God there is the Master's Minority. The necessity of remaining pure is stressed in this letter. Christians are soldiers in the army of God, and thus, should expect to do battle. If we lose the battle we will lose the crown of life. If we win, the rewards will be great.

The Church Of The Open Door (Philadelphia)

INTRODUCTION: The city of Philadelphia was founded by Attalus II in 140 B. C. He loved his brother Eumenes II so much that he was called Philadelphos. This word means one who loves his brother. The city then was named after Philadelphos.

1. It is believed that the church was established in this city by Paul on one of his evangelistic journeys (45-58 A. D.).
2. Philadelphia was founded for the purpose of spreading Greek culture and the Greek language. It was called "Little Athens."
3. This city had hot springs that had medicinal value.
4. Its soil was very fertile because it was located in a volcanic area. In A. D. 17 the city was destroyed by an earthquake. Under the good actions of Tiberius Caesar this city was rebuilt. He suspended taxes and provided financial aid as in the destruction of Sardis. The city had a special relationship to the Caesars as a result of this. It renamed itself Nerocaesarea. It is believed that the church in this city was established by Paul on one of his missionary journeys (45-58 A. D.).
5. The church in Philadelphia was small in number. Its enemies were the Jews. There seems to have been no persecution from the

Romans or pagans.

7. This church received all praise like Smyrna.

I. A DESCRIPTION OF CHRIST (vs. 7)

A. Christ is described as “he that is holy.” The word “holy” here is *hagios* in the original language. It means, “separate from sin, consecrated to God, sacred.” Christ’s holiness was original, underived, and full.

1. Christ is called the “holy one” in Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:27; 13:35.

2. He is indeed separate from sin (John 8:46; I Peter 2:22; I John 3:5).

B. Christ is “he that is true.” The word “true” is the Greek word *alethinos*. It means, “genuine or real.” Christ is the “true bread” sent from heaven by the Father (John 6:32). He is the “true vine” (John 15:1). John said, we are in him that is true (I John 5:20). Christ is real! He is no false Christ, Lord, or God. He was God in human flesh (John 1:14). Make no mistake about it, being holy and true are divine attributes (Isaiah 6:3; I Thessalonians 1:9).

C. Finally, Christ is described as “he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth.”

1. This is a quote from Isaiah 22:22. In the context we find that Eliakim the faithful steward of Hezekiah has been given the key of the house of David. God did this. Eliakim then had authority to see that no man gained

entrance into the royal palace or presence. If they did, they had to go through him alone.

2. Christ also has the key of David. Luke 1: 32-33 says, “. . . and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.” This was also foretold by Isaiah in 9:6, 7 which states, “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this.”
3. Christ gave the keys to the Apostles (Matthew 16:18; 18:18). With these keys they unlocked the door of the church on the day of Pentecost. Christ had that authority because after his resurrection, all authority or power was given him by the Father (Matthew 28: 18). This authority is exercised not only in heaven and on earth, but in the world of the dead. Christ has the keys of death and hades (Revelation 1:17-18).
4. Christ has the authority as judge (John 5: 22) to permit us to enter into the presence of the Father in heaven. Christ said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life, no man cometh

unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). In I Corinthians 15:24 Paul wrote, "Then cometh the end, when he shall deliver up the kingdom unto God, even the Father." What power and authority!

II. CHRIST'S PRAISE AND BLESSINGS FOR THE CHURCH (vss. 8-11)

A. Christ set before them an "open door" which no man could shut.

1. In Acts 14:27 Paul speaks of how God opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.
2. In I Corinthians 16:9 Paul speaks of a great and effectual door that had been opened.
3. When Paul came to Troas the Lord had opened a door to preach the gospel (II Corinthians 2:12).

B. What was this door?

1. Some think it was Christ himself (John 10:9).
2. I tend to believe that it was a door of opportunity to spread the gospel. After all, Philadelphia was a city founded for the purpose of spreading in an evangelistic manner the Greek culture and language. What a blessing this opportunity was!

C. Christ knew that they had "little strength." They were not powerful. They may have had little finances, numbers, or influence. Christ teaches us here that a small church can be blessed and used by Christ. The secret to all this is to live pleasing in his sight.

1. Though they had little strength, they pleased God by “keeping the word.” Jesus said, if ye love me then ye will keep my word (John 14:15, 21, 23). If we are not doers of the word, we will deceive ourselves (James 1:22). The tense of the verb “kept” shows that Christ was referring to a definite past action.
 2. Though they had little strength, they pleased Christ because they “had not denied his name.” They wore his name (I Peter 4:16). They did all in the name of Christ (Colossians 3:17). No doubt they suffered for his name (Acts 5:41). They were proud and not ashamed of the greatest name to ever fall from the lips of mankind (Acts 4:12).
- D. Notice verse nine. In particular consider the word “behold.” It means, “attention!” Christ wanted their attention. He spoke of the “synagogue of Satan.” They were a people who claimed to be Jews but they were not. They kept on lying about this matter. True Jews were the people of God. They are the Israel of God (Galatians 6:16). Real Jews are those who are circumcised not in flesh but in the heart (Romans 2:28-29). These so-called Jews were Satan’s friends and enemies of the church. Christ promised that he would “make them worship before their feet.” This was to teach them that “Christ loved the church in Philadelphia. How was this to be accomplished? We are not told. I believe that as the gospel converted Jew and Gentile alike, these so-called Jews would be humbled by its power. They would conclude that God was really with them.

- E. In verse ten Christ makes a promise. He praised them for "keeping the word of patience." Some think this refers to God's enduring word. In the context though it refers to the word's instruction to remain patient or steadfast (Hebrews 12:1-4; Galatians 6:9; Matthew 24:13; Revelation 2:10). Because they had been patient, Christ would "keep them in the hour of temptation, that would come upon the world to try it." God provides a way of escape from temptation. He can deliver the godly out of temptation (I Corinthians 10:13; II Peter 2:9). Some scholars say that this meant that these Christians did not suffer any physical harm during Trajan's persecution. Trajan did not want to come into Philadelphia because he was afraid of earthquakes. This may be. But the Bible teaches us that we will not escape persecution. God will though preserve his own and see that they come through it stronger in their relationship to him (James 1:2-3).
- F. Then Christ in verse eleven issues a warning. "Behold I come quickly." Perhaps he was trying to motivate them with the threat of the second coming. Yet, it seems to be that he was saying that he would come quickly and deliver them from their enemies, while punishing those who were evil.
- G. In verse eleven there is also an admonition. It is twofold. "Hold fast that which thou hast." They needed to hold on to that which characterized them. Paul said, "hold fast to that which is good" (I Thessalonians 5:21). This is what these Christians needed to do. They had nothing but good things said about them. They were to do this "that no man take thy crown." They could

lose their eternal reward. This reward is called the crown of life and a crown of righteousness (Revelation 2:10; II Timothy 4:8). Essau lost his crown to Jacob. Reuben lost his to Judah. Saul lost his to David. Matthias took the crown of Judas. The Gentiles have taken the Jews' crown away. We can fall from grace and be lost (II Peter 2:20-22; Hebrews 4:4-6).

III. THE PROMISE OF REWARD (vs. 12)

- A. The rewards are promised to those who overcome.
- B. God promised to make the victorious one a "pillar in the temple of my God." In Philadelphia, if you served as a priest in the pagan temples and rendered faithful service, they would erect a pillar in that temple in your honor. It would have an inscription on it. Christians are priests (II Peter 2:9). The church is a temple. Yet, it is not a physical building (I Corinthians 3:16; I Peter 2:5). There will also be no temple in heaven (Revelation 21:22). This is just a way of saying that God will honor the faithful.
- C. Christ also promised that they would "go no more out." This is obviously a reference to the earthquakes of Philadelphia. The people would run out into an open field or space when the quakes began. This was Jesus' way of saying that God would grant security to those who overcome. There will be no fear in heaven.
- D. Then there is the promise, "I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, . . . and I will write upon him my new name." Philadelphia after the earthquake in A. D. 17 and the aid rendered by

Tiberius Caesar, changed its name to Nerocaesarea. God through Christ has helped us to rebuild our lives. He is worthy of having us wear his name. He owns us, thus he puts his name on us. He is ours and we are his!

Conclusion: From this epistle we learn much about the nature of Christ. Christ is holy, true, and authoritative. Christ will open doors even for small but faithful churches. We learn that churches can live in such a way as to bring nothing but praise from God. Keeping God's word and upholding his name pleases Christ. Christians can lose their crown. Others can take it away. The rewards of being faithful are honor, eternal security, and being identified by God as his own.

The Church That Made God Sick (Laodicea)

INTRODUCTION: Laodicea was founded by Antiochus II in 250 B. C. It was named after his wife Laodice. By the way, he later poisoned her.

1. It was a wealthy city. Someone has called it the "Wall Street" of Asia. There were many millionaires there. In A. D. 60 the city was destroyed by an earthquake. Unlike Sardis and Philadelphia, the city needed no help to rebuild.
2. Laodicea was also a clothing center. Outer garments were made of black wool. This wool was raven colored and very glossy.
3. There was a medical school in this city. It was famous for ear salve and eye powder.
4. There were also warm mineral springs that were turned into a health resort.
5. Laodicea is mentioned twice in the letter to the Colossians (Colossians 2:1; 4:17).
6. This is the saddest of the seven letters. It contains no praise. It is nothing more than an autopsy of a dead church. Christ takes the church apart and shows us what killed it.

I. THE AUTHOR OF THE FINAL LETTER (vs. 14)

- A. Christ addressed himself as the "amen." This

word is often translated, "truly or verily." It is used to "affirm or guarantee the truthfulness of a statement." God is called the "God of truth or amen" in Isaiah 65:16. Jesus Christ then is a guarantee of the truthfulness of God's will for man. Christ is proof that God said what he meant and meant what he said!

- B. Christ is the "amen" because he is the "faithful and true witness." The word "faithful" means, "trustworthy or reliable." "True" means, "genuine or real." A "witness" is "someone who acknowledges what he has seen or heard on a firsthand basis."
- C. Christ is also "the beginning of the creation of God." The word "beginning" is *arche* in the Greek language. The Jehovah's Witnesses are wrong when they say that this verse teaches that Christ was a created being. The word *arche* teaches us that Christ is the "source or originator of all creation."
 - 1. John 1:1-3, 14 tells us that the Word which became flesh and dwelt among us created all things.
 - 2. Colossians 1:16 says that all things were created by Christ and for Christ.

II. THE CONDEMNATION (vss. 15-17)

- A. There is no praise for this church. This church is the worst of all. In Thyatira there was at least a remnant. In Sardis there were a few who did not defile their garments.
- B. Christ knew their works.

1. They were not "hot." Perhaps Christ had in mind the warm mineral springs in Laodicea and Hieropolis. The word "hot" means, "boiling hot or zeal." It is the word *zestos* in the original language.
 2. They were not "cold." Again Christ may have been thinking of the cold springs of Colossae which his readers would be familiar with.
 3. These Christians were too cold to be hot and not hot enough to be cold! They had neither the coldness of direct opposition nor the warmth of genuine enthusiasm.
- C. Christ said that he wished "that they were either cold or hot." He wished that they were either lost or truly saved. He would rather that some make no claim to him or the church or that they would be fervent in spirit serving the Lord, zealous of good works, and doing what they did with all their might (Romans 12:11; Titus 2:14; Ecclesiastes 9:10).
- D. Christ wanted his followers to have the fervor of a patriot fighting for his nation. He wanted them to have the zeal of a congressman trying to push his bill through the legislature. He desired that they have the enthusiasm of a doctor who just made a medical breakthrough. Christ wanted these Christians to be on fire like a salesman who is sold on his product! He is trying to teach these Christians that he and his church has first place or no place in their lives! There is no room for neutrality. We are either for him or against him (Matthew 12:30).

- E. They were neither hot nor cold. They were “lukewarm.” This word is *chliaros* in the Greek and means, “tepid.” Once again Christ uses a term that these people were familiar with. Tepid was often used to describe the temperature of their mineral springs.
1. The Laodiceans were a people who professed that they knew God, but by their works they denied him (Titus 1:16). They had a form of godliness but denied the power thereof (II Timothy 3:5).
 2. They were sound in doctrine but would not defend it.
 3. They did not deny the cross but were indifferent towards it.
 4. They tolerated sin in their own lives.
 5. They knew the world was lost but did nothing about it.
 6. They were practicing the MAXIMUM OF THE MINIMUM.
 7. In the lukewarm hearts of the Laodiceans good and evil met and was neutralized.
- F. Christ did not want them to be lukewarm. He knew that a lukewarm Christian was no match for a red hot Devil!
- G. Christ then said that because they were “lukewarm”, he would “spue” them out of his mouth. These people were familiar with the nauseating lukewarm mineral water which often caused

people to vomit. Christ now would “vomit” them out of his mouth. These Christians made him sick. Thus, he would reject them with extreme disgust.

- H. But why were these Christians lukewarm? Verse seventeen says loud and clear that they were “self-satisfied.” Listen to them, “Thou sayest I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing.” Notice that this was their own estimate. The rich farmer of Luke 12:19-20 felt that way. Riches do have a tendency to make one self-satisfied or deceived. Mark 4:19 says, “the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word and it becometh unfruitful.”
- I. Now consider Jesus’ estimate of this church. “. . . knowest thou not that thou art the wretched one and miserable and poor and blind and naked?” (Revelation 3:17).
 - 1. They were “wretched and miserable.” That is, they were objects of pity.
 - 2. They were “poor” in the sense that they were spiritual paupers.
 - 3. They were “blind.” That is, they could not see their obligations to God, others, and self.
 - 4. They were “naked” in the sense that they lacked the attributes and characteristics that should grace the soul of a Christian.
- J. Christ was saying then that they were spiritually destitute. The church in Smyrna was poor

financially but rich spiritually. The church in Laodicea was rich financially but poor spiritually!

- K. The Lord said in effect that an honest atheist is more acceptable than a self-satisfied religious man.
- L. This church had lost its zeal, excitement, fervor, and enthusiasm. It had become fat, lazy, self-righteous, and complacent.

III. CHRIST OFFERS SOME ADVICE (vs. 18)

- A. He offers "counsel." Christ is our counselor (Isaiah 9:6). God said this is my beloved Son, hear ye him (Matthew 17:5). That is good advice. Those who will not hear him are building their lives on the sand (Matthew 7:24-26).
- B. Christ's advice is, "buy from me." He is the source of all true riches.
 - 1. They should buy "gold tried in fire." In other words, spiritual riches. These are real and tested riches. They will not decay and cannot be stolen (Matthew 6:19-21). Laodicea was famous for wealth. But not this kind.
 - 2. They also needed to buy "white garments." Laodicea was a clothing center. It was famous for the outer garments made of black wool. The white garments were those washed by the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 7:14). They are the attire of the bride of Christ. The bride is clothed with righteousness or righteous deeds (Revelation 19:6).

3. Finally, Christ advises that these Christians buy of him “eyesalve to anoint their eyes that they might see.” This city was famous for its eyesalve. Yet, these Christians were blind spiritually. Satan blinds both the alien sinner and the erring Christian (II Corinthians 4:4; II Peter 1:9).

IV. CHRIST OFFERS AN ADMONITION (vs. 19)

- A. Those who Christ loves (*phileo*), he rebukes and chastens. Hebrews 12:6-8 teaches us that God only chastises sons. He does so that we might live (Hebrews 12:9). He does so for our profit (Hebrews 12:10). These Christians should have rejoiced over this verse. It meant that God still considered them his. Someone has observed that the greatest anger of God is when he withdraws his anger.
- B. He then commands them to keep on being “zealous.” He wants them to be hot!
- C. Then he commands them to “repent.” This is to be done in one definitive act!

V. FINALLY, CHRIST OFFERS TWO PROMISES (vss. 20, 21)

- A. Christ said, “Behold I stand at the door and knock, if any man hear my voice, I will come in unto him, and sup with him and he with me.”
- B. Literally, Jesus said, “See, I have taken my stand upon your threshold, and I am continually knocking.” What a pathetic picture!
 1. Here we have Christ on the outside. Driven out by self-satisfaction or lukewarmness.

2. Here we have Christ tenderly seeking readmittance into their hearts.
 3. Observe also that man must open the door. Christ will not force his way in.
 4. Once a little girl and her Daddy were going through an art gallery. They came to Holman Hunt's famous picture of Jesus knocking at the door. The little girl said, "who is that knocking?" Her weary father said, "Jesus." "Is he tired?" The father answered the little girl by saying, "it looks like he is." The girl asked, "why don't they let him in?" The tired father said, "how do I know?" "Let's go home." When the father put his little girl to bed, she asked again, "why won't they let him in?" "I guess they are just bad and foolish men," said the father. "We would let him in," wouldn't we Daddy? That night the father could not sleep. He kept asking himself why he had kept Jesus out of his heart. He soon let him in.
- C. Jesus then promises to those who overcome the privilege of "sitting down with him in his throne." This simply means that Christians will share in the reign, power, authority, and glory of Christ (Romans 8:17-18).

In conclusion, we learn from this letter that Christ and his church must have first place or they will have no place (Matthew 6:33; II Corinthians 8:5). Do we not also see the danger of luxury or wealth? They can indeed cause one to err from the faith (I Timothy 6:10). Lukewarmness among God's people makes Christ sick. He wants us to be zealous. Could it be that God is knocking on the door of your heart? Will you not let him in?

The Throne Of God

INTRODUCTION: In Chapter One we see a picture of Christ. In Chapters Two and Three, we see Christ amidst the churches on earth.

1. As Revelation Four opens up, John sees an open door. Christ opened a door for the church in Philadelphia (Revelation 3:8). Christ wanted the church in Laodicea to open the door of their hearts to him (Revelation 3:20).
2. In verse one, John hears a voice like a trumpet which said, "come up hither." We are told by millennial advocates that this is the rapture. They say the church is not mentioned from chapters four through nineteen because it has been raptured. The Bible does not even mention the word "rapture." The idea that the church will be raptured up into the air for a seven year period while there is a tribulation on earth is totally false. Paul in I Thessalonians 4:13-18 says that the church will rise to meet Christ in the air. But it will not be for seven years. We shall ever be with the Lord in the air.
3. John was going to see things that were to come to pass. He was to see it while in the Spirit. John was in the Spirit on the Lord's day (Revelation 1:10).

I. THE THRONE OF GOD AND HIM THAT SAT UPON IT (vss. 2, 3)

- A. John saw a “throne set in heaven.” The word “throne” is found in every chapter of Revelation but chapters eight, nine, and two. It is found nineteen times in chapters four and five. The word “throne” means “a seat of authority.” Here we see the control center of the universe. By the way, the throne of God is between the cherubim (Psalms 80:1; 99:1).
- B. John wrote of “one that sat on the throne.” Let us note that he is not resting. God is reigning and ruling the universe. Notice John’s description of him.
1. He looked like a “jasper” stone. This was the diamond. It was pure, clear, and sparkling white. It no doubt symbolized God’s holiness and purity.
 2. He also looked like a “sardine” stone. This was the sardius stone and was red in color. It stands for the wrath of God.
 3. These two stones were found in the breastplate of the high priest and in the foundation of the New Jerusalem.
 4. There was also a “rainbow round about the throne.” Note that it was not a semicircle but it completely encircled the throne. This may symbolize the fact that God is a covenant making God (Genesis 9). Don’t forget that there are seven colors in the rainbow. It also of course stood for God’s wrath (the flood) and God’s mercy in saving Noah and

his family. The rainbow in its sight was like unto an emerald. We usually associate this with the color green. Some think this was a colorless rock. In other words, it was crystal which reflected the colors of the rainbow. It is interesting to note that the word "emerald" means, "to glow."

5. Thus, we have God described in terms of light. In Psalm 104:2, we learn that God covers himself with light. He dwells in light that no man can approach (I Timothy 6:16).

II. THOSE WHO ARE AROUND THE THRONE (vs. 4)

A. First there were the four and twenty elders. Who were they?

1. Some say they were a heavenly court or council (Genesis 3:22).
2. Many link them with the twenty four courses of priests (I Chronicles 24:7-18). Each course had a president called an elder. The elders of our text offer up incense which is the prayers of the saints (Revelation 5:8).
3. Others believe them to be the twelve Patriarchs and twelve apostles. Their names are found on the gates and the foundation of the walls of heaven (Revelation 21).
4. Scholars suggest that they represent the saved of both Old and New Testament times. The occupants of heaven sing the song of Moses and the Lamb (Revelation 15:4).

5. My personal view is that suggestions three and four are the best possible interpretations.
- B. They were clothed in “white raiment.” White raiment will be given to Christians who overcome (Revelation 3:5). It symbolized also joy and purity.
 - C. The elders also had on their heads “crowns of gold.” Christians who overcome are promised the “crown of life and the crown of righteousness” (Revelation 2:10; II Timothy 4:8). See also Revelation 4:4, 10; 14:3.
 - D. What was the function of these beings?
 1. They worship (Revelation 5:11; 11:16; 14:3, 7-11; 19:4).
 2. They offer the prayers of the saints (Revelation 5:8).
 3. They encourage (Revelation 5:5).
 4. They interpret (Revelation 7:13).

III. THAT WHICH PROCEEDS FROM THE THRONE OF GOD (vs. 5)

- A. “Lightnings, thunder, and voices” proceed from the throne.
- B. This reminds us of Exodus 19:16, “And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount (Sinai) and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people in the camp trembled.” These things then stand for the majesty and power of God.

C. "There were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God." We read about these seven Spirits also in Revelation 1:4; 5:6 and 3:1.

1. Who are the seven Spirits? Some say they are the sevenfold gifts of the Spirit in Isaiah 11:2. Thus, it is concluded that this is the Holy Spirit.
2. Revelation 5:6 links them with the "seven horns and seven eyes" that the slain Lamb (Jesus) has, as he stands ready to open the book of seven seals. Horns and eyes have always stood for power, honor, and knowledge in the Bible.

IV. THAT WHICH IS BEFORE THE THRONE (vs. 6)

A. Before the throne is a "sea of glass like crystal." It is said that Solomon's palace floor looked so much like the sea, that the Queen of Sheba pulled up her skirts as if to wade.

1. Revelation 15:2 speaks of a sea of glass mingled with fire.
2. But in Revelation 21:1 we are told that there is no sea in heaven.

B. It is interesting to note that the word "crystal" can mean, "ice."

C. Consider also the fact that in creation God divided the waters that were under the firmament from those that were above the firmament (Genesis 1:7).

- D. The waters above the heavens are to praise God (Psalm 148:4).
- E. God placed the beams of his chambers in water (Psalm 104:3).

V. THAT WHICH IS IN THE MIDST OF THE THRONE
(vss. 6-9)

- A. "In the midst of the throne and round about it were four beasts."
- B. Notice the description of the beasts.
 - 1. They are full of eyes.
 - 2. They have the face of a lion. This is the supreme beast.
 - 3. They have the face of a calf or ox. The ox is supreme among cattle.
 - 4. They have the face of a man, who is supreme among all creatures.
 - 5. They have the face of a flying eagle, which is supreme among the birds.
 - 6. They have six wings. This reminds us of the Seraphim (Isaiah 6:1-2). Note also that the Seraphim used two wings to cover their eyes which probably stands for humility. They used two wings to fly. This symbolizes obedience. They also used two wings to cover their feet which was a sign of reverence. The wings of the four beasts had eyes within, which may stand for insight.

7. Consider also that these four beasts do not rest day or night. They then continually ascribe holiness to almighty God. They also ascribe glory, honor and thanksgiving.
- C. Who are these four beasts? Well, there are many theories.
1. Many believe that they stand for everything that is noblest, strongest, wisest, and swiftest in nature. The idea of nature praising God is not out of harmony with the word of God (Psalms 19:1; 148).
 2. Others think that they are attributes of God (Bravery, strength, intelligence, and swiftness).
 3. Ancient scholars believed the four beasts represented the four covenants with Adam, Moses, Noah, and Christ. While others thought they stood for Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.
 4. My personal view is that they are the same as the living ones in Ezekiel 1:5. They are four in number as the living ones (Ezekiel 1:4; Revelation 4:6). They have the same faces (Ezekiel 1:10; Revelation 4:7). They are associated with thrones (Ezekiel 1:26; Revelation 4:6). Both the living ones and the four beasts are covered with eyes (Ezekiel 1:18; Revelation 4:8). They are both associated with a rainbow (Ezekiel 1:28; Revelation 4:8). Ezekiel 10:20 tells us that the living ones are the Cherubim. Perhaps here and in other places we learn that they are among the highest forms of angels. Their primary

function seems to be that of guarding (Genesis 3:24; Exodus 25:20).

VI. THAT WHICH GOES ON AROUND THE THRONE (vss. 10, 11)

- A. Worship goes on around the throne.
- B. We have a song of praise in verses eight and nine.
 - 1. The four beasts ascribe holiness to God as did the Seraphim (Isaiah 6:1-3).
 - 2. They also emphasize his eternal nature.
- C. The four and twenty elders sing a song of creation.
 - 1. They fall down and worship.
 - 2. They cast their crowns down which is a sign of submission.
 - 3. They cry out that God is worthy of glory, honor, and thanksgiving.
 - 4. Why? Because God created all things. They were created for his presence (Colossians 1:16).

In conclusion, we learn that God rules in heaven. The throne of God is utterly beautiful. Really it is hard to comprehend. We learn about the importance of worship. If you don't enjoy worship now, you would never enjoy heaven! We learn that God is worthy of the worship of the saved in Old and New Testament times. He is worthy of worship from angels and all creation!

Worthy Is The Lamb

INTRODUCTION: In chapter one we have a picture of Christ that is one of the most unique in scripture.

1. In chapters two and three we see the church as represented by the seven congregations in Asia Minor.
2. Revelation four gave us a look at the very throne of God and him who sits upon it.
3. Now in Revelation five our attention will be focused on the Lamb of God.
4. As the chapter begins, and we see the curtain rising on this great drama even more, John sees in the right hand of God a book. It is a book written within and on the back. This no doubt points to the fact that it is full and important.
5. Some see somewhat of a parallel between the book of Ezekiel 2:9-10. In this text the prophet eats the book and then preaches its contents. Others link the book of our text to the statement in Psalms 40:7-8, "Lo I am come in the volume of the book, it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God, yea thy law is within my heart." Frankly, I think the book revealed what was to happen to the church and the Roman empire. This book must be understood in

light of the times in which it is written and in light of the people to whom it was written. A book with prophecies that pertained to our age or beyond, would be of no value to these Christians.

6. Notice that this book was “sealed with seven seals.” Roman law required that a document be sealed by seven witnesses. Each sealed the document by tying seven threads around the scroll. It could only be opened when all seven witnesses were back.
7. John sees next a strong angel that asks, “who is worthy to open the book and loose the seals thereof?” Note the word “worthy.” The angel did not ask who was able to open the book, but who was “worthy” to open the book. There would be more than just opening the book. The one who opened the book would be responsible for controlling and developing that which follows.
8. John “wept” when no one seemed able to open the book. Literally, he “kept on weeping audibly” (vs. 4).

I. BEHOLD THE LION OF THE TRIBE OF JUDAH AND THE ROOT OF DAVID (vs. 5)

- A. The word “lion” was used in Bible times to describe the noblest son. When Jacob blessed Judah, he called him a “lion’s whelp.” He also said he “coucheth as a lion, as an old lion.” Then he foretold that “the sceptre should not depart from Judah until Shiloh or Christ should come” (Genesis 49:9-10). Hebrews 7:14 says that Christ sprang from the tribe of Judah.

- B. Christ is also called here “the root of David.” Isaiah 11:1-2 says, “There shall come forth a shoot out of the stem of Jesse and a Branch shall grow out of his roots, and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him . . .” Peter, on Pentecost, said in Acts 2:30 that God promised that of the fruit of David’s loins, he according to the flesh would raise up Christ to sit on David’s throne. According to Revelation 22:16 Christ is the root and offspring of David.
- C. Consider also the fact that in this verse Christ “prevailed.” That is, he overcame. The original language indicated that it was done in one act. This of course has to be the resurrection. Through this act Christ overcame Satan, sin, and death, which are the three greatest enemies of God and man.

II. THE LAMB STANDS AS THOUGH IT HAD BEEN SLAIN (vs. 6)

- A. The text says that the Lamb was standing in the midst of the throne, the four beasts, and the four and twenty elders. He was standing as a triumphant conqueror.
- B. The word “lamb” is used over twenty times in Revelation to describe Christ. The word “lamb” in this text means, “a little lamb.”
 - 1. In Isaiah 53:7 the prophet wrote, “He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth, he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, as a sheep before his shearers is dumb, so openeth he not his mouth.”
 - 2. John the Baptist calls him the lamb of God

that cometh to take away the sins of the world (John 1:29).

3. In Revelation 13:8 Christ is pictured again as the lamb slain from the foundation of the world.
4. The lamb John saw stood as one that had been "slain." This word means, "slaughtered." He no doubt stood as he did before the Apostles. They saw the nail prints in his hands and feet. They saw the gapping hole in his side. These marks must have been visible to John and to all in heaven.
5. The lamb had "seven horns." The word "horn" stood for "power and honor" in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 33:17; Psalm 89:17).
6. Furthermore, the lamb had "seven eyes which were the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." A parallel to this may be Zechariah 4:4 which was that the eyes of the Lord run to and fro through the whole earth. I believe that this description points to the omniscience of Christ.

III. WORTHY IS THE LAMB (vss. 7-14)

- A. Christ took the book from the hand of the Father. Then the four beasts and the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb.
- B. Notice that they had "harps and golden bowls of incense which were the prayers of the saints." Many want to use the word "harp" and argue that if instrumental music can be found in heaven,

it ought to be in the church. Yet, the harp is just as literal as the incense which is a figurative term to describe the prayers of the saints.

- C. These heavenly creatures “sing a new song.” Literally, they “kept on singing.”
- D. The word “new” is a word that denotes “quality” in contrast to new when it is used in relationship with old. The book of Revelation is a book of new things. We read about a new name (Revelation 2:17; 3:12); the new Jerusalem (Revelation 21:2); the new heavens and new earth (Revelation 21:1); and in fact, in heaven all things will be new (Revelation 21:5).
- E. It is interesting to notice that already in this book, we have had two other songs.
 - 1. The “song of praise” from the four beasts (Revelation 4:8-9).
 - 2. The “song of creation” from the four and twenty elders (Revelation 4:10-11).
- F. Now we come to the “song of redemption.” It is sung by the four creatures and the four and twenty elders.
- G. They sing out, “Worthy art thou to take the book and open the seals thereof.” But why was Christ worthy?
 - 1. He was slain.
 - 2. He became a redeemer or one who purchased. He became a redeemer by shedding his blood (Ephesians 1:7). He poured out his blood for

the remission of sins (Matthew 26:28). He purchased the church with his own blood (Acts 20:28). Peter said we are redeemed by blood as of a lamb without spot or blemish (I Peter 1:18-19).

3. He redeemed men of "every tribe, and people, and tongue, and nation." He died to become the "Saviour of the whole world" (John 4:42). This statement in our text reminds us of Daniel 7:13-14. The prophet wrote, "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like unto the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before them. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom that all people, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and the kingdom that which shall not pass away." See also these passages on the great commission (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:47).

H. Christ is worthy because he "made his redeemed into a kingdom and priests." See also Revelation 1:5.

- I. Verse ten also says, ". . . we shall reign on the earth." Many have used this passage mistakenly to advocate the so-called thousand year reign on earth. The American Standard version renders this phrase, "They reign on the earth." Thus the King James version has this passage pointing to the future. The other translation gives the impression that we are reigning now. Which is correct? It should be obvious from chapters

four and five of Revelation, we see that Christ is reigning now. Christians reign now in life through one Jesus Christ (Romans 5:17). Christ must reign until he has put all enemies under his feet and the last enemy that shall be abolished is death. When he comes again, it will not be to establish a kingdom on earth but to deliver up the church-kingdom that already exists into the presence of the Father (I Corinthians 15:24-26).

J. Finally, we see the whole universe praising the Lamb (vss. 11, 14).

1. The elders and the beasts praise him.
2. So do an innumerable host of angels.
3. They cry out "Worthy Is The Lamb."
4. They ascribe a seven fold blessing to Christ.
 - a. Power (I Corinthians 1:24)
 - b. Riches (II Corinthians 8:9)
 - c. Wisdom (I Corinthians 1:24)
 - d. Strength (Revelation 1:8)
 - e. Honor (Philippians 2:11)
 - f. Glory (John 1:14)
 - g. Blessing

K. Notice that Christ receives worship. Angels don't receive worship (Revelation 19:10). Thus, the Jehovah's Witness doctrine that Christ is an angel is false!

Conclusion: We have learned that Christ is the noblest Son of all. He is the Son of man but most important, he is the only begotten Son of God (John 3:16). Christ has prevailed or overcome. This is the gospel or good news! Yes, Christ was slain and through his blood, we can be saved and go to

heaven. Thus, Christ is worthy of universal praise. It would be better for the world of our day to submit to the Son of God in gospel obedience and worship him, than to be forced to bow the knee to him on judgment day.

The Execution Of Judgment

INTRODUCTION: In chapters four and five, the church is assured that God is in control and the future is in God's hands.

1. In Chapter Six, six of the seven seals are broken. This chapter has basically the same message as chapter five.
2. In verse one, John sees the Lamb open the first seal. He hears a noise like thunder.
3. Then one of the four beasts (the one like a lion) says, "come." The words "and see" are not in most manuscripts. Thus, this creature speaks not to John, but is calling the first of the four horses. The use of four horses to get the message across is also found in Zechariah 6:1-8.

I. THE WHITE HORSE (vs. 2)

- A. What does this mean? Who is this on the horse? Many think that this is Christ and the gospel which conquers the world of its day. They go to Revelation 19:11-12 which says, "And I saw the heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat thereon was called Faithful and True; and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself." Yet, the only similarity in these two texts would

be the white horse. The crowns are not similar. They are singular and plural in the texts. In addition, they are two different words in the original language. One is *stephanos* (Revelation 6:2) and the other is *diadem* (Revelation 19:11-12). The rider in Chapter Six had a bow which Christ did not have in Chapter Nineteen.

- B. Others believe the rider and horse stand for the Roman empire which conquered the world of its day. But the Romans did not use the bow. Their emperors did not wear crowns.
- C. Thus, the only logical answer is that this description points to the Parthians, who were Rome's Eastern rivals. They were feared for their skill with the bow. The message then is that Rome will be at war. She will suffer from external invasion.

II. THE RED OR FLAME COLORED HORSE (vss. 3, 4)

- A. This horse was called on the scene by the second beast which was like a calf.
- B. This horse would take peace from the earth and kill with a great sword.
- C. Many believe that this represents the blood of the saints that is to be shed.
- D. The best interpretation, in my judgment, is that this horse represents internal strife and rebellion that is often associated with warfare. I think there are historical records to back this up.

III. THE BLACK HORSE (vss. 5, 6)

- A. The third beast here is the one with the face of a man.

- B. The rider had a pair of balances in his hand. This indicates scarcity.
- C. Verse six quite clearly describes famine. Food is scarce and expensive. The poor man will be especially hard hit.
- D. Famine often follows on the heels of war and internal strife.

IV. THE PALE OR LIVID HORSE (vss. 7, 8)

- A. Some render the word "pale" as "greenish-yellow" in color. It is a ghastly picture.
- B. Death is the rider. Hades follows along behind. Here we see death and hades personified. Revelation has much to say about death and hades.

1. Revelation 1:17-18

2. Revelation 20:13-14

- C. This horse, its rider and its follower will kill with hunger, pestilence, and wild beasts. See Ezekiel 14:21.
- D. In summation, these four horses have said to the Roman empire and the church, that God has weapons to deal with the persecuted church, that neither have ever dreamed of. In other words, God is going to use external invasion, internal strife, famine, pestilence, and death to bring Rome to her knees, that his people might be spared, and the gospel spread.

V. A CRY FOR JUSTICE (vss. 9-11)

- A. The fifth seal is now opened.

- B. John saw under the altar souls. The word “altar” is the same word used for an “altar of sacrifice.” I think a study of the Bible will indicate that heaven served as the pattern of the tabernacle and temple.
- C. Under the Old Testament law, when a sacrifice was offered, the blood was poured out at the base of the altar. Was this what John saw? The life of the flesh is in the blood (Leviticus 17:11). We don’t know for sure.
- D. These souls were “slain.” That is, they were “slaughtered” or killed for two basic reasons.
1. They were slain for the “word of God.” They were preaching it all over the world (Colossians 1:23).
 2. They were killed for the “testimony they held.” That is their beliefs that were centered in the gospel.
 3. In Revelation 1:9 we see that John was exiled on Patmos for these same two reasons. Could it be that these same souls are referred to in Revelation 12:11?
- E. They cry out, “how long, O Master, holy and true dost thou not avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?” They did not doubt that justice would be done. They simply wanted to know when. The cry for vengeance or justice would not seem unusual if we had seen what they had been through. They may have been the ones beheaded in Revelation 20:4. The blood of Abel cried out to God from the ground (Genesis 4:10). God will indeed avenge his elect (Luke

18:7; Hebrews 10:30). By the way, as a side line lesson, note that souls that are dead are conscious in hades (Luke 16:19-31).

- F. They are given “white robes.” This was promised to those who overcome (Revelation 3:4). They stand for victory, purity, and festivity. Perhaps also they stand for righteousness (Revelation 19:8).
- G. The saints also are told to “rest for a while.” The word “rest” denotes “refreshment.” Those who die in the Lord are blessed because they can “rest.”
- H. They are also comforted by the fact that others will suffer the same fate.

VI. A PICTURE OF FINAL JUDGMENT (vss. 12-17)

- A. Expressions like the sun becoming black as sackcloth, the moon turning to blood, stars falling to the earth, and the heavens departing as a scroll are all found in the Old Testament. They point to some kind of a calamity or judgment. You can find these expressions in books like Isaiah, Joel, and Hosea. They were used when God was going to punish Israel or the nations about them. Christ uses this terminology when he describes the end of the world and the destruction of Jerusalem (Matthew 24).
- B. In my judgment, the context points to the final judgment.
- C. There are seven classes of men in verses fifteen and sixteen. They no doubt stand for humanity in general.

- D. They want to hide from the face of God, when they know judgment is at hand. They also want to hide themselves from the "wrath of the Lamb." This description of Jesus might seem to be contradictory. A lamb is known for gentleness. Yet, in Romans 11:22 we are told to behold the goodness and the severity of God. God has many facets to his personality.
- E. The question is asked, who shall be able to withstand the wrath of God? II Thessalonians 1:7-9 gives us the answer. Those who know not God and obey not the gospel cannot stand. Those who belong to the Lord will weather the storm.

In conclusion, what have we learned? God is in control. In his omniscience, he is not unmindful of his suffering saints. He is not indifferent to the enemies of his people. We learn that in the final analysis, the wicked will be punished and justice will be done. We also learn something about the nature of God's wrath. It is so terrible that no one wants to face it.

The Militant And Triumphant Church

INTRODUCTION: In Revelation 6:17 we read, “. . . the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?”

1. This question is answered in Chapter Seven.
2. In Chapter Seven we learn that “triumph” and not “tribulation” is the last word concerning the history of the church.
3. Verses one through three form an introduction to this chapter.
4. In them we read of the “four angels standing at the four corners of the earth.” Now Bible writers were not ignorant. Isaiah 40:22 speaks of God sitting above the circle of the earth. Satellites have recently discovered four magnetic points on this planet.
5. Now these four angels are holding back (like a dog on a leash) the four winds. These winds stand for destructive forces. God often used winds to do his will (Jeremiah 4:13; Job 37:9-10).
6. The idea of angels controlling the forces of nature is not new. Angels control fire and water (Revelation 14:18; 16:5).
7. These introductory verses also speak of an angel that comes from the sunrise. Some

think it is Christ. They sight Malachi 4:2.
I personally don't believe that this is true.

I. THE SEALED OR CHURCH ON EARTH (vss. 4-8)

- A. Notice that John "heard" the number of the sealed.
- B. The word "sealed" is used to denote, "ownership or genuineness." In the Biblical context of this book it means, "that God's people were to be marked for safety in the times of trouble that lay ahead. See Ezekiel 9:1-6. Here we have God's people marked for preservation.
- C. The number of those sealed were one hundred and forty-four thousand. Who were they?
- D. The Jehovah's Witness tell us that there are two classes of saved individuals.
 - 1. There is the "anointed class" which is comprised of the one hundred and forty-four thousand. These will be in heaven, we are told. We are also told that in 1918 part of the one hundred and forty-four thousand were raised and taken to heaven. The others will be later changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.
 - 2. The second class of people is the so-called "other sheep." The Jehovah's Witness use John 10:16 to justify this theory. These saved will not go to heaven but will remain on earth!
 - 3. These views will not hold up in light of the scriptures. The Bible does not divide the saved up into two classes. There is but one body or church (Ephesians 4:4; 1:22-23).

The same verse used to justify the so-called "other sheep" also says, ". . . there shall be one flock and one shepherd." This statement disproves these false doctrines. Furthermore, we know that Christ did not come back in 1918 because Revelation 1:7 says that every eye shall see Christ, when he comes again.

- E. Another theory identifies the one hundred and forty-four thousand as the saved among the Jews. The multitude in verse nine we are told represents the Gentiles who are to be saved. Yet, there is no distinction made between Jewish and Gentile Christians. In Christ, all are one (Galatians 3:28). God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34-35). Jew and Gentile are made one through the death of Christ on the cross (Ephesians 2:14-16).
 - 1. The idea of a literal twelve thousand people from each of the twelve tribes making up the one hundred and forty-four thousand is ridiculous. What would be the mathematical odds that exactly twelve thousand from each tribe would be saved? The discerning Bible student will notice that the twelve tribes are not listed in this text. There are nineteen different listings of the tribes in the Old Testament and this one doesn't agree with any of them. Levi was not a tribe because it had no land. Ephraim and Manasseh were the sons of Joseph. The tribe of Dan is not even listed. Perhaps this is so because this tribe went into idolatry.
- F. If these one hundred and forty-four thousand are Jews, then only Jews are sealed. There is no

evidence from this text that the Gentiles were. Remember God is no respecter of persons (Romans 2:11).

- G. Well, who are these one hundred and forty-four thousand? They are the church on earth. The church is often described as the Israel of God (Galatians 6:16; Romans 2:28-29). The one hundred and forty-four thousand are the same as the multitude in verse nine. We have pictured in Chapter Seven the same body of people. They are simply seen from two viewpoints. In verses four through eight we have the church on earth. In the remaining verses of the chapter, we see the church in heaven. We see in this text the church militant and the church triumphant!
- H. Revelation 14:4-5 describe the sealed of God or the one hundred and forty-four thousand. They are virgins (not defiled women). They are followers of the Lamb and are redeemed. They are the firstfruits unto God and are without blemish and guile. These attributes describe not the Jews, who rejected Christ, but the church that obeyed him and served him.
- I. In Revelation 7:1-3, we see the one hundred and forty-four thousand being sealed for preservation during the tribulation. In Revelation 7:14 the multitude has come out of the tribulation. They then are the same group, the church. In Revelation 14:5 the one hundred and forty-four thousand are before the throne of God. Again, we learn they are the same group. In Revelation 7:4 the one hundred and forty-four thousand are sealed. Paul taught the Ephesians that Christians are sealed with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians

1:13-14; 4:30). Thus, the church and the one hundred and forty-four thousand are the same.

II. THE GREAT MULTITUDE OR THE CHURCH IN HEAVEN (vss. 9-17)

- A. The multitude “cannot be numbered.”
- B. It is made up of people from all nations and languages. Here is a statement that points to the fulfillment of the great commission (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8).
- C. Note that the multitude “stands before the throne.” This was a favored position in ancient times.
- D. The multitude was arrayed in “white robes.” White robes were promised to those who overcome in Sardis (Revelation 3:4-5). The white robes may stand for the righteousness or righteous acts of the saints (Revelation 19:8). These robes are made white in the blood of the Lamb as we shall soon see (Revelation 7:14). Those whose robes are washed will enter into heaven (Revelation 22:14). These robes then stand for purity, victory, and joy.
- E. The multitude also have “palm branches” in their hands. Palm branches were used during the Feast of Tabernacles. This was a festival of great joy. The Jews took branches of palm trees and went forth to meet Christ, saying Hosana, blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.
- F. Then notice if you will that salvation is ascribed by the multitude to God and the Lamb (vs. 10).

In the next two verses the angels, four beasts, and four and twenty elders worship God.

G. In verses 13 and 14, John has a conversation with one of the twenty four elders. Perhaps this was the same elder that tried to comfort John in Revelation 5:15.

1. Those whom John saw had “come out of the great tribulation.” Literally, “they kept on coming out of the great tribulation.”
2. What is the “great tribulation?” Some think John is describing the destruction of Jerusalem. Not so. That had happened twenty five years before this book was penned. Others see the great tribulation as some event at the end of the world like the so-called battle of Armageddon. Where is the scripture to back this up? The best view of the great tribulation is that it refers to the Christian life. People keep going through this tribulation. It is not a one time event. The language indicates this. Christ said, in this world ye shall have tribulation (John 16:33). The new converts were told that through much tribulation, they would enter into the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22). Those who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer tribulation (II Tim. 3:12).
3. Those who came out of this tribulation have “washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” This is a metaphor that describes “conversion.” The blood of Christ “washes away sins” (Revelation 1:5). The blood is WHAT washes away sins and baptism is WHEN sins are washed away (Acts

22:16). Yes, baptism preceded by faith, repentance, and confession puts us into the death of Christ, where his rich, red, royal, ruby blood was shed (Romans 6:3-6).

- H. In the remaining verses (15-17) we see the end result of conversion and living the Christian life.
1. Note that the multitude is “before the throne.” This is perfect communion.
 2. They “serve him day and night.” This is perfect service.
 3. God “spreads his tabernacle” over them. Here is perfect presence and protection.
 4. The redeemed “hunger and thirst no more.” They are not exposed to “the sun or heat” anymore. The Lamb will be “shepherd.” He will “feed them and lead them to living waters.” This is perfect provision.
 5. God will “wipe away all tears.” This is perfect bliss and joy.
 6. It is said that the poet Robert Burns could never read these verses without weeping.

In conclusion, what have we learned? God knows those that are his. Those who belong to God are pure, followers of the Lamb, without guile, and deceit. They are from all nations, races, tongues, and cultures. We have had a beautiful picture of heaven painted by the pen of John. The redeemed will be arrayed in white robes and will have palm branches in their hands. They will worship God with all the angels and other heavenly beings. The saved of all ages will enter into the presence of God and will have all their needs met throughout all eternity.

The Power Of God

INTRODUCTION: Chapters five through seven reveal a book with seven seals. In these chapters the seals are opened one by one.

1. Now we come to the seven trumpets. One great lesson to learn is that the seven trumpets are going to reveal the same thing revealed by the seven seals. In other words, we are going to see the same picture from two basic viewpoints. Later we will have the seven vials. They will represent the same message as the seven seals and seven trumpets.
2. Gibbons in his classic work, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, pointed to three factors that brought Rome to her knees. They were, natural calamity, internal decay, and external invasion. We will see these three factors at work in this lesson.
3. As the seven trumpets are sounded, we must take note of a pattern. The first four trumpets will affect the world of nature. The last three will affect men. This same pattern was followed in the opening of the seven seals.
4. Our text will be Revelation chapters eight and nine.
5. The first five verses will serve as the introduction of this lesson.

6. In verse one we read of "silence of a half and hour" in heaven. Some suggest this points to "reverence." Personally, I doubt this. Rather, it seems that we have here the "calm before the storm and in the context it is possible that heaven is silent as the prayers of the saints ascend."
7. In verse two we read of "seven angels of the presence." The apocryphal book of Tobit identifies them as seven archangels. This book even names them. Where did the author get his information? We have only the name Michael in the Bible. Gabriel is not called an archangel in the scriptures. Gabriel is one who stands in the presence of God (Luke 1:19).
8. These angels have "seven trumpets." Trumpets were used to announce the arrival of dignitaries. They were also used to sound a warning or call an army to battle. In the context, it is obvious that the trumpets sound warnings of calamities that were to come.
9. In the next verse we see another angel like the seven. He offers up the prayers of the saints with incense. The incense is probably intercessions. Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the saints can offer intercession to aid us (Hebrews 7:25; Romans 8:26-27; I Timothy 2:1-2).
10. Verses four and five say loud and clear, that when the saints pray, God hears and acts. Could it be that these prayers are those we noted in Revelation 6:9-11? God will indeed avenge his elect (Luke 18:1-8).

I. THE FIRST TRUMPET (8:6, 7)

- A. This trumpet reminds us of the seventh Egyptian plague (Exodus 9:23-25).
- B. Here we see a natural calamity to befall the earth. Under the seals one-fourth of the earth was affected. Here it is one-third. We have here what we might call in modern day terms an ecological disaster.

II. THE SECOND TRUMPET (8:8, 9)

- A. Here we see salt water affected.
- B. We are reminded of the similarity to the first plague here (Exodus 7:20-21).

III. THE THIRD TRUMPET (8:10, 11)

- A. A star fell from heaven. This represents Satan. We will see this more clearly in chapter nine.
- B. Here we see fresh water affected at its very source.
- C. The star was named "Wormwood." This word means, "bitter or gall." Over the years Wormwood has been identified as Simon Magnus, Cerinthius, Arius, Plagius, and the Catholic church, etc.

IV. THE FOURTH TRUMPET (8:12, 13)

- A. Here we see light affected. There can be little or no life without light.
- B. This trumpet reminds us of the ninth plague in Egypt (Exodus 10:21-23).

- C. Consider the fact that John saw not an “angel” but the original language indicates “an eagle” flying in mid heaven. Some have even called this bird a “vulture.” Jesus used the word eagle or vulture to describe the destruction of Jerusalem (Matthew 24:28). Thus, we have had pictured some ecological disasters in the first four trumpets. Now, we come to the second division of trumpets, often called the “woe trumpets.”

V. THE FIFTH TRUMPET (9:1-11)

- A. The star falling from heaven here represents Satan. Jesus saw Satan fall as lightning from heaven (Luke 10:18). See also Isaiah 14:12; Revelation 12:9-11; II Peter 2:4; Jude 6.
- B. Note the fact that “there was given to him the key to the bottomless pit or abyss.” At one time Satan controlled the world of the dead (Hebrews 2:14). But Christ through his death, burial and resurrection, now has the keys of death and hades (Revelation 1:17-18). Christ now has all authority (Matthew 28:18). Satan has only what God allows and what he can take from man by deception. The “key” he has in the text stands for “authority.” The “pit or abyss” in my judgment is “hades.” Hades is divided into two states. There is “tartarus or the abyss” for the wicked dead, and there is “paradise or Abraham’s bosom” for the righteous dead. All men will enter hades at death and await the second coming of Christ and the judgment.
- C. The “smoke” that ascends out of the pit is the “deception that comes from sin and false doctrine.” Satan is a master at deception (II Corinthians 11:14; 4:4).

- D. Locusts like scorpions come out of the abyss. It is obvious that these are not to be viewed as literal.
- E. They cannot harm those who have been "sealed." See Revelation 7:4. Sealing was used to "protect God's people." See Ezekiel 9:1-9. Don't forget that God sealed his people with lamb's blood for the purpose of protecting them from the death angel down in the land of Egypt. The locusts connected with this trumpet again remind us of the plague in Exodus 10:4-20.
- F. Satan here is allowed to torment the evil people of the day but cannot kill them. He was allowed by God to test and torment Job. But he could not kill him.
- G. Verses seven and eight give a sevenfold description of the locusts. Perhaps this indicates complete power to torment.
- H. The king or angel of the locusts in Abaddon or Apollyon. We have seen that the seven churches had angels. So also have we seen angels over water, wind, and fire. Now we have one over the abyss. His name means, "the destroyer or destructor." Satan then was the destroyer or death angel that passed over the land of Egypt killing the firstborn male of man and beast, that did not have the blood of the lamb on the doorposts and lintels.
- I. What we have in these verses is a vivid picture of moral and spiritual decay that is tormenting the souls of men. Sin is characterized by deception. Sin stings. The sting of death is sin (I Corinthians 15:56). Sin stings when it injects its

poisonous venom into the souls of men. Satan is the king and father of it all.

VI. THE SIXTH TRUMPET (9:14-21)

- A. The Euphrates River formed a protective barrier for Israel on the East. On the other side of this river were the Babylonians, Assyrians, and Persians: The Euphrates is not used here as a geographical reference but as a symbol of some power that is being held in abeyance and that will soon be turned loose on Rome.
- B. Verse sixteen points to external invasion. We certainly cannot interpret this verse literally as the millennialists do. They would have us see an army of two hundred million men involved in some cataclysmic struggle at the end of time. If this is literal, then will they all be on horseback? Who fights like this in modern times? How ridiculous!
- C. From my studies, I would say that the Parthians or some other power would be pictured here. Certainly though, not in these numbers.
- D. These six trumpets have revealed God's judgments on the earth and on sinful men. Yet, many men did not repent of their evils. Often chastisement will cause some people to hide. The men in chapter six are a good example of this. Note also the conduct of Adam and Eve after sinning (Genesis 3). Others curse their misfortune. Many are like the Egyptian Pharoah, their hearts harden at chastisement.

In conclusion, we have learned from these chapters that God is omnipotent. He brought the mighty Roman empire to its knees. We also learn something about the power of prayer. When God's people pray, God hears and answers. Our attention is also focused again on Satan. He is the destroyer. Satan is not a friend of man but a bitter and destructive enemy.

Down, But Not Out!

INTRODUCTION: In chapters five through seven, we have the opening of six seals. Then there is a pause or interlude. This intermission contains two consolatory visions. The seventh seal is opened in chapter eight.

1. In chapters eight and nine we have six trumpets being sounded. Then there is a pause before the sounding of the seventh trumpet. In fact, it is not sounded until chapter eleven and verse fifteen. Before the final trumpet there were again two visions that consoled the readers, as with the seals.
2. Chapters ten and eleven will form our text.

I. THE MIGHTY ANGEL (10:1-7)

- A. This angel was clothed in a cloud. He had a rainbow about his head. His face was like the sun and his feet were as fire. These are all figures that we associate with being in the presence of God. Some think this angel is Jesus. But I will argue that similarity is not identity.
- B. In the angel's hand there was "a little open book." This is not the same as the book sealed with seven seals. We do not know its contents. The best interpretation is that it is a partial revelation of God's will to John. Some have thought that it contains the information in chapter eleven. Others believe that it contained the second part of Revelation. Certainly, it must

have had something to do with the church and its struggle with the Roman empire.

1. John hears a voice like a "lion." It came from the angel.
 2. Then John hears the "voice of the seven thunders." Who are they? Some suggest they represent the Catholic church. Not so. Thunder is associated with storms, calamity, or judgment.
- C. In verses five through seven, we learn that an angel stood on the earth and on the sea. He lifted up his hand and swore by him that liveth forever and ever. See Daniel 12:7. He declares that time shall be no more. That is, God will no longer delay to carry out his will concerning the church and Rome. Then we are told that when the final trumpet sounds "the mystery of the gospel will be finished." In my judgment, that mystery is the gospel (see Romans 16:25-26). The servants of God known as prophets wrote of the mystery in times past. They did not understand it. They like angels desired to look into it (I Peter 1:10-12).

II. JOHN AND THE LITTLE BOOK (10:8-11)

- A. John was to take the little book and eat it. It would make his belly bitter and his mouth sweet. This picture was taken from Old Testament sources.
1. Ezekiel 2:8 - 3:11
 2. Jeremiah 15:16
- B. The message to John was that he had to digest

the contents of this little book. Then he was to prophesy or teach it to the nations.

- C. The word of God is sweet to learn. Yet, so often it is bitter to preach. John was to preach the message of this little book, no matter how bitter or unpleasant. We who preach the gospel must do the same. By the way, Ezekiel's message was a message of woe. I suspect John's was also.

III. MEASURING THE TEMPLE (11:1-11)

- A. Some scholars think we have a picture of the measuring of the temple in Jerusalem for literal destruction in A. D. 70. Then we are told it will be rebuilt during the so-called thousand year reign. This doctrine is false. The book of Revelation was written about twenty-five years after the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem.
- B. Still others believe that we have a picture of Roman Catholicism being measured by the word of God. What relevance would this view have for first century Christians who were undergoing severe persecution by the Roman empire?
- C. What we have here is the measuring of the "church" for the purpose of "separation and protection" during the great persecutions that they are facing. The church is often called the "temple of God" in the Bible (I Corinthians 3: 16-17; II Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:19-20). God's people were measured for separation, sanctification, and protection in Zechariah 2: 1-5. Thus, what we have here is another picture of the sealing of the saints in the midst of tribulation.

- D. "The court" was not to be measured. In all probability, the court stands for the world. This is consistent with previous observations. "The Holy City" or "church" will be trodden under foot for forty-two months. Here is persecution for an indefinite period of time.
- E. The "two witnesses" in this text have had many interpretations. We are told that they are "Moses and Elijah, the Old Testament and the New Testament, Zerubbabel and Joshua, law and prophecy, etc." To me, the best explanation is that they stand for "Christ and the word." This could be Christ and the church, which is to preach the word.
- F. Notice that the two witnesses are to "prophecy." That is, they are to preach and teach the gospel. They will be characterized by miracles. Well, the Apostles went every where preaching the word. The Lord worked with them by confirming the word with signs or miracles (Mark 16:20).
- G. In verse four they are likened to "two olive trees and two candlesticks." This description calls to mind Zechariah's description of Zerubbabel and Joshua. Joshua was a type of Christ.
- H. They have great power (vss. 5-6). This may refer to the early portion of the Christian age, when there was such great success. The gospel was preached to the whole world in one generation (Colossians 1:23).
- I. Beginning in verse seven, we see persecution characterizing the saints. A "beast" arises to oppose the saints. Who is the beast? We will deal with that in chapter thirteen. He comes out of

the "abyss" over which is none other than "Abaddon or Apollyon" whom we have identified with Satan (9:11). God's people are slain. They are humiliated. Their enemies rejoice over their demise. Those who preached the gospel "tormented" these pagans. The gospel is a sword that is sharp and two-edged (Hebrews 4:12). It can touch the very soul of those who hear it. It can torment those who reject it.

- J. But notice that the "spirit of life entered into them and they stood up on their feet." This reminds us of the "valley of the dry bones" (Ezekiel 38). The message is that God's people may be down but they are not out.

"Truth crushed to earth shall rise again,
the eternal years of God are hers,
But error wounded, writhes in pain,
And dies among its worshippers."

IV. THE SEVENTH TRUMPET (11:15-19)

- A. In verse fifteen, we are told, "The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever."
- B. Does this mean that the kingdom of God is open to the nations? I doubt it. It had been opened for several decades.
- C. This verse teaches us that "the nations of the world are crumbling before the stone cut out of the mountain" which is the "church" (Daniel 2:44-45).

- D. Daniel 7:27 teaches us that, “the kingdom and the dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High: his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominions shall serve and obey him.”
- E. The “four and twenty elders” fall down and worship God as they so often do. This was in response to the truth that all kingdoms belong to God (vss. 15-17).
- F. Verse eighteen shows the reaction of the world to the knowledge that God is in control of the world.
- G. Finally, we have a brief glimpse into heaven in verse nineteen.

In conclusion, we have seen in these chapters the church under the protection of God. Satan cannot touch them. We see that the church will be persecuted (II Timothy 3:12). But though the church is often down, it will never be counted out (Matthew 16:18; Daniel 2:44; Hebrews 12:28).

The Radiant Woman

INTRODUCTION: It has been suggested that chapters one through eleven describe things from the vantage point of earth. Chapters twelve through twenty-two describe things from the vantage point of heaven.

1. Someone has observed that beginning with chapter twelve, we enter into the last half of Revelation. If we did not have the last half of Revelation, the book would still be complete. The message of the first half is that Christ and the church will be victorious over their enemies.
2. Let us now look at our text which is Revelation twelve.

I. THE RADIANT WOMAN (12:1-6)

- A. In the first verse we read about the “first wonder.” Notice that it is seen in heaven or from heaven’s vantage point.
- B. The first wonder is a woman clothed with the sun, moon, and stars. Literally, she is “wrapped around” with these heavenly bodies.
- C. Who is she?
 1. Some have said Mary. But there is too much of the supernatural here for Mary to be the woman.

2. Others suggest it is Israel. After all Israel gave us the Christ.
 3. Many believe that the woman is the church. Yet, the church did not give us Christ as did Israel.
 4. The best interpretation is that the woman represents the remnant of God from all three Bible dispensations. There is the Patriarchal Age which we often call the starlight age. Stars give off little light to the earth. Then there is the Mosaic Age, which we commonly call the moonlight age. The moon has a little more light to give us than the stars. Then of course there is the Christian Age in which we now live. This has been called the sunlight age because we have God's complete revelation to man.
- B. The "child" of verse two is obviously "Christ." How do we know? Verse five quotes Psalm 2:9 which comes from one of the Messianic Psalms written by David. This verse is applied to Christ in Revelation more than once. See Revelation 2:26-27.
- C. Now we come to the second wonder. It is the "red dragon." The context clearly shows us that this is Satan (vs. 9). He has "seven heads." The seven heads are "seven mountains on which the woman sitteth" (Revelation 17:9). This is obviously, Rome. The dragon has "ten horns." These horns are "ten kings" (Revelation 17:12). This idea ties in with the "diadems" which are royal crowns. What we have here is a description of the Roman empire and her rulers. Satan uses his "tail" and sweeps away "one-third of the

stars.” This describes his great power. I think it also describes the fact that when he fell, he took many angels with him.

- D. Now notice the fact that the dragon wants “to devour the child” as soon as he is born. Matthew two tells us of an attempt to kill the Christ child. Luke four tells us of another attempt to destroy Christ through temptation. In the garden there was still another attempt to destroy the Lord. Our Lord was in such agony there that his sweat became as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground (Matthew 26).
- E. Satan failed to destroy Christ. Our Lord was “caught up unto God and his throne.” Here we see John considering the life and ascension of Christ in one breath. Christ could not be touched by Satan.
- F. Neither could the church. The idea of fleeing into the wilderness is thought of in connection with Israel leaving Egypt. Joseph and Mary fled Israel and went into Egypt after the birth of Christ. The church fled into the wilderness known as Pella when Jerusalem was being destroyed in A. D. 70. I think the text refers to the fact that God protected the church. This was especially true in the early years as the gospel was being preached to the world of that day (Colossians 1:23). God has always provided protection and nourishment for his people.

II. WAR IN HEAVEN (12:7-12)

- A. Some expositors of the text believe this to refer to a spiritual struggle between God and Satan.

- B. Others, and I am among them, believe that it is referring to a struggle between God and the angel Satan before the world began. There are many scriptures that seem to say this. See Ezekiel 28:11-17; Isaiah 14:12-20; II Peter 2:4; Jude 6; Luke 10:18; I Timothy 5:6; John 12:31.
- C. The war included "Michael and his angels." The name "Michael" means, "He who is like God." Michael was and is an "archangel." He was a defender of Israel. He fought the princes (angels) of Greece and Persia (Daniel 10:13, 21; 12:1). See also I Thessalonians 4:16 and Jude 9.
- D. The dragon and his angels lost and were cast out of heaven.
- E. Notice the other terms used to describe him.
1. The "old serpent." He appears as the serpent in Genesis three.
 2. The "Devil." This word means, "an accuser, a slanderer, one who maligns." He accuses brethren day and night (vs. 10).
 3. He is called "Satan" which means, "adversary." See Job, chapters one and two. He also serves as an adversary to Joshua, the high priest, in Zechariah chapter three.
 4. He is "the deceiver of the whole world." He deceives by blinding the minds of the unbelieving from the light of the gospel (II Corinthians 4:4). He is a master impersonator (II Corinthians 11:14-15). He is a liar and the father thereof (John 8:44).

F. The good news is that “saints can and do overcome Satan.” There are three things they can do to defeat the Devil.

1. Christians overcome through the blood of the Lamb. Christ’s blood washes us from our sins and cleanses our consciences (Revelation 1:5; Hebrews 9:14). If we walk in the light we receive a daily cleansing by his blood (I John 1:7). Do you know that four hundred thousand people will have heart attacks each year in America? Really, they have blood attacks. Their blood clots and cannot get to the heart, kidneys, lungs and brain. There must be a proper flow of blood to these vital organs or we will die. There must be a continual flow of the blood of Christ to cleanse our souls, if we are to live with him forever!
2. Christians overcome because of “the word of their testimony.” They win the victory because they believe the word of God. They are willing to confess the Christ who is its center. They are willing to teach and preach that gospel to every creature in every nation (Romans 10:17; Romans 10:9-10; Mark 16:15-16). John was on Patmos because of the word of his testimony (Revelation 1:9-10).
3. Finally, Christians defeat Satan because “they love not their own lives even unto death.” Those who find their lives will lose them (Matthew 10:39). Christ said, we must be faithful even unto death and we will receive a crown of life (Revelation 2:10). The Bible tells us of the deaths of Stephen, James, and Antipas (Acts 7:12; Revelation 2).

- G. The end results of this information are two. For the saints there is cause to rejoice in heaven. But on earth there is woe. Satan is like a wounded animal or criminal. He knows he is going to die and he wants to take as many with him as he can.

III. SATAN'S WAR ON EARTH (12:13-17)

- A. In verse thirteen, we see the church being persecuted.
 - 1. All who live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution (II Timothy 3:12).
 - 2. Christ taught us that if they persecuted him, they would persecute us (John 15:20).
- B. But the church mounted "the wings of eagles" and fled into the wilderness. God used this kind of language to describe the flight of Israel out of Egypt (Exodus 19:4). Thus, God provided protection and sustenance for the church in hard times. Though persecuted, though killed and half dead, the church will survive.
- C. Satan cast out of his mouth "water as a river to carry the woman away." In the Bible "water" has been often used to denote "evil" (Psalm 18:4; Isaiah 43:2; Psalm 42:7). But the "earth" comes to the woman's aid. This could be "nature or the peoples of the earth." Many rivers in Bible lands flowed along and then suddenly sunk into the sands, only to resurface several miles away.
- D. Satan grew angry when he could not destroy Christ and the church as a whole. So he went, in my estimation, to attack individuals who made

it up. Some think that Satan could not destroy Israel so he attacks the church here. Obviously, by this time in the text the woman stands for the church.

- E. We know this to be true because of the description of the "seed."
1. The seed are those who "keep God's commandments" (John 14:15, 21, 23; I John 2:3).
 2. The seed are those who "hold the testimony of Jesus." Christians are to hold this without wavering (Hebrews 10:23).

In conclusion, we have learned that there was a struggle between Satan and God before the world began. It continues even now. We are all caught up in it. No one can remain neutral. We are either for Christ or we are against him (Matthew 12:30). If we stand with Jesus and follow the threefold plan of attack mentioned in this chapter, we shall by the grace of God prevail over Satan.

The Evil Trinity

INTRODUCTION: One of the keys to understanding the book of Revelation is that we must try to see the book “through first century glasses.” We must ask ourselves, what did this book mean to people who lived in that time period?

1. In this text we get a good look at the unholy trinity. It is made up of Satan and the two beasts.
2. I hope also that we can explode some myths. There are many false doctrines that are associated with this text.
3. As we enter into a study of the text, let us remember that Satan has been cast to earth. His time is limited. Therefore, he will try to do as much damage as he can. We will see him delegating his power to the two beasts.

I. THE BEAST OF THE SEA (13:1-10)

- A. The word “I” is found in the King James version in the first verse. The American Standard has “he.” Most manuscripts say “he.” Thus, Satan is described here and not John.
- B. The word “beast” here is a word denoting “a brute or savage beast.”
 1. It is from the “sea.” This word refers to “people” in Revelation 17:1, 15. It is also

used to denote “upheaval and turbulence” in other parts of the Bible.

2. The beast has “seven heads.” Some think these refer to seven world empires. I am not among them. Revelation 17:9 tells us that the seven heads are “seven mountains upon which the woman sitteth.” We are talking about Rome here.
 3. The beast has “ten horns.” Revelation 17:12 tells us that the ten horns are “ten kings.” This may refer to emperors from Tiberius to Domitian. Some think it refers to minor rulers who are in subjection to Rome. History and scripture point to the emperors in my judgment. Three of those emperors ruled for a total of eighteen months after the death of Nero.
 4. The beast has “ten crowns” on the ten horns. These are royal crowns and coincide with the idea that rulers are being described here.
 5. The beast has upon his heads “names of blasphemy.” Roman rulers often called themselves: Lord, divine, the son of God, and Saviour. These words are blasphemous when applied to human beings.
- C. In verse two the beast is likened to a leopard, bear, and a lion. This kind of language was used to describe world empires in Daniel 7:1-8. Rome seemed to be then a combination of the other ancient empires. Let’s compare them.
1. Both came out of the sea (Revelation 13:1; Daniel 7:3).

2. Both had ten horns (Revelation 13:1; Daniel 7:7).
 3. They both are like leopards, bears, and lions (Revelation 13:2; Daniel 7:3-6).
 4. Both blasphemed (Revelation 13:5; Daniel 7:8, 20).
 5. Both made war against the saints (Revelation 13:7; Daniel 7:21).
 6. This struggle was to last forty-two months (Revelation 13:5; Daniel 7:25).
- D. Notice in verse two that the dragon gives his power to the beast. The beast is also called "the false prophet" (Revelation 16:13; 19:20).
- E. One of the heads was "wounded to death." Some translations say "death stroke." Verse three though tells us that the "wound was healed." Many expositors think that this is the end of the Roman Empire which came in 476 A. D. Then the healing would represent the rise of Roman Catholicism. I doubt this. There is another idea that is centered around Nero. This theory is called "Nero Redivivus." He died in 68 A. D. Legend arose that stated that Nero was not dead. It was believed that he was in Parthia and was going to lead an army against Rome. Well, Nero was dead. He received the death stroke. But he was alive in that Domitian Caesar seemed to be almost exactly like Nero. This is the best interpretation of this verse that I know of.
- F. The beast was characterized by "blasphemies" (vss. 4-6).

1. It blasphemed God.
 2. It blasphemed God's "name." That is, God's "character."
 3. The "tabernacle" is blasphemed. This may be the church (Philippians 3:20) or heaven.
 4. "Those who dwell in heaven" were also verbally abused. This no doubt refers to angels (Ephesians 1:21).
- G. "War against the saints" is waged against the saints. We see in verse seven then the universal power of the beast. See also Daniel 7:21.
- H. There is a textual variation in verse eight. The King James version reads like this. "... whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." The American Standard version reads, "... everyone whose name hath not been written in the book of life of the Lamb that hath been slain from the foundation of the world."
1. The book of life is mentioned many times in the scripture (Revelation 3:5; 20:15; Philippians 4:3; Exodus 32:32).
 2. Verse eight teaches that from the foundation of the world, God determined that through Christ's death, those in Him will be saved (Ephesians 1:4-11). This verse certainly does not teach the old denominational theory of predestination, that teaches that some were ordained before the world to be saved or lost. According to this theory there was no way you could change your eternal destiny.

- I. Verse ten may be a combination of a couple of verses such as Jeremiah 15:2 and Matthew 26:52. What does this verse mean?
 1. Whatever is ordained for man, man must accept it. This means that Christians must take whatever comes their way.
 2. If Christians are persecuted they may have to go into captivity. If so, they are to go without murmuring. They are not to defend themselves by force. Their weapons are steadfastness, courageous acceptance, and faith.

II. THE BEAST OF THE EARTH (13:11-18)

- A. The beast is of the "earth." That is, it is human in origin.
- B. It had "two horns like a lamb and spake as a dragon."
 1. Horns symbolized power. It had two. Jesus had seven! (Revelation 5:6).
 2. The word "lamb" was a religious symbol. This lamb acted like (Satan) a dragon.
 3. This beast was the "Concilia." The concilia was a group of magistrates and priests that were given authority to enforce emperor worship throughout the empire.
- C. Verse twelve tells us that the power of Rome was behind the Concilia. It forced people to worship the image of Domitian.

- D. It could produce signs. The Pharoah's magicians could also produce signs. Ventriloquism was commonly used. Perhaps the signs of II Thesalonians 2:9 were used (vss. 13-15).
- E. The "mark of the beast" has been a much discussed subject. What is it? It was something on the right hand and forehead.
1. Slaves were marked or branded if they ran away or committed a crime. This mark was called a stigma.
 2. Soldiers often wore the name of their generals.
 3. Contracts were sealed.
 4. On coins there were the emperor's likenesses.
 5. The Seventh Day Adventists say that the mark of the beast is the worship on Sunday.
 6. Others say it is the sign of the cross.
 7. Remember that in Revelation 7:3 God marked his own. It was not a literal mark. The best possible explanations for the so-called mark of the beast are these:
 - a. It could stand for physical and mental cooperation with Rome and the Concilia.
 - b. Historical sources point to the practice of burning incense in worship of the Caesars. After this was done and one confessed that Caesar was Lord, he was given a certificate stating that he had done these acts. This he could show and thus save

his life and avoid economic boycott. Personally, I think that a combination of these ideas is correct.

F. The number of the beast and man is "666." The American Standard version has "616" in the footnote.

1. The ancients used to ascribe numerical value to letters of the alphabet. Some have used this method to figure out who the beast is. Many say the popes, Napoleon, Hitler, and yes, even Ronald Wilson Reagan!
2. Notice that the text states the number is of "a man" and not "the man." Thus, no one person is in mind. I think this eliminates the Nero theory. If it is Nero, it is Nero as he is personified in Domitian.
3. Consider the fact that seven is the number of perfection. Six falls just short. 888 was a number that stood for Christ in ancient times. 888 is beyond perfection but 666 falls far short. Six has always been a number that stood for imperfection and evil.
4. Thus, my conclusion is that it stands for the Roman Empire. The power of Rome falls short of the power of God. Rome will fail to overcome Christ and the church.

In conclusion, we have learned that we are at war. Satan is our archenemy. He has already been defeated. All enemies that he chooses to work through in an effort to destroy the church will suffer the same fate. The beasts and the mark of the beast have nothing to do with some future events that some have falsely conjured up in their wild imaginations.

Judgment Is Coming

INTRODUCTION: After chapter thirteen the church needed words of encouragement and assurance.

1. In chapter fourteen, we see the triumph of the redeemed. The wicked are judged. There is also pictured the final harvest of souls. Note also the role of angels in this chapter.

I. THE REDEEMER AND THE REDEEMED ON MT. ZION (14:1-5)

A. John saw a "Lamb."

1. This was the Lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the world (John 1:29).
2. This was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8).

B. John saw the Lamb "standing." He did not see the Lamb slain. Christ had now been raised from the dead. Thus, he stands victoriously. This must have been a source of great joy to the early Christians.

C. The Lamb stood on "Mount Zion." Mount Zion stood in a symbolic way for "Jerusalem" (Isaiah 2:1-4). It also stood for heaven and the church (Psalm 2:5-6; Hebrews 12:22-23).

D. Standing with the Lamb were the "one hundred and forty-four thousand."

1. The one hundred and forty-four thousand stood for the church on earth (Revelation 7:4).
 2. The one hundred and forty-four thousand were also described as the great multitude (Revelation 7:9). This was a picture of the church in heaven.
- E. Notice now the description of the one hundred and forty-four thousand.
1. They have the "Father's name on their foreheads." This is in contrast to those who have the mark of the beast. This is not a literal mark. God doesn't need to literally place his name on his own. In his omniscience, God knows his own (II Timothy 2:19).
 2. They "sing a new song." Could this be the same as Revelation 5:8-9?
 3. They are "redeemed from the earth." The church has been purchased with Christ's blood (Acts 20:28). We as Christians have been bought with a price (I Corinthians 6:19-20; Ephesians 1:7; I Peter 1:18-19).
 4. These Christians are not "defiled with women for they are virgins." We are not talking here about celibacy or adultery. These Christians were spiritually pure. They were not involved in idolatry. They did not worship the images of the Caesars. Christians are to be chaste virgins when they are presented to Christ (II Corinthians 11:2). We are married to Christ (Romans 7:4).

5. The church here is made up of those “who are followers of the Lamb.” That is, they are disciples. Christ has left us an example that we should follow in his footsteps (I Peter 2:21). Following Christ also means obedience and loyalty.
6. They are “firstfruits unto God and the Lamb.” Under the Old Testament law the Jews offered the firstfruits of their fields to God in sacrifice. In so doing, they acknowledged God as the giver of all their harvest. It was also a pledge of more to come. Thus, these early Christians were living sacrifices to God (Romans 12:1-2). They belonged to God and their lives were a guarantee that other people would be taught the gospel and would be offered to God as living sacrifices.
 - a. James 1:18 says, “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.”
 - b. Jesus is called “the firstfruits of the dead.” He is a down payment or guarantee that others also would be raised from the dead, never to die again.
 - c. See also Romans 16:5; I Corinthians 16:15.
7. They have “no guile.” The saints have no deceit. They do not lie. There is no religious falsehood in them. They then are like Jesus (I Peter 2:22).

8. Finally, there is “no fault” in them as they are before the throne. They have then no “blemish or reproach.” It is God’s will that his saints be without blemish (Ephesians 1:4; 5:27).

II. THE ANGEL OF GOOD NEWS (14:6-7)

- A. The angel flies in mid-heaven.
- B. He has the “everlasting gospel.” It is everlasting in the sense that it is “eternally valid.” It contains “God’s eternal purpose.” It deals with “things that are eternal in nature.”
- C. It is clearly a “universal gospel.” It is for those of “every nation, kindred, tongue, and people.”
- D. Let us take a closer look at this gospel.
 1. It is not the Book of Mormon as the Mormons claim. After the first century men had one faith and did not need another to replace it (Jude 3; Ephesians 4:4-6).
 2. Let us be perfectly clear, this angel was not to preach this gospel on earth. He would have been accursed (Galatians 1:8-9).
 3. The gospel is to be forever entrusted to earthen vessels (II Corinthians 4:7).
 4. The good news that the angel had was that judgment was coming. This was good news to God’s people that were undergoing great persecution. Here we see a synecdoche. That is, a part standing for the whole. Part of the gospel here stands for all of it.

5. The angel preached the gospel only in the sense that he revealed it to and through John and his pen of inspiration. Revelation 1:1 says, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him, to shew unto his servants, the things which must shortly come to pass. He sent it and signified it by his angel, unto his servant John."
6. The angel's message had four parts.
 - a. "Fear God." They should not fear Rome (see Ecclesiastes 12:13).
 - b. "Give him the glory." The beast deserves none (I Corinthians 10:31).
 - c. "Worship God." The Caesars deserve no worship. They did not create the world (Revelation 19:10; John 4:23-24; Ecclesiastes 12:1).
 - d. "The hour of judgment is come." This should be enough to motivate all men to obey these simple instructions (II Corinthians 5:10-11).

III. THE ANGEL OF DOOM (14:8)

- A. This angel announces that Babylon has fallen! In Old Testament history, there was no more shattering event than the fall of Babylon. Babylon here is Rome. In the intertestamental period, the Sibellene Oracles describe Rome as Babylon. The fall of Rome was predicted before it happened. It was described as though it had happened. God was able to do that (Isaiah 46:10; 48:33).

- B. The idea that Rome had made the nations “drunk with the wine of her fornication” is rooted in Jeremiah 51:7.
1. This means that Rome has so much power that she was able to seduce the other nations.
 2. She is described in Revelation as a “harlot or whore.”
 3. In fact, we have a detailed description of the fall of Rome in chapters seventeen and eighteen.

IV. THE WARNING ANGEL (14:9-12)

- A. This angel announces judgment on those who worship the beast. He sounds a somber warning to those who have the mark of the beast.
- B. They shall “drink of the wine of the wrath of God.”
1. This wine will be “unmixed.” They will receive the full might of God, as he punishes them. Nothing will be held back.
 2. They will drink of the “cup of indignation.”
 3. They shall be “tormented with fire and brimstone.” The word “torment” means, “to grieve or vex with pain.” God used fire and brimstone to punish, yea destroy Sodom and Gomorrah (Jude 7).
 4. This will all take place in the “presence of the angels and the Lamb.” Does this sound subChristian? Some make that claim. Yet,

if we had been through the suffering and deaths that these Christians faced, I am sure that this would not seem abnormal. Just as the Roman emperors watched as Christians were tortured, so Christ will observe perhaps in the sense that he is aware of the suffering of the evil. This is just! By the way, the rich man suffered in the presence of Lazarus in the hades realm (Luke 16: 19-31). The wicked will have "no rest day or night." Their punishment will be eternal (Matthew 25:46).

- C. Verse twelve could mean that Christians can be "patient or endure" knowing that the evil and wicked enemies of God are going to be punished in the manner just described. They can also remain steadfast by "keeping the commandments of God" (see John 14:15, 21, 23; I John 2:3).

V. THE BLESSED DEAD (14:15)

- A. The word "blessed" means, "happy, O the bliss, O the joy, and fortunate."
- B. They are blessed only if "they die in the Lord." To be in the Lord is to be in Christ. To be in Christ is to be in the church. Christians are those who believe unto salvation (Romans 10: 9-10). They repent unto life (Acts 11:18). They confess unto salvation (Romans 10:9-10). They are baptized INTO CHRIST (Galatians 3:27; Romans 6:3-5). The same thing that saves us also places us into the kingdom of God or the church (John 3:5; Acts 2:38, 41, 47).
 - 1. Note the fact that those "asleep in Christ"

will God bring with him. That is, when Jesus comes, the dead in the Lord will not be left behind (I Thessalonians 4:14).

2. See also I Corinthians 15:17-20.

- C. "Henceforth" means, "from now on."
- D. They are blessed because they shall "rest." This word means, "shall be refreshed."
- E. There shall be rest from "labor." The word means, "spiritual suffering and agony, as well as any physical toil that brings weariness."
- F. Their "works" will follow them. That is, "their influence will live on (Hebrews 11:4). God of course will not forget. After all, he has a book of remembrance (Malachi 3:16).

VI. THE ANGEL OF THE RIGHTEOUS HARVEST (14:14-16)

- A. The text begins with a description of "the Son of Man." This in my estimation is Jesus. He is so described in Daniel 7:13-14.
- B. He has a "golden crown." This is a crown of "victory."
- C. He also has a "sharp sickle." This is for reaping.
- D. Now the angel of the righteous harvest appears. He comes from the "temple" of sanctuary of God.
- E. He declares that it is time to reap the ripe harvest. The word "ripe" denotes, "wheat that is dry or withering."

1. Wheat has always stood for the righteous (Matthew 3:12).
2. Here we have pictured an ingathering of the saved (Matthew 13:30).

VII. THE ANGELS OF THE UNRIGHTEOUS HARVEST (14:17-20)

- A. In verse seventeen we have a reaping angel. He has a sickle in his hand.
- B. Then we have an "angel that is over fire." He came from the altar. Was this the altar the souls were under that were crying for vengeance? (Revelation 6:9-11). Is he now helping to answer their prayers?
- C. The angels are to "gather the clusters of the grapes." They then are to gather the evil. The grapes are "fully ripe." That is, they are like the Amorites. Their cup of iniquity was full (Genesis 15:16).
- D. The grapes will be gathered into the "winepress of the wrath of God." They will "be trodden without the city." "Blood will come out."
 1. These figures of speech are rooted in the Old Testament (Isaiah 63:1-6; Joel 3:13). See also Revelation 19:16. From this text we learn that it will be Jesus who will be treading the winepress!
 2. Blood will come up "to horses bridles." It will cover "sixteen hundred furlongs." This would be about two hundred miles. Obviously, this is not to be taken literally. It

does describe though the fierce anger of God that will be meted out to the lost.

3. The idea of God using angels to bring in the harvest, and especially to gather out of the kingdom those who cause stumbling and do iniquity, is clearly taught in Matthew 13:39, 41-42.

In conclusion, we have learned what a Christian is. There may be no better description than that which is in this text. We are again impressed with the fact that judgment or harvest time is coming. All of us will be reaped. We shall be gathered into the barn or trampled in the winepress.

The Wrath Of God

INTRODUCTION: William Hendriksen has written, "In the history of the world a definite and ever-recurring order of events is clearly evident. The preaching of the Word is applied to the heart by the Holy Spirit and churches are established. Again and again this happens. They are light-bearers and lampstands in the midst of a world which lies in darkness. They are blessed with the constant presence of Christ." (Revelation 1-3).

"Again and again the judgments of God are visited upon the persecuting world. The judgments again and again fail to move men to repentance" (Revelation 8-11).

"Again and again this conflict between the church and the world points to a deeper, more fundamental warfare between Christ and Satan, between the "seed of woman and the dragon" (Revelation 12-14).

"The question arises: whenever in history the trumpets of judgment, the initial plagues, fail to result in repentance, what then? Does God permit such impenitence, such hardness of heart to go unpunished until the final judgment? Must we conceive of God's wrath as being pent up until the second coming of Christ? The text of our lesson will answer this question. Whenever in history the wicked fail to repent in answer to the initial and partial manifestation of God's judgments, the final effusion of wrath follows. Final, though not complete, until judgment day. There is no more opportunity to repent. When the wicked, often warned by the trumpets of judgment, continue to harden their hearts, death finally plunges them into the hands of an angry God. Yes, before their death they may have crossed the deadline, the line between God's patience and his wrath" (Exodus 10:27; Matthew 12:32; Romans 1:24, 26, 28; I John 5:16).

1. The seven bowls of wrath are then a restatement of the seven seals and the seven trumpets. But there are some differences.
 - a. The trumpets call men to repent and the bowls call for judgments.
 - b. The trumpets bring partial judgments and the bowls bring final judgments.
 - c. The trumpets did not reach man until the fifth trumpet was sounded. The bowls reach man immediately.
 - d. Please observe also that the bowls of wrath resemble the ten plagues in Egypt.
2. Our text will be chapters fifteen and sixteen.
3. Chapter fifteen is the shortest in Revelation and will serve as an introduction to sixteen.
4. In the opening verse John sees a "sign." This is the third one. In chapter twelve he saw two signs. One was the woman or church. The other was the dragon or Satan.
5. The sign involves "seven angels." Could these be "the angels of the presence" which we read about in Revelation 8:2?
6. These seven angels are given "the seven last plagues." We have already seen the use of the word "plagues" in Revelation 9:20 and 11:6. They stand for "God's judgment and punishment, as was illustrated in ancient Egypt.
7. John also saw "a sea of glass mingled with

fire.” The sea always stood for separation. Some say it stood for God’s transcendency. It was mingled with fire. This is a little different description than Revelation 4:6. The fire here may stand for the “trials of the Christians and the judgment of God.” Frankly, I think we have an allusion here to Old Testament Israel. Israel left the slavery of Egypt and crossed the Red Sea. Then they stood victorious and burst into a song of victory. Could it be that Israel’s victory over Egypt foreshadowed the victory of the church over the beasts? I think so.

8. The text pictures the one hundred and forty-four thousand as victorious. This no doubt is a picture of the church.
9. The overcomers have “harps” in their hands. Does this mean we can have instrumental music in the church? Well, are these harps literal? They are as literal as the incense that was associated with the prayers of the saints in Revelation 8:4. If they are literal, what about the altar of incense? Are we going to place an altar of incense in the church?
10. The victors sing the “song of Moses and the Lamb.” The song of Moses can be read in Exodus fourteen and fifteen. This song was sung at every Jewish service in connection with the saying of the Shema. Surely, the song of Moses and the Lamb shows us that we have the saved of the Old and New Testaments here. Let us take a closer look at the song.

a. Great and marvelous are thy works Lord

God Almighty (Psalms 92:5; 111:2).

- b. Just and true are thy ways, King of the Saints or Ages (Psalm 145:1).
 - c. Who shall not fear and glorify thy name? (Psalm 86:9).
 - d. Thou art holy (Psalm 86:9).
 - e. Thy judgments are manifest.
 - f. God is praised for his works, ways, holiness, and name. These areas of praise are rooted in the Psalms.
11. John sees the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony. There is no literal temple in heaven (Revelation 21:22). The temple here is the sanctuary or place where God dwells. The Tabernacle was called the tabernacle of the witness or testimony because it contained the ten commandments in the ark of the covenant.
12. Now the seven angels appear once again. Their clothing is like that of Old Testament priests. It might also be royal dress. There is a textual discrepancy here. The King James version says the clothing is "pure white linen." The American Standard version reads, "precious stones bright and pure." Note also that the vials or bowls of wrath are given to the angels by one of the four living creatures.
13. In the last verse of chapter fifteen, John sees the temple filled with "smoke" that is often

associated with God's glory. No one could enter until the plagues had been poured out on the earth. This means that no more prayers would be heard. There would be no more time for repentance. It is only time for God to unleash his fury upon the Roman Empire.

I. THE FIRST SIX BOWLS OF WRATH (16:1-12)

- A. The first bowl (vs. 2) is poured out on the earth.
 - 1. The men of the earth suffer from "grievous and noisome sores." These sores were "loathsome, foul, painful, and malignant." Some think we are talking about leprosy here!
 - 2. They come upon those who worship the beast.
 - 3. This reminds us of the sixth plague (Exodus 9:8). Maybe they were boils. It is also similar to the first trumpet (Revelation 8:7).
 - 4. Remember they come upon non-Christians.
- B. The second bowl (vs. 3) falls upon the sea. The sea turns to blood.
 - 1. Exodus 7:17-21
 - 2. Revelation 8:8-9
- C. The third bowl (vss. 4-7) has the rivers and fountains of waters turning to blood.
 - 1. Exodus 8:10-11; Revelation 8:3.
 - 2. We have here an angel of the water.

3. God is praised for his righteous actions.
 4. What we have in the last two bowls is this idea: The saints' blood ran like water. Now your blood will be shed. You are so blood-thirsty, now you drink up.
- D. The fourth bowl was poured out on the sun (vss. 8-9).
1. Men were to be scorched with fire.
 2. They blasphemed God and did not repent and glorify God.
 3. See Revelation 8:12.
- E. The fifth bowl affected the seat of the beast (vss. 10-11).
1. The "seat" would be his "authority and power."
 2. The kingdom would be full of "darkness." Darkness stands for a loss of wisdom (Psalm 69:23). It also stands obviously for evil (John 3:19).
 3. Though there was great suffering, they repented not.
 4. To me this points to internal decay.
- F. The sixth bowl was poured out on the Euphrates River (vs. 12).
1. This river was eighteen hundred miles long. It formed a natural barrier between Israel and her enemies.

2. The idea of a body of water being dried up is not new.
3. We think of the Red Sea in Exodus and the Jordan River in the book of Joshua.
4. The Euphrates was diverted by Cyrus the Persian in his effort to overtake Babylon. He was successful and Babylon fell.
5. What we have here is a threat of external invasion.

II. NOW WE HAVE THE INTERMISSION OR INTERLUDE (16:13-16)

- A. After the sixth seal and trumpet there was a pause or interlude before the opening of the seventh seal and the sounding of the final trumpet. We have the same pattern being followed with the seven bowls of wrath.
- B. John now sees "three unclean spirits."
 1. They were like "frogs." The frog was considered as "low and defiled and absolutely dirty." This may be why the plague on Egypt was considered so terrible (Exodus 8:5-11). Thus, the frog was a symbol of evil and uncleanness. The three spirits came out of the mouth of the dragon (Satan) the beast (Roman Empire) and the false prophet or the (Concilia).
 2. The "spirits" were "breaths." That is, they were evil words, teaching, or as some say, propaganda against the church. All of this of course has its roots in Satan, who is a liar

and the Father thereof (John 8:44).

3. We also see “miracles” worked that move the kings of earth to gather for the battle of the great day of God.

C. In verse fifteen we come to another of the seven beatitudes in the book of Revelation.

1. Christ will come as a thief (I Thessalonians 5:2).
2. The blessed man is the one who keeps on watching and keeping his garments. The captain of the temple guard used to check up on his guards. Those found asleep were stripped of their clothing which was then burned. He (the guard) was sent home naked and ashamed.
3. Christians must be on guard or alert. The Devil, our adversary, walketh about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (I Peter 5:8). If we are not wise like the five virgins, we will be left out of heaven, when the bridegroom comes to claim his own at the end of the world (Matthew 25:1-10).

D. Now in verse sixteen we come to “Armageddon.” Notice that there is only a “gathering” there. There is nothing about a “battle” going on there. The word “Armageddon” has been called a city. Some say “Harmageddon” means, “mountain of Megiddo.” Megiddo supposedly was on the plains of Esdraelon. This was located in Galilee. “Megiddo” means, “to cut off and slaughter.” It was the sight of many famous Old Testament battles. There were other battles that took place

here that we shall elaborate on later in the lesson, "The Battle of Armageddon."

III. THE SEVENTH BOWL OF WRATH (16:17-21)

A. This bowl fell on the air.

1. Did it affect the breathing of man?
2. I suspect that the air is that realm of Satan. He is the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2). See also Revelation 9:2.

B. Notice the four great things in this text.

1. The great voice.
2. The great earthquake.
3. The great city.
4. The great Babylon.

C. The city was divided into three parts. Jerusalem was also divided into three parts (Ezekiel 5).

1. Some say they represent Jerusalem, Sodom, and Egypt in a spiritual sense (Revelation 11:8).
2. I suspect we are talking about internal rottenness, external invasion, and natural calamity that brought Rome to her knees.

In conclusion, what have we learned? We have seen in this text a perfect illustration of Romans 2:5 which says, "But after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." We have learned that men will reap what they sow. They will reap more than what they sow (Galatians 6:7-8; Proverbs 13:15; 22:8).

The Battle Of Armageddon

INTRODUCTION: The battle of Armageddon is thought to be a great and terrible conflict. Many see it as a bloody holocaust, unlike anything that the world has ever known before. We are told by some prophets of doom that it will happen in our time. Others say that it will happen shortly before the coming of Christ. Let us take a look at some of the theories and then let us look at the Bible, as we try to gain a better understanding of this matter. I will be using some material from brother Wayne Jackson in this lesson. He has done the finest writing on this matter that I have seen to date.

I. FIRST OF ALL, THERE IS THE DISPENSATION-ALIST VIEW

- A.** This view began with a man by the name of Darby and is propagated by the Schofield Reference Bible.
- B.** Dispensationalism views history in relationship to the days of creation. They see time divided into seven dispensations or ages. The last one according to this theory is the so-called millennium.
- C.** We are told that Christ will come back to set up his kingdom that was surprisingly rejected by the Jews. The bridegroom is now tarrying. But according to the dispensationalists, the signs of Matthew 24 are now being seen and it will not be long until Christ returns.

- D. The so-called "first state" of his coming will be quiet and invisible. We are told that when Christ comes the living righteous will be raptured and the dead saints will be raised. During the first three and a half years, Solomon's temple will supposedly be rebuilt and animal sacrifices will be reintroduced. During the last half of the so-called "seven year rapture" there will be a bloody conflict called the Battle of Armageddon.
- E. The theory continues by saying that Christ will come back after Armageddon and will reign on David's throne in Jerusalem.
- F. Next, there would then be the raising of the wicked dead, judgment and eternity.

II. A REPLY TO THE FALSE DOCTRINES OF THE DISPENSATIONALISTS

- A. Christ was not surprised that he was rejected. Psalm 118:22 says, "The stone which the builders refused is become the head of the corner."
- B. Christ did establish his kingdom. He did not fail. How utterly ridiculous to think of God failing! Paul said that Christians are translated out of darkness and into the kingdom of God's dear Son (Colossians 1:13). John declared that he was in the kingdom (Revelation 1:9). Those born of water and the Spirit enter the kingdom of God. If the kingdom does not exist, are there any souls who have been born again? (John 3: 3, 5, 7).
- C. The church was not an afterthought of God.

The church is no second-rate institution, as some would have us to believe. It was that institution that God purposed in his mind before time began. It was part of the eternal purpose of God (Ephesians 3:10-11).

- D. Isn't it interesting that we have some people who are so skilled at reading "the signs" that point to Jesus' coming? These false prophets come and go. Why can't people see this? Christ does not know when he will return. The angels do not know. Only the Father knows (Matthew 24:36).
- E. Where do people get the idea that Christ will return silently and invisibly? They certainly do not get it from the Bible! Christ will come back with his angels in flaming fire (II Thessalonians 1:7-8). Every eye shall see him (Revelation 1:7). Paul said, ". . . and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Hebrews 9:28). Christ will not only be visible, he shall be audible. He shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with a trumpet (I Thessalonians 4:16). When Christ returns the heavens shall pass away with a great noise (II Peter 3:10).
- F. The Bible emphatically teaches that the righteous and the wicked will be raised from the dead at the same time. They shall also be judged at the same time. The idea of separate resurrections and judgments is denominational and not Biblical (John 5:28-29).
- G. And where does the Bible use the word tribulation as it is used by the proponents of the millennial theories? The Bible does not speak of some

seven year period when the law of Moses is re-introduced and when there will be some bloody holocaust at the end of the age.

- H. The idea of God's people engaging in carnal warfare is contradictory to Holy Writ. Christ's kingdom is not of this world. This is why they do not fight (John 18:36). We wrestle not against flesh and blood. Our warfare is spiritual, as is our armour (Ephesians 6:10-18). See also II Corinthians 10:4.
- I. Good reader, there is simply no Biblical proof for the idea that Christ will ever reign on this earth for a thousand years. If so, where is it?

III. HAL LINDSEY'S ARMAGEDDON

- A. According to Lindsey, Israel will be invaded by the Arabs and Africans. This invasion will be spearheaded by Egypt.
- B. Then Russia and allies will invade and conquer the Middle East. Next, Red China and Western Europe, led by a Hitler like dictator, will destroy Russia with a nuclear attack. This is supposed to represent a revived Roman empire.
- C. This will set the stage for Armageddon. Western civilization, led by a Roman dictator, will go to war with Red China. This battle we are told will take place in Megiddo. Blood will be up to the horses bridles for two hundred miles, as one would travel from North to South Israel. The battle would then spread all over the world. Just about the time that it looks like the world will be destroyed, Christ will come.

- D. What a fantastic fairytale! How could someone find this in the Bible? What Lindsey has done is simple. He has engaged in "eisegesis." In other words, he reads into the text that which is not there. Genuine Biblical scholarship tries to engage in "exegesis." This means that we should try to pull out of the text that which is in it.

IV. WHERE IS ARMAGEDDON?

- A. "Armageddon" is a Hebrew word that is found one time in the Bible.
1. Some render the word "Harmageddon." This would be "mountain of Megiddo."
 2. "Armageddon" has been translated "city of Megiddo."
 3. "Megiddo" is thought to have been Southwest of the Sea of Galilee. It has been placed in the Plains of Esdraelon or the Valley of Jezreel.
 4. The dimensions scarcely lend themselves to the engagement of vast armies envisioned by the sensationalists, who are so committed to literalism. It is twenty miles long and fourteen miles wide. The mount of Megiddo is only seventy feet high.
 5. Surely, we all recognize that the patterns of warfare have changed dramatically since Bible times. Modern day methods of warfare do not correspond to the supposition and that is what it is, that the battle of the ages will be fought on these grounds, which are so

restricted and vulnerable. It may be that there is no literal place on the map that we can point to as Armageddon.

- B. The plains of Megiddo were a famous battle sight in ancient times.
1. Barak and Deborah defeated the Canaanites there (Judges 5:19-21).
 2. Ahaziah was killed there by Jehu (II Kings 9:27).
 3. Nechoh of Egypt killed Josiah there (II Kings 23:29).
 4. On these plains Gideon overcame the Midianites (Judges 6:33; 7:20).
 5. King Saul and Jonathan were killed here (I Samuel 31:1-6).
 6. Zechariah 12:11 associates Megiddo with mourning.
 7. In the twelfth century the Crusaders and Moslems fought some bloody battles here.
 8. Napoleon and the Turks fought here in 1799.
 9. In 1918 the British fought the Turks here also.
 10. Thus, this place called Megiddo or Armageddon became a symbol of slaughter, bloodshed, and mourning. It is much like Waterloo, Gettysburg, or the Alamo.

- C. What we have here is the use of a geographical point to emphasize a spiritual truth. A good example of this is hell. The Greek word for hell is *Ghenna*. It was taken from the Valley of Hinnom that was South of Jerusalem. In this valley garbage burned day and night. The garbage was infested with worms. Smoke and fire could be seen then at all times. Jesus took this geographical point and taught us that the place of punishment would be like this. If we are to take this literally, will we not be forced to say that the damned will be cast into a garbage dump outside of Jerusalem?
- D. In the book of Revelation, John uses Babylon to symbolize Rome. Egypt and Sodom symbolize oppression and wickedness. The Euphrates is used to symbolize enemies (Revelation 14: 11:8; 16:2).

V. WHAT IS THE BATTLE OF ARMAGEDDON?

- A. Armageddon appears within the context of the pouring out of the seven bowls of wrath. In particular, it is in connection with the pouring out of the sixth bowl.
- B. The context is Revelation 16:12-16.
 - 1. The text mentions the Euphrates which symbolizes external invasion. Probably from the Parthians.
 - 2. The three unclean spirits represent propaganda or false doctrines that come from Satan, the Roman empire, and the Concilia, which was to enforce emperor worship.

3. We read in the text that these forces will cause the world to gather for battle that will take place in the great day of God.
 4. Then in the context we have one of the seven beatitudes of Revelation. It teaches us to be on guard, prepared, or ready.
 5. Notice also that the forces were to be “gathered” in Armageddon. Does it really say it will be fought there?
- C. There are many theories as to what this so-called battle is.
1. Some think it refers to the destruction of Jerusalem.
 2. Others see it as the end of Roman persecution in the time of Constantine.
 3. Many see it as a struggle between the church and pagan Rome.
 4. Some think it pictures the struggle between Catholicism and the Reformers.
 5. Down through the years it has been linked to Waterloo, World War I and World War II.
- D. Well, what is the truth?
1. Revelation 16:14 speaks of the “day of God.” Revelation 16:15 speaks of “coming as a thief.” Do not these ideas describe the second coming of Christ? (II Peter 3:12; I Thessalonians 5:2).

2. Revelation 16:16 says nothing about a battle in Armageddon. It does speak of a gathering.

- E. Actually, the real battle scene is found in Revelation 19:11-16. Surely, these verses describe Christ as he destroys those in judgment with his words, who have not obeyed his will. Thus, Armageddon is the final struggle between good and evil that will end on judgment, when eternity begins.

In conclusion, I hope we can see what men are doing to the book of Revelation when they try to interpret it through twentieth century glasses. We must see this book in light of its historical context. We must ask ourselves, what does it mean to the people to whom it was written? We cannot interpret it in view of the prevailing theological views that are swaying the minds of people today. In looking at these perverted views of this subject, we see a classic example of what Peter stated in II Peter 3:16. He said that men can and do wrest the scriptures to their own destruction.

The Fall Of The Great Harlot

INTRODUCTION: The last half of Revelation presents a contrast between two women and two cities.

1. Revelation twelve presents a woman arrayed with the sun, moon, and stars. She brings forth a man child. She flees into the wilderness, where she is nurtured and protected. She has other seed. They are those who keep God's commandments and hold to his testimony.
2. In our text of Revelation seventeen and eighteen, we see the great whore arrayed in worldly splendor. She is named Babylon, the mother of whores or harlots. She influences kings and makes war with the saints.
3. The woman of Revelation twelve is called the "beloved city" (Revelation 20:9). She is the "holy city" or the "new Jerusalem" that comes down from heaven as a bride adorned for her husband (Revelation 21:2).
4. In Revelation 17:18 the whore is identified as the "great city." Rome then was the center of opposition to Christ and the church.

I. THE GREAT WHORE UPON THE SCARLET BEAST (17:1-6)

- A. In verse one we read that she will receive "judgment." This means, "punishment, condemnation,

or judicial punishment.”

- B. Rome is called a “whore or harlot.” The Greek word is *porne*. Thus, Rome was not an adultress. She was never married to Christ.

1. Nineveh was called a harlot (Nahum 3:4).

2. Trye was called a harlot (Isaiah 23:16-17).

3. Jerusalem was also called a harlot (Isaiah 1:21).

- C. In verse four the harlot has a “golden cup” in her hand. It is filled with the “abominations and filthiness of her fornication.” This refers to the moral and ceremonial uncleanness that is associated with emperor worship and idolatry.

- D. The name of the whore is given in verse five. She is called “Babylon, The Great, The Mother of Harlots and Abominations of The Earth.” In Rome prostitutes wore their names on their foreheads.

- E. This harlot was “drunk with the blood of the saints and martyrs.” Untold thousands and millions were killed through persecution in the early centuries of Christianity. One martyr is named in this book. He was Antipas (Revelation 2:13).

- F. John was astonished by what he saw.

II. THE MYSTERY IS NO MORE (17:7-14)

- A. Verse eight is another reference to the myth that centered around Nero.

1. The beast shall ascend out of the “bottomless pit.” This is the same pit that we saw in chapter nine. There we are told that Satan is in control. It is a source of evil and uncleanness.
 2. The ultimate end of the “beast and those with its mark” is “perdition.” Hell!
- B. Those who will wind up in a Devil’s hell are those whose names are not written in the book of life. If their name is not in the book of life, they have not become Christians. To become a Christian one must:
1. Believe in Christ (John 8:24).
 2. Repent of sins (Luke 24:47).
 3. Confess Christ (Matthew 10:32-33).
 4. Baptism is also essential (Mark 16:16; Matt. 28:19; John 3:5).
 5. Christian living is essential to keeping one’s name in the book. It can be blotted out (Revelation 3:5).
- C. Rome “sits upon many waters.”
1. The word “sit” would mean, “rule.”
 2. Ancient Babylon was located by the Euphrates River. The city was lined with canals.
 3. But from verse 15, we learn that the “waters” represent “peoples, languages, and nations.”

D. The harlot made the “kings of the earth drunk with her fornication.” In ancient Rome harlots used wine to engage men in fornication. Here Rome is described as one that has great influence. She got the nations involved in political, religious and economic alliances. Thus, the nations yielded themselves to Rome to gain Rome’s favor. Those who did so were those whose names were not written in the Lamb’s book of life (Revelation 17:8).

E. John was carried away into the “wilderness” (vs. 3). The wilderness is a place of spiritual encounter. John the Baptist spent time in the wilderness (Matthew 3). So did Christ. He was tempted there (Matthew 4). The Apostle John spent time in the wilderness (Revelation 1:10; 4:1). We have also seen the woman (the people of God) in Revelation twelve in the wilderness. Now, John sees the whore on a scarlet beast.

1. Scarlet is the same color as the dragon in Revelation twelve.
2. The beast is the Roman empire. Sitting on the beast is Rome. She is arrayed with all the trappings of royalty and riches.
3. “The names of blasphemy” are the names of deity that were worn by the Roman emperors.
4. According to verse nine the “seven heads” are the “seven mountains upon which the woman sitteth.” This must refer to Rome which is a city that sits on seven hills. The “seven heads” also “seven yea, eight kings.” Many expositors believe them to represent “seven

kingdoms.” Here is the list. First, ancient Babylon begun by Nimrod. Secondly, the Babylon of the Chaldees. Thirdly, there is Assyria. Fourthly, there would be the Medes and the Persians. The fifth kingdom would be the Greeks. The sixth would be the Romans. The seventh would be some future anti-Christian force. Other scholars believe that the seven heads, yea the eight kings, are the following Roman emperors. (Augustus, Caligula, Claudius, Nero, Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian). This is my view.

5. Next, we have the “ten horns.” According to the context, they are ten kings, who shall receive power from Rome for a short time. They will submit themselves to Rome and be used by the great harlot.

F. In verse fourteen they will make “war with the Lamb.”

1. The Lamb will overcome them. A more detailed look at the victory is found in Revelation nineteen.
2. The Lamb is addressed as “Lord of Lords.” He is not Lord among Lords. He is superior. He has all the preeminence (Colossians 1:18).
3. He is also called “King of Kings.” Again, Christ is not King among Kings. He is the blessed and only Potentate (I Timothy 6:15).
4. “They that are with him” shall overcome. The possibility of overcoming is found in Revelation 2:7, 10; 3:5. See also Romans 8:35-39.

5. Those who are with him (Christians) are:

- a. "Called" – Christians are those who are called out of the world by the gospel (II Thessalonians 2:14). The word "church" means "the called out."
- b. "Chosen or elect" – God chose us in him before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4; II Peter 1:10).
- c. "Faithful" – Christians are to be trustworthy or reliable (Revelation 2:10; I Corinthians 4:2).

G. In verses sixteen and seventeen, we see that God uses the kings and kingdoms of the world for his own purpose.

- 1. The Most High ruleth in the kindgoms of men and giveth them to whomsoever he willeth (Daniel 4:24).
- 2. In Judges 7:22, we see God turning the Midianites against each other.

H. Finally, in verse eighteen the woman is identified as the "great city." This was of course Rome.

III. THE DOOM SONG OF BABYLON (18:1-3)

- A. This doom song reminds us of Old Testament Babylon's doom.
- B. God said he would stir up the Medes against Babylon (Isaiah 13:17).
- C. Babylon would be as Sodom and Gomorrah (Isaiah 23:19).

- D. See also Isaiah chapters twenty-one and forty-seven and Jeremiah chapters fifty and fifty-one.
- E. Other doom songs:
 - 1. Nineveh (Zephaniah 2)
 - 2. Edom (Isaiah 34)
 - 3. Tyre (Ezekiel 26-27)
- F. Truly, Rome had an intoxicating influence on the nations. The nations bowed their knees that they might share Rome's abundance (vs. 3).

IV. GOD CALLS HIS PEOPLE OUT (18:4-5)

- A. He called Lot out of Sodom (Genesis 19:12-14).
- B. He called the Jews out of Babylon (Isaiah 48:20).
- C. These Christians were not to partake of Rome's sins and thus her punishment.
 - 1. We are in the world but not of the world (John 15:19).
 - 2. We are called out of the world to live a life of separation (II Corinthians 6:14-17; 7:1).
- D. Note that her "sins reached unto heaven." They were piling up like the sins of the Jews (Romans 2:5). The sins of the Amorites were filling up the cup (Genesis 15:16).
- E. Good reader, God remembers iniquities. Sin will be punished. Pay day someday! (Galatians 6:7-8).

V. THE CALL FOR JUSTICE (18:6-8)

- A. The harlot's reward was this. "Render unto her even as she rendered, and double unto her the double according to her works: in the cup which she mingled, mingle unto her double." This is what we read about in Isaiah 42:7-9. Much of John's language is deeply rooted in the Old Testament.
- B. From this verse, I think we learn this. We not only reap what we sow, but often, so very much more. Those who sow iniquity shall reap calamity (Proverbs 22:8). Truly, the way of the transgressor is hard (Proverbs 13:15).
- C. Notice also that judgment is to be meted out according to works.
 - 1. II Corinthians 5:10
 - 2. Romans 2:6
 - 3. Revelation 22:12
- D. Consider the reason for punishment.
 - 1. She lived in utter luxury. She was materialistic. She was all wrapped up in the things of the world. Those of us who live in America had better take a good long look at this verse. Oh, my friends, do we know how good we have it in this nation? In the last five years I have traveled around the world on more than one occasion. I have seen poverty in Asia, Africa, and in the Caribbean that is indescribable. When I returned to America, I thanked God that I lived in the home of the free,

brave, and prosperous. I came back home with a greater appreciation of what material possessions I have. I quake with fear when I see my fellow Christians choked by riches, lust for things, and the cares of this life. We are caught up in a vicious cycle. We have no money to evangelize the world because it is all tied up in homes, cars, clothing, and worst of all, church buildings that are nothing more than millstones around our neck. We would be so much better off if we got rid of all our real estate. The early saints met in homes and rented halls. They also met in other public gathering places. Have we really restored New Testament Christianity? Preachers, what about us? We have become so worldly and so professional. I would to God that we would become sacrificial and be willing to lay our lives on the line. Oh God, please help us to let go of the things or this world that tie us down and keep us from flooding the world with the gospel, as the waters of the sea cover the earth. Father help us to lay our goods, yea and our very souls at the sweet feet of Jesus. Help us to cultivate the attitude that says, here am I, send me. Oh God use us, poor, miserable, and wretched as we are. Help us to be clay in thy hands, oh great potter. Mold us and make us according to thy will. Help us Father to ascend into heaven not on flowery beds of ease, but as those who have sailed through bloody seas. In Christ's name, I ask it. Amen.

2. Pride was also another reason for Rome's fall. Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty

spirit before a fall (Proverbs 16:18). The scriptures list pride as one of the major reasons why Satan fell (Isaiah 14; Ezekiel 28). Christians are to gird themselves with humility (I Peter 5:5).

VI. THE THREEFOLD OUTCRY AT ROME'S DOWNFALL (18:9-19)

- A. The Kings were weeping and wailing. Why? Because they shared in her wantonness (vss. 9-10).
- B. The merchants were also mourning and weeping. They were going to lose their major business partner (vss. 11-16).
- C. Shipmasters and mariners wept. This was the way that they made their living (vss. 17-19).

VII. THE CALL FOR JOY (18:20)

- A. Those in heaven and on earth are to rejoice at the downfall of the harlot. In particular, saints or Christians are to rejoice. Joy should characterize the Apostles. Think, my friends, of what these great men of God endured. The New Testament prophets were also to be glad. There were prophets in the church at Antioch (Acts 13:1-3). God placed them into the early church (Ephesians 4:11). We have only one named. He was Agabus.
- B. This joy was centered around the fact that God avenged his elect.
 - 1. Hebrews 10:31
 - 2. Hebrews 2:2-3

VIII. THE QUICK AND UTTER DESTRUCTION OF BABYLON (18:21-24)

- A. At this point let us observe that God has now destroyed the Roman Empire. Now it is time for the city of Rome itself to feel the wrath of God.
- B. Rome's fall will be quick and violent. It is likened to the throwing of a millstone into the sea.
- C. All signs of life are gone.
 - 1. Amusement is gone.
 - 2. Business has ceased.
 - 3. Home life is no more.
- D. The reason for Rome's demise is seen again and again. In her was found the blood of the prophets and saints. She shed their blood, now her blood will flow like a mighty river.

In conclusion, we must observe that Rome is a good example of the fact that sin is a reproach to any people. She is a perfect illustration of what happens to those who disobey John's statement in I John 2:15-17. Truly, the world passes away and the lusts thereof. We should be impressed with the fact that the Lamb of God cannot be defeated. He and his own will win the battle against Satan. Justice will be done. We can count on this. The time finally comes when God has enough. The time comes when talking is replaced with action.

God In Control

INTRODUCTION: In chapters seventeen and eighteen, we see the downfall of Babylon or Rome. This is a cause for rejoicing in Revelation 18:20. Heaven and earth were not rejoicing because of the horrible punishment to befall Rome. They were really rather rejoicing over the fact that right was triumphing over wrong. At last justice was winning the victory over injustice.

I. THE GREAT HALLELUIAH CHORUS (19:1-10)

- A. The "halleluiahs" in this context are linked to Babylon's downfall.
- B. In the King James version the word is "alleluiah." In the American Standard version it is "halleluiah." Halleluiah is found four times in this context.
- C. The only time the word "halleluiah" is found in the New Testament is in Revelation nineteen. The word is found in the Psalms. There are some Psalms called the "Hallel Psalms." They were sung during the Feast of Tabernacles and at Pass-over (Psalms 104-109; 113-118). The word "halleluiah" does not occur in the Old Testament. Rather the phrase, "praise God or Jehovah." This is the meaning of the word "halleluiah."
- D. The first halleluiah (vss. 1-2)
 - 1. Salvation, glory, honor, and power are ascribed to God and not to Rome.

2. "True and righteous are the judgments of God." That is, God's judgments are without prejudice. They will not show partiality. They will be characterized by the omniscience of Christ.
3. The great whore was judged for two reasons. First, Rome had "corrupted the earth." She was continually bringing moral decay to others. It is one thing for an individual or nation to sin. It is worse to drag others into our sins. Secondly, Rome had murdered saints. Acts 9:4 says that when Paul persecuted saints, he persecuted Christ. In I Corinthians 8:12 we learn that when we sin against Christians, we sin against Christ. When we fail to aid our fellowmen, we fail to aid Christ (Matthew 25:45). When Rome killed Christians, she was in reality sinning against Christ.

E. The second halleluiahs (vss. 3-5)

1. There was rejoicing because of the eternal damnation or destruction of Rome. Her smoke rose up forever and ever. This is a description of eternal punishment (Revelation 14:10-11). Rome was to burn with fire (18:8-9, 18, 21).
2. The halleluiahs came from the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures or beasts.

F. Next, a voice out of the throne is heard saying, give praise to God all ye his servants, ye that fear him both small and great. Thus, God expects all men, regardless of their circumstances in life to worship him.

G. The third halleluiah (vss. 6-10)

1. A voice like a multitude is heard crying out halleluiah.
2. "The Lord God, the almighty reigneth." Christ is Lord of all (Acts 10:36). Christ is God (John 3:16; 1:1-3, 14). The word "almighty" in the Greek language is found ten times in the New Testament. Nine times it is found in Revelation. It means, "one who controls all things, one who has all in his grip, one who has the power to direct and guide all things."
3. The word "reigneth" is in the eternal present. The use of this word destroys the so-called theory of the future thousand year reign. Christ is reigning now (Romans 5:17). He must reign until he hath put all enemies under his feet (I Corinthians 15:25). God has always been controlling the affairs of men and nations (Daniel 4:25).

H. In verse seven the saints are to "rejoice and be glad." Why? Because the "marriage of the Lamb is come." Throughout the Old and New Testaments God's relationship to his people has been likened to that of a marriage (Romans 7:4; II Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:25-29; Revelation 22:17).

I. The eighth verse tells us that "the wife arrays herself in fine linen bright and pure, and the fine linen is the righteousness (righteous deeds) of the saints."

1. The raiment of heavenly beings whether they be angels or men is that of white robes (Revelation 3:5; 7:9, 14).
 2. The bride of Christ is to be without spot and without blemish (Ephesians 5:27).
- J. We have another of the beatitudes in verse nine. In order to understand this verse we need a little information about marriages in this time. First, there was the "betrothal." This was more than an engagement. There were vows made in the presence of witnesses. The couple was legally recognized as husband and wife. Then there was the "interval." During this time the dowry was paid. During this time the bride and groom readied themselves for each other. Then the groom went after his bride and brought her back to his place where there was the "marriage supper." This was a time of great joy. It lasted anywhere from seven to fourteen days. After this the marriage was then consummated. Matthew 22:1-14 should be studied in this regard. Those who refuse the invitation of the God of heaven to the great wedding supper will be destroyed. Truly, many are called but few are chosen. Few are chosen because most will make excuses. Christians are those who have pledged themselves to Christ. The Lord has paid the dowry. We should be arraying ourselves now. Christ the groom will come back for his bride. Then we shall go to heaven with him and partake of the marriage supper. This will be a time of eternal rejoicing.
- K. John learns that he should not worship an angel. See also Revelation 22:8-9; Colossians 2:18; I Timothy 2:5.

II. THE GREAT LEADER (19:11-16)

- A. Christ in Revelation is pictured as Lion, Lamb, Judge, and now Warrior. He is the great leader of the armies of heaven.
- B. He rides a "white horse." Generals rode white horses in ancient times. No doubt the word "white" stands for Christ's "holiness, victory, and joy."
- C. The name of the one who rides this horse is "Faithful and True." "Faithful" means, "trustworthy and reliable." "True" means, "genuine or real". See Revelation 1:5; 3:7.
- D. "In righteousness he judges and makes war." This is an Old Testament picture (Isaiah 11:3-4; Psalm 2; Isaiah 63:1-6).
- E. His "eyes are like a flame of fire" (Revelation 1:14). Here we have a description of Christ's omniscience.
- F. On his head are many crowns or diadems. Rulers often wore more than one crown to show they ruled over several nations. Christ rules over the whole world.
- G. Christ has "a name that no man knows." There is no need to speculate about it.
- H. His clothing is dipped in blood. This is the blood of his enemies. See Isaiah 63:1-6.
- I. He has a name which is "The Word of God." Christ is described in this manner in John 1:1-3, 14. Truly, Christ was the mind of God in human flesh.

- J. Verse fifteen tells us that he has “a sharp sword.” This is the “word of God” (Revelation 1:16; Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 4:12).
1. He will use it to smite the nations.
 2. He will rule the nations with a rod of iron (Psalm 2:6-9).
 3. Here we see the result of the so-called “Battle of Armageddon.”
 4. Christ will also “tread the winepress” (Revelation 14:20; Isaiah 63:1-6).
- K. Christ is called in verse sixteen the “King of Kings.” He is the King eternal (I Timothy 1:16). He is also described as the “Lord of Lords.” Truly, Christ is our Lord and our God (John 20:28). See also Revelation 17:14.

III. THE GREAT SUPPER OF GOD (19:17-18)

- A. “Fowls” were probably vultures, eagles or scavengers. Birds were an evil omen in ancient times.
- B. They will eat the flesh of men and beasts. In this text we see that the strongest are not strong enough. The rich are not rich enough. They are powerless before death. The scavengers will not know about their power, riches, and fame. Their flesh will taste the same as the flesh of the poor and unknown! John borrows from an Old Testament picture (Ezekiel 39:17-20).

IV. THE GREAT WAR (19:19-21)

- A. The “beast” is the Roman Empire.

- B. "The kings of the earth" are her allies.
- C. They will war against Christ.
- D. But the "beast and the false prophet" (Concilia) will be "taken or defeated." They will be cast into hell alive.
- E. The "rest or remnant" are Rome's allies. They too will be defeated.
- F. We have now seen the downfall of those who have the mark of the beast (Revelation 15-16). We have seen the fall of the Harlot (Revelation 17-18). Now the beast and the false prophet fall. In Revelation 20:1-10, we shall see the fall of Satan.

In conclusion, we have seen a great struggle that ends in great victory. It brings great joy. The Christian life is a struggle (II Timothy 4:6-8; Ephesians 6:10-18). We too can have the victory (I John 5:4). We too can rejoice evermore in heaven.

The Binding Of Satan

INTRODUCTION: Revelation twenty has become a breeding ground for many false doctrines.

A careful exegesis of this chapter will prove the millennial doctrines to be false.

I. THE ANGEL (20:1)

- A. Many people do not believe that the angel is Christ. They argue that he does not appear elsewhere in Revelation as an angel. There he is described as a Lamb, Judge, Lord, and King. It is argued then, that Christ could not be this angel.
- B. This view may be correct. But there are some strong arguments that make me lean towards the idea that the angel is Christ. A careful reading of Genesis 18-19 will show that the Angel of Jehovah was either Jehovah (the Father) or Christ. I think it was Christ in a theophany. Christ certainly was active in the history of Israel in the Old Testament (I Corinthians 10:4; John 8:58). See also Exodus 23:20-21.
 - 1. The angel has a "key." Christ gave keys to the Apostles. They were keys to the kingdom (Matthew 16:18-19; 18:18). Christ has the keys of death and hades (Revelation 1:17-18). I think hades is the same as the "bottomless pit" or the abyss. The "key" is not literal. It stands for "authority." Christ has all authority in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18).

He has even been given authority to execute judgment (John 5:27).

2. The "bottomless pit or abyss" is a place that demons fear (Luke 8:31). It was controlled by the fallen star. Out of it came smoke (false teaching) and locusts which represent suffering. This place is also described in Jude 6 and II Peter 2:4. In my judgment, as stated earlier, I believe this to be Hades which is the intermediate dwelling place of departed spirits. It also is the temporary abode of Satan and his angels. Their final abode will be hell.
3. The "chain" is literally "upon the hand or hanging from the hand" of the angel. Obviously it is not literal, anymore than the bottomless pit or key. The word "chain" refers to "the binding power of the gospel" (Matthew 12:22-29).
4. The fact that we cannot interpret these verses literally destroys the myth of the millennialism. In order for this doctrine to be true, everything in the text must be literal.

II. THE FOURFOLD NAME OF OUR GREAT ENEMY (20:2)

- A. The "Dragon" is the same "Red Dragon" with seven heads and ten horns that we read about in Revelation 12:3. He has a "tail that sweeps away a third part of the stars" (vs. 4). This word was used to describe something in the reptile family. Satan is truly a monster and totally repulsive. This word also stands simply for that which is evil. The Pharoah of Egypt and

Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon are called dragons (Ezekiel 29:3; Jeremiah 51:34).

- B. The "old serpent" is a term that takes us back to the Garden of Eden. This word points to the fact that Satan is "cunning, subtle and deceitful" (Genesis 3:1; II Corinthians 11:14-15).
- C. The word "Devil" means, "a false accuser or slanderer." He falsely accuses brethren day and night before God (Revelation 12:10).
- D. "Satan" means "adversary" (I Peter 5:8; Zechariah 3:1).

III. THE BINDING OF SATAN (20:2b-3)

- A. The word "bound" is the word *edesen* in the Greek language. It carries with it the idea of "restriction." If we can determine when Satan was bound, we can have a better understanding of the "thousand years."
- B. Satan was bound during the incarnation of Christ. In other words, the life, death, and resurrection of Christ brought severe restrictions upon the enemy of our mortal souls.
 - 1. This was foretold in Genesis 3:15.
 - 2. In John 12:31-33 the Bible says, "Now is the judge of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out, And I, if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die."
 - 3. Christ blotted out the handwriting of

ordinances that were against us, that were contrary to us. He has taken them out of the way by nailing them to the cross. In so doing, he despoiled the principalities and powers. He made a show of them, triumphing over them in it (Colossians 2:14-15).

4. Through his death, Christ brought to naught him that had power over death, even the Devil (Hebrews 2:14).
5. Christ came to destroy the works of the Devil (I John 3:8).
6. With the gospel armour we can shield ourselves with faith and quench the fiery darts of the evil one (Ephesians 6:16).
7. We can resist the Devil with our faith and he will flee from us (I Peter 5:9; James 4:7).
8. Satan cannot destroy us with temptation (I Corinthians 10:13; II Peter 2:9).
9. These are just a few verses that point to Satan's binding and the fact that he has been severely limited to what he can do. He certainly cannot operate the way he did before the cross.
10. But someone says, I certainly don't think Satan looks like he is restricted in anyway. Just look at all the evil in the world. Satan is bound like a dog that is on a leash. Sometimes a dog is placed on a leash that is attached to a clothesline. But he is restricted in the sense that he cannot run loose at will. A bad dog on a leash cannot hurt you if you

don't come near. But if you get close enough, he could bite. I think the text links the binding of Satan primarily to the "deceiving of the nations."

- C. The "thousand years" in this text cannot be taken literally. It is no more literal than the "key, bottomless pit, and chain."
 - 1. The Bible uses the number one thousand in a figurative or symbolical way. God said, "Every beast of the forest is mine and the cattle on a thousand hills" (Psalm 50:10). Again the Psalmist declared, "A thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday" (Psalm 90:4). Peter wrote, "A day with the Lord is as a thousand years and a thousand years as a day" (II Peter 3:8).
 - 2. The scriptures used to show when Satan was to be bound demonstrate that this thousand year period stands for the Christian age.
- D. Satan is "cast into the pit, shut up, and sealed." The tomb of Christ was sealed to make sure that no one would be able to get him out (Matt. 27:66).
- E. The reason for the binding is plain. He is not "to deceive the nations anymore." During Old Testament times Satan had nations like Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, Persia, Media, Greece, and Rome under his control. The pre-Christian world is described in Romans chapter one. We have already seen that Satan is the deceiver of the whole world (Revelation 12:9). But now in the gospel age, he will not prevail against the church (Matt. 16:18; Hebrews 12:28; Daniel 2:44). He cannot

destroy the word of God (Matthew 24:35). He cannot stop the world wide spread of the gospel (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16).

F. When the thousand years are fulfilled, Satan will be "loosed for a little season."

1. Satan cannot break loose from the chains of the abyss. God will loose him.

2. Why will he be loosed? Only God knows. Here are a few thoughts that might be helpful.

a. He may be loosed to test the people of God. God permitted him to test Job.

b. He may be loosed to sift the wheat from the chaff (Luke 22:31).

3. How would Satan test God's people? How could he sift the wheat from the chaff? He could work through persecution, worldliness and false doctrine.

IV. A SUMMATION OF MILLENNIAL THEORIES

A. Millennialism tries to find justification for its existence in Revelation 20. I believe that it fails to do so.

B. The word "millennium" comes from "mille" which is Latin for "thousand." It also comes from the Latin word "annus" which means, "year." Millennialism is also called "Chiliasm." The Greek word *chilia* means, "thousand."

C. There are many variations of the millennial doctrines. The two major views of pre-millennialism

are “historical pre-millennialism” and “dispensational millennialism.” These theories were originated by the Jews and people like Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Irenaeus, J. N. Darby of the Plymouth Brethren, and finally, C. I. Scofield. The Scofield Reference Bible is a major propagator of this false doctrine.

- D. These views assert that Christ will come and there will be the so-called “rapture.” Christ supposedly will come secretly and quietly. He will raise the righteous dead and the living saints will join them and ascend to be with Christ in the air. This rapture is to last for seven years. The first three and a half years the temple of Solomon will be rebuilt. The Jews will return to Palestine and animal sacrifices will be re-instituted. During the second three and a half year period, the great tribulation (Battle of Armageddon) will take place. About the time that the world is going to destroy itself, Christ will come. He will then sit on David’s throne and reign in Jerusalem for a thousand years. Some say at the end of the reign Satan will be loosed and there will be another great battle. Others say that at the end of the reign, the wicked dead will be raised. Then there will be judgment and eternity. Again some say that after Satan has been defeated, the earth will be renovated and we will have the new heaven and the new earth.
- E. I submit that these doctrines are read into the text of Revelation 20. This is eisegesis not exegesis! Revelation 20 is conspicuous by what it does not say in reference to the so-called millennium.

1. It says nothing about the second coming of Christ.
 2. It says nothing about a bodily resurrection.
 3. Where is the verse that shows Christ reigning on earth?
 4. The text is silent as a tomb about the literal throne of David.
 5. Jerusalem or Palestine are not mentioned here.
 6. Words like “rapture and tribulation” do not appear.
 7. There is nothing about the conversion of the Jews here.
 8. There is nothing about the church on earth in this text.
- F. What is wrong with pre-millennialism? Plenty! I won't give you all the replies to this doctrine but consider these.
1. This view relies on a literal and a chronological interpretation of Revelation. Neither of these interpretations will hold up under scrutiny.
 2. Christ did not fail to establish his kingdom. The church and kingdom are one and the same institution (Matthew 16:18-19; Colossians 1:13; Revelation 1:9; John 3:5).
 3. The word “rapture” is not found in the Bible.

4. The idea of two resurrections is false. There will be one resurrection (John 5:28-29).
 5. The laws of Moses have been forever blotted out by the death of Christ (Colossians 2:14-15; Ephesians 2:14-16; Hebrews 8:6; 9:15-17; 10:10).
 6. Christ is on David's throne now (Acts 2:32-36).
 7. This doctrine would eliminate the work of the Holy Spirit (John 16:7).
 8. It would eliminate the priesthood of Christ (Hebrews 8:4).
 9. It belittles the doctrine of the church (Ephesians 3:21; Acts 20:28).
- G. Post-millennialism began in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It was based on a philosophy that saw the world growing better and better, as the gospel spread from one nation to another. People believed in sort of a "golden age" to come. Satan would be bound and peace and prosperity would abound. This would all come to an end with an apostasy which would be associated with the loosing of Satan. Then Christ will come again. The resurrection and judgment would follow the coming of Christ. What is wrong with this view? It was and is naive. The world simply is not getting better and better.
- H. Then there is A-millennialism which many link with Augustine. It does not believe in a literal thousand year reign. It believes that Satan was

bound through the death and the resurrection of Christ. The thousand year period is the Christian age. Satan will be loose and then Christ will come. Then there will be the resurrection of both righteous and unrighteous. Following this will be judgment and eternity. We in churches of Christ would probably identify ourselves with this view.

In conclusion, we have learned once again that Satan is the archenemy of our souls. He was defeated by the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. We have learned of Satan's ultimate end. We have examined some of the many false doctrines in light of the Revelation itself and have proven them to be erroneous. Surely also we have been impressed with the power of the gospel (Romans 1:16; I Corinthians 1:18).

The Blessed Saints Of God

INTRODUCTION: I once read the following statement: "I have read the last chapter of the Bible and we have won!" I like the positive outlook expressed by this individual.

1. Revelation is a book of victory. One by one we have seen God overcoming his enemies.
2. In Revelation 20:1-3 we saw the beginning of the end of Satan.
3. Now let us look at the blessed saints of God.

I. THE REIGN OF THE SAINTS (20:4)

- A. John said, "I saw thrones and they that sat upon them."
 1. The word "saw" is not in the original text.
 2. The word "throne" means, "a seat of authority." Let us ask some questions about the thrones that will help us to understand them.
 - a. "What" are the thrones? Obviously, they are not any more literal than the "key, pit or chain." The word "throne" stands for "the spiritual reign and the spiritual dominion of the saints over self, sin and Satan."
 - b. "Where" are the thrones? The text does

not say. Revelation 5:10 says that God has made us kings and priests and that we reign on the earth.

- c. "When" do saints reign on thrones? In this life (Romans 5:17).
- d. "Who" reigns on these thrones? The Apostles (Matthew 19:28). The text states that those beheaded and those who did not worship the beast and receive the mark of the beast. I also submit that all Christians reign (Revelation 2:26; 3:21).

B. "Judgment was given unto them."

- 1. The word "judgment" has been the subject of endless debate. In my judgment, there are two possible ideas that are worth our consideration. First, this may mean that God will judge in their favor. In other words, God will rule against Satan. Secondly, the word judgment is often used to denote "ruling." Christians rule in the sense that they "reign or exercise spiritual dominion."
- 2. When we try to identify the word "them" most scholars believe it refers to the "martyrs and the confessors." That is those "who were beheaded with an axe and those who suffered as the martyrs but who did not lose their lives." I think the beheaded souls were the same as those in Revelation 6:9-11. All Christians are included in "them" (I Corinthians 6:1-2; Daniel 7:22).
- 3. Christians were persecuted for "the testimony

or witness of Jesus and for the word of God.” They were persecuted for believing the teachings of Jesus and for preaching them (Revelation 1:9; 12:9).

- C. They “lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.”
1. “Lived” means, “they came to life.” Someone has wisely observed that “only Christians live!” Amen to that!
 2. Christians also “reign” (II Timothy 2:12; Revelation 1:6).
 3. It is important to point out that all the verbs in this text are in the same tense. This means that the time the saints were sitting on the thrones and reigning was the same time that they were not worshipping the beast, nor receiving the mark of the beast.
 4. They lived and reigned “with Christ.” Where is Christ reigning? In heaven. Christ is reigning now (Psalm 110:1; Acts 2:29-36; Revelation 3:21).
 5. Christians are reigning now (Romans 5:17; Revelation 5:10).
 6. I believe that Christ is reigning in heaven now and the saints are reigning on earth now.
 7. Saints live and reign with Christ for “a thousand years.” The idea of the so-called thousand year reign first surfaced among the pre-Christian Jews. It is not Christian in origin!

Jews believed that Christ or the Messiah would come and establish an eternal kingdom. But around 100 B. C. the Jews grew pessimistic as they saw the world becoming more and more evil. They came to the conclusion that the world was so evil that the kingdom could not come. Then they decided that the Messiah would come and have a limited reign. After Christ's reign the world would come to an end.

8. They also believed that the age of the world corresponded to the time that it took to create the world which was six days. They went to Psalm 90:4 and concluded that each day was a thousand years in length. (See also II Peter 3:8). The Messiah was to come during the sixth thousand years. Then the seventh thousand years would be like the Sabbath rest. This would be when Christ would reign for a thousand years.

II. THE FIRST RESURRECTION (20:5-6)

A. "The rest of the dead lived not again."

1. "The rest of the dead" are those who were and are dead spiritually (Ephesians 2:1).
2. The words "not again" are not in the Greek text. It certainly leaves a false impression to the King James readers.

B. "Until the thousand years were finished."

1. "Until" means, "to the time that."
2. In other words, "the spiritually dead never

really lived throughout the Christian or gospel age.

3. Let me state emphatically that this text does not teach multiple resurrections (John 5: 28-29).

C. The "first resurrection"

1. We can understand what the first resurrection is, if we can understand what the first death is.
2. The first death is "being dead in sin." Adam and Eve were told that when they ate the forbidden fruit, they would surely die (Genesis 2:17). They ate it and did not die physically, at least then and there. People can be living physically and yet be dead spiritually (Ephesians 2:1; I Timothy 5:6; Revelation 3:1).
3. Some see the first resurrection as a special resurrection of the martyrs and confessors. Not so. Others view it as a resurrection of the cause of Christ, that seemed on the verge of total destruction. This view certainly has some Biblical basis (Isaiah 26:19; Hosea 13:14; Ezekiel 37:1-14). In these verses Israel overcomes the idolatry of Babylon and Assyria. It is likened to a resurrection.
4. To me, the most plausible view is that the first resurrection refers to conversion. Ephesians 2:5-6 reads, "Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace are ye saved); And hath

raised us up together, and made us to sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” John 5:24 says, “He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and cometh not into condemnation, but hath passed out of death and into life.”

5. Notice now Romans 6:3-5, “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Christ, were baptized into his death? Therefore, we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection.” See also Colossians 2:12-13; 3:1-3.
 6. Conversion in these texts is likened to a death, burial, and resurrection.
 7. The second resurrection is the resurrection of the physical body from the grave (Acts 24:15; John 5:28-29; I Corinthians 15).
- D. In verse six we have another of the “beatitudes” of Revelation.
1. It promises a “blessing.” “Happiness” will be one of its end products.
 2. Only those who are “holy” or “pure” will partake of it. We are purified only by the cleansing blood of Christ (Hebrews 9:14; Revelation 1:5).
 3. The “second death” is “hell or the lake of

fire and brimstone” (Revelation 20:14).

4. Christians again are “priests” (I Peter 2:5, 9; Revelation 1:6). Christ is our high priest (Hebrews 4:15). We serve God in his church which is the temple of God (I Corinthians 3:16-17). Christians are to offer up “spiritual sacrifices” (I Peter 2:5; Romans 12:1-2; Hebrews 13:15).
5. “The thousand years” refers to the Christian or gospel age.

In conclusion, Christians exercise spiritual dominion now and in the world to come (Romans 8:17-18; Revelation 3:21). The first resurrection is conversion. The second resurrection is that of the body. It will be the greatest blessing of all to escape the second death and go to heaven.

The Ultimate End Of Satan

INTRODUCTION: The book of Revelation is a book of figures and symbols.

1. Revelation 1:1 says, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave unto him to show unto his servants, the things which must shortly come to pass: and he sent it and signified it by his angel unto his servant John." The word "signified" points to the signs or symbols in this book.
2. Note the metaphors in Revelation 1:13-14. Christ's head and hair is like wool and white as snow. His eyes are like a flame of fire. His feet are like burnished brass. His voice is like that of many waters.
3. In Revelation 1:20 we learn that the "seven stars" are "seven angels." The "seven candlesticks" are the "seven churches."
4. Satan is like a Dragon (Revelation 12:3, 9).
5. Rome is like a harlot (Revelation 17).
6. In Revelation 20:1-6, we learned that the "key, chain, pit, one thousand years, throne, and first resurrection" were used not literally, but in a symbolic way.
7. Our text is Revelation 20:7-10.

I. THE LOOSING OF SATAN (20:7-9)

- A. Satan will be loosed when the one thousand years expires. Sometime before the end of the gospel age Satan will be loosed.
- B. The "premillennial" theory advocated by some believes that Satan will be loosed after the thousand year reign has ended.
- C. Notice that Satan "shall be loosed." God will do the loosing. Satan is not omnipotent. He could not break God's restraints.
- D. He shall be loosed from his "prison." This prison was the "bottomless pit or abyss." I think this is Hades. In particular, that part called "Tartarus."
- E. According to Revelation 20:3 Satan shall be loosed for "a little season."
- F. But why must Satan be loosed? Only God knows! But let me hazard to make a few educated guesses.
 - 1. He may be loosed to test the people of God like he tested Job.
 - 2. He may be loosed to sift the wheat from the chaff (Luke 22:31).
 - 3. Or he may be loosed just long enough to gather his forces for the destruction of verse nine.
- G. What will he do when loosed?
 - 1. He will try to "deceive the nations, which are

in the four quarters, Gog and Magog.” Satan is addressed as the god of the world that blinds the minds of unbelievers (II Corinthians 4:4). The whole world lies in the evil one (I John 5:19). He is the deceiver of the whole world (Revelation 12:9).

2. Who or what is “Gog?” Gog is the son of Japeth in Genesis 10:2. In Revelation Gog is a nation. In Ezekiel Gog is a Prince from the North (Ezekiel 38:2).
3. Who or what is “Magog?” In Revelation Magog stands for nations. Magog was the land where Gog was Prince (Ezekiel 39). By the way, Israel was to defeat Magog. The flesh of Magog was to be eaten by birds. In Ezekiel Gog and Magog were Israel’s enemies.
4. According to the Jewish historian, Josephus, Magog stood for a people called the Sythians. Gog was a prince of the Sythians.
5. From Rabbinical sources such as the Talmud, we are told that Gog and Magog were the enemies of the Messiah. Some would identify them with Antiochus Euphrones the Syrian who desecrated the temple during the inter-testamental period.
6. The early Christians believed that they stood simply for the enemies of God’s people.
7. Some today have taken the ridiculous position that Russia is being described here. Not so!

8. Furthermore, Satan will “gather the nations for battle.” What battle is this? It is the struggle that has been going on since the Garden of Eden. It is a battle between God and Satan. It is a battle between good and evil. This war is not carnal (Ephesians 6:12; II Corinthians 10:4-5).
9. These nations will “encompass the camp of the saints” (vs. 9). This should remind us of the Assyrians who laid siege to Jerusalem under Sennacherib (II Kings 19:20-37). More than this, we have here a picture of Old Testament Israel during the exodus. The twelve tribes would camp around the tabernacle on four sides. They would form a perfect square by facing each of the four directions. The “camp of the saints” here is the “church.”
10. So also is the “beloved city.” This is “the Jerusalem that is from above, the mother of us all” (Galatians 4:26). This is the city of the living God found in Hebrews 12:22. This is the same city as the “new Jerusalem that came down from heaven, adorned as a bride for her husband” (Revelation 21:2).
11. “Fire came down from heaven and devoured them.” Fire from heaven destroyed Sodom, Gomorrah, Nadab, Abihu, and Magog (Genesis 19:24; Leviticus 10:1-2; Ezekiel 39:6). Christ is going to come in “flaming fire” (II Thessalonians 1:7-9). The world will be destroyed by fire (II Peter 3:9-12).

II. THE FINAL END OF SATAN (20:10)

- A. Satan was “cast” into the lake of fire and brimstone. The word “cast” means, “that he was cast once and for all time into that lake.”
- B. Satan was cast down to the earth (Revelation 12:9-12).
- C. He was cast into the bottomless pit (Revelation 20:3).
- D. Now, he is cast into a place that was made for the Devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41).
 - 1. It is a lake of “fire.” It is unquenchable fire (Mark 9:47-48).
 - 2. It is a place of “brimstone.” This is sulphur. It gives off a very nauseating odor.” It also causes one “to suffocate.”
 - 3. It is a place of “torment.” The word “torment” means, “to grieve or vex with pain.” It means to “torture.” The torment consists of drinking of the wine of the wrath of God. This wine is unmixed. This wrath is also described as indignation (Revelation 14:10-11).
 - 4. This torment is to go on “day and night, forever and ever.” Hell is eternal (Matthew 25:46). There will be no relief (Luke 16:24).
 - 5. Please note that Satan is among the tormented. He is NOT the tormentor.

In conclusion, what have we learned? We have once again been confronted with the fact that Satan is the archenemy

of our souls. Satan is like a wounded animal. Animals are most dangerous when wounded. He will do all he can to destroy our souls. We should though rejoice! We know his ultimate end. He has been defeated. We are also confronted with the reality of hell. Hell is real. A Hollywood actor committed suicide. He had fought with his wife. He shot her three times. He left a note. On it he said that he had lost all joy for living. He said, "Tell them I'll meet them in hell." In life hell had only been a joke. But in death, he like all men knew that there had to be a place like hell.

The Final Judgment

INTRODUCTION: Throughout Revelation there have been several judgment scenes. But none of them depicted the final judgment.

1. There is the judgment against the nations (Revelation 11:18).
2. There is the judgment against the killers of the saints (Revelation 16:5-6).
3. There is the judgment against the harlot Rome (Revelation 18:8; 19:2).
4. Judgment is also exercised on the beast and the false prophet (Revelation 19:11-21).
5. In our text of Revelation 20:11-15, we have a picture of the final judgment.

I. THE GREAT WHITE THRONE (20:11)

- A. This throne is “greater” than the thrones of the Pharaohs. It is greater than the thrones of Nebuchadnezzar and Sennacherib. It is greater than the thrones of Alexander the Great and the Caesars. This throne of Christ is greater than all the thrones that have been in existence throughout human history! Why? Christ is the King of kings and Lord of lords! (Revelation 17:14). This throne is greater than all others because it is a “judgment seat.” This throne is

greater than all others because of the “great issues” that will come before it. It is great because of the “great decisions” that will be made by the one who sits upon it. The declarations of Christ on this throne will place us all on the left hand with the goats or on the right hand with the sheep (Matthew 25:31-34). We will either go to heaven or hell, as we flee from the presence of this throne (Matthew 25:34, 41, 46).

- B. It is a “white” throne. This points to the “purity, holiness, and glory” of the one who sits upon it.
- C. “Him that sat upon it” is of course Jesus (II Corinthians 5:10; John 5:22; Acts 10:42).
- D. Notice that from Jesus “the face of heaven and earth fled.”
 - 1. Psalm 102:25-26 tells us that the heavens and earth will perish. They will wax old as a garment.
 - 2. Christ taught that heaven and earth would pass away, though his word would not (Matthew 24:35).
 - 3. Peter tells us that the world will be burned up (II Peter 3:7-12).
- E. “No place will be found for them.” This should teach us that matter is not eternal. Certainly, we should also learn that the earth is not going to be renovated.

II. THE GENERAL RESURRECTION (20:12-13)

- A. John saw the “dead.”

1. He saw the "great and the small."
 2. Christ will judge the "sheep and the goats" (Matthew 25:32).
 3. Christ will also judge the "quick and the dead" (II Timothy 4:1).
- B. The "books were opened." In Daniel 7:10 the prophet saw thousands, yea even tens of thousands before the judgment seat. He also saw "books opened." What are these books?
1. "The book of nature." "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament sheweth his handiwork" (Psalm 19:1). "The invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by things that are made, even his everlasting power and Godhead" (Romans 1:20).
 2. "The book of remembrance" (Malachi 3:16).
 3. "The Old Testament" bore witness to the deity of Christ before the incarnation." Christ said that the scriptures the Jews searched testified of him (John 5:39). He also said that the law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms spoke of him (Luke 24:25, 44).
 4. "The New Testament" will be used. We will be judged by Christ's words (John 12:48). We will be judged by the "gospel" (Romans 2:16). Christ's words bring salvation. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? Which at the first began to be spoken

by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him" (Hebrews 2:3). The words of Christ alone can lead us unto eternal life (John 6:68).

5. "The book of works" will be opened. The importance of works can be seen in Matthew 25:31-46. Paul said, "who will render to every man according to his deeds" (Romans 2:6). The church at Ephesus had left their first love and was urged to "do first works" (Revelation 2:4-5). Faith without works is dead (James 2:14, 17, 24, 26). Our works will follow us after our death (Revelation 14:13). These are not works of human merit (Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5), but are works of God (John 6:29), whereby, we appropriate the salvation that God has so graciously provided all men (Titus 2:11-14).
 6. There will be the opening of the "book of life." Moses and David knew about the book of life (Exodus 32:32; Psalm 69:28). The names of God's people are in it (Philippians 4:3). But let us not forget that our names can be blotted out of this book (Revelation 3:5). Those whose names are not in this book cannot go to heaven (Revelation 20:15; 21:27). The book of life will contain the "words" that we have spoken (Matthew 12:35-36). It will contain the "thoughts of our hearts" (I Corinthians 4:5).
- C. "The sea gave up its dead." Jews believed that one lost at sea and thus never buried would have a spirit that would wander the earth. The sea stood for "separation and for fear" in the ancient mind.

- D. "Death and hades" gave up the dead that were in them.
1. The King James version has the word "hell." The word in the original language is "hades."
 2. Death and hades are inseparable in Revelation (Revelation 1:18; 6:8).
 3. In this text death and hades are personified. That is, they are spoken of as if they were persons.
 4. "Death" is used in this text in the sense of the "grave."
 5. "Hades" is the intermediate resting place of the soul. The soul will remain here until Christ comes again. The word "hades" means "all receiving or the unseen realm."

III. THE LAST ENEMY DESTROYED (20:14)

- A. "Death and hades were cast into the lake of fire."
- B. Paul taught us that "the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (I Corinthians 15:26). In this text, we see Paul's promise becoming a reality.
- C. In light of these verses, we should all sing the "Victory Song" of I Corinthians 15:54-57 which says, "So when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be unto

God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

- D. The "lake of fire" is the "second death." This is not annihilation. The soul of man is eternal. Satan will do all he can to destroy man's soul, but Christ will do all he can to save man's soul.

IV. THE ULTIMATE END OF THE LOST (20:15)

- A. Notice the word "If" that is found in the American Standard version. "If any was not found written in the book of life." My good reader, salvation is conditional. I John 2:3 literally reads, "Hereby we keep on knowing that we know him, if we keep on keeping his commandments." John 17:3 says, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."
- B. If one does not have his name in the book of life, it is because he has not become a Christian. He has not been added by the Lord to the church. Those in the church are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
- C. Furthermore, if one's name is not in the book of life, it could mean that his name was blotted out of the book of life. This is indeed a distinct possibility (Numbers 32:32; Revelation 3:5).
- D. Those not in the book of life "will be cast into the lake of fire." This is the "second death or hell." Truly, they will have a resurrection characterized by "everlasting shame, contempt, and damnation" (Daniel 12:2; John 5:29).

In conclusion, let us note that all nations shall stand before the great white judgment seat of Christ. The poet expressed it all this way:

The Sinner's Record

"In that day that is not far,
At the blazing judgment bar,
Even now the awful summons I can hear,
I must meet the mighty God,
I must face his holy word,
I must stand before the judgment bar,

I must each broken vow,
That I hold so lightly now,
Every heartache that I have caused,
Things that time cannot erase,
I must meet them face to face,
When I stand before the judgment bar,

Every secret lust and thought,
There shall be to judgment brought,
When the Lord in all his glory shall appear,
All the deeds of darkest night,
Shall come out to greet the light,
When I stand before the judgment bar,

O, my record shall be there
Be it's pages dark or fair,
When I stand before the judgment bar,
When the books shall open lie,
In the morning by and by,
O my record, O my record will be there!"

All Things New

INTRODUCTION: The scene now shifts from judgment to eternity.

1. Heaven is the keystone in the sacred arch of Christianity.
2. The word heaven is found in twenty New Testament books. It is found in these books some two hundred and sixty-one times.
3. The key word in our text today will be the word “new” which is *kainos* in the Greek language. It describes “a newness in quality” in contrast to newness from the standpoint of time.

I. THE NEW HEAVENS AND THE NEW EARTH (21:1)

- A. The idea of “new heavens and a new earth” is not really new.
- B. This concept is spoken of in Isaiah 65:17; 66:22; II Peter 3:10. These verses tell us that the physical universe will disappear. When this happens there will be a change in circumstances and environment. These verses describe the church in its glorified state.
- C. In John 14:1-3, Jesus tells us that he is going to prepare a place for us. He is not going to come back and renovate this present earth. See also Revelation 20:11; 21:5.

- D. "The sea will be no more." The sea could stand for "peoples" (see Revelation 17:15). It is also used to describe the "wicked" (Isaiah 57:20-21). But in all probability, it refers to the literal sea. In other words, the whole universe will pass away. It is made up of the heavens, the earth, and the sea. By the way, I think the sea stood for separation and fear in the Jewish mind.

II. THE NEW JERUSALEM (21:2)

- A. It is called a "holy city." The proponents of the millennial theories believe this to be the literal city of Jerusalem. There Jesus would supposedly reign for a thousand years.
- B. The "new Jerusalem" is the "Jerusalem that is above" (Galatians 4:26). It is the "heavenly Jerusalem" of Hebrews 12:22.
- C. It "comes down from heaven as a bride adorned for her husband."
1. The church is addressed as the bride of Christ. She is arrayed in white or fine linen. This linen is bright and pure. It is the righteousness or righteous deeds of the saints. Those who are bidden to the marriage supper are blessed (Revelation 19:7-9). The bride invites all to come and partake of the water of life (Revelation 22:17). See also Romans 7:4; II Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 5:25-33.
 2. What we see here then is the church in her glorified state.

III. A NEW RELATIONSHIP (21:3-7)

- A. The “tabernacle of God is with men.” In Old Testament times this signified the “presence of God.”
- B. He “shall dwell with them.” Literally, “he shall tabernacle with them.” John wrote, “The Word became flesh and ‘dwelt’ (tabernacled) among us . . .” (John 1:14). Christ did dwell among men in the robe of human flesh for some thirty-three years. He was Immanuel or “God with us” (Matt. 1:23).
- C. Verse three is saying that God and his people will enjoy an intimate relationship, that was much like that which God and faithful Israel enjoyed. Certainly though, this verse describes a degree of intimacy unlike that which even Israel did not know.
- D. The new relationship will be characterized by the “no mores” that are found in Revelation (vs. 4).
 - 1. The sea will be no more (Revelation 21:1).
 - 2. Christians will go out no more (Revelation 3:12).
 - 3. In heaven there will be no more hunger, thirst, or heat (Revelation 7:16).
 - 4. There will be no more night (Revelation 22:5).
 - 5. There will be no more tears.
 - 6. There will be no more death (I Corinthians 15:26).

7. There will be no more sorrow.
 8. There will be no more crying.
 9. There will be no more pain.
 10. Why will these things be no more? Because the first things are passed away. Life as we now know it will be no more in heaven.
- E. Verse five says that all things will be new!
- F. In verse six God is called the “Alpha and Omega.” “Alpha and Omega” are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. They also mean the beginning and the end. God is the beginning of all things because God created all things (Genesis 1:1; John 1:1-3, 14). God is the end in the sense that all things find completeness in God. All things come from God and return to God.
- G. To those that are athirst, there will be given access to the “water of life.” This is promised in Revelation 22:17 and in Revelation 7:14-17. In the book of Isaiah, people were told to draw water out of the wells of salvation with joy (Isaiah 12:3). Water in the Old Testament then stood for salvation. In the New Testament the Holy Spirit is linked to “living water” (John 7: 38-39). In our text the “water of life” stands for “eternal life.”
- H. Finally in verse seven there is a promise to “those that overcome.” Promises to those who overcome are not new in Revelation.
1. Those who overcome will eat of the tree of life (Revelation 2:7).

2. Those who overcome will be clothed in white garments. Christ will not blot their names out of the book of life (Revelation 3:5).
3. Those who overcome will be made pillars in the temple of God. They will go out no more (Revelation 3:12).
4. Those who overcome will sit down with Christ in his throne (Revelation 3:21).
5. Those who overcome will receive power over the nations (Revelation 2:26-27).
6. In our text those who overcome will "inherit all things." This refers to the things previously mentioned in the immediate and broader context. Peter described our inheritance in this way. It is incorruptible and undefiled. It fadeth not away. It is reserved in heaven for us (I Peter 1:4). Paul wrote in Romans 8:17-18, "And if children then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed."
7. Verse seven also promises, "I will be his God, and he shall be my son." The privilege of sonship is described by John in I John 3:1, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God."

In conclusion, the theme of this lesson has been, "All Things New." All things can be new through the new birth

(John 3:35). "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, old things are passed away and behold all things are become new" (II Corinthians 5:17). We get into Christ when we are baptized into Christ (Galatians 3:27). Romans 6:4 says, we arise to walk in newness of life. Someone has written these words:

"O how I wish there was some wonderful place
Called the land of beginning again,
Where all our mistakes, and all our heartaches
And all our poor selfish griefs could be dropped
Like a shabby old coat at the door
And never be put on again."

Thank God, we can proclaim that all things can become new in this life and in the life to come!

Who's Who In Hell

INTRODUCTION: In many high school and college year-books there is a section called "Who's Who." Every library in the nation has a copy of *Who's Who In America*. It might interest you to know that Satan has his own "Who's Who In Hell." This list is found in Revelation 21:8 which says, "But for the fearful and unbelieving and the abominable, and murderers and fornicators and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part shall be in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." At first glance, we might not think that any of us are on that list. Look again! Let's take a detailed look.

I. FIRST OF ALL NOTICE THAT THE FEARFUL HEAD THE LIST

- A. The word "fearful" has been rendered "cowards" by some. Many Christians that lived at the end of the first century or at the beginning of the second denied Christ by worshipping Caesar. One of the great problems in the early church was what to do with these Christians. They succumbed to fear.
- B. Someone has said, "The Christian is like the turtle. He must stick his neck out if he is going to make progress." Some of the early Christians would not stick their necks out. Paul said, "God has not given us the spirit of fear" (II Timothy 1:7).
- C. We can overcome fear with love. "Perfect love casteth out fear" (I John 4:18).

- D. Faith is the victory that overcomes the world (I John 5:4). Faith then can help to overcome fear.
- E. Jesus' statement in Matthew 10:28 can help overcome fear. He said, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul, but rather fear him which is able to destroy both body and soul in hell." Christ can do just that! Remember, if we are ashamed of Christ and his word, he will be ashamed of us when he comes again (Mark 8:38).
- F. Let us then never fear the society in which we live to the extent that we become like it. Christians are not to fit into the world's mold (Romans 12:1-2).
 - 1. Let us never be ashamed to pray in public.
 - 2. We must not let fear keep us from door knocking and personal work.
 - 3. Fear is one of the major factors that keeps many from becoming Christians.
- G. Fear can be overcome not only with love and faith. Acts 4:13 says, "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus." Boldness that comes from an intimate relationship with Jesus will keep fear out of our lives.

II. SECONDLY, THE UNBELIEVING ARE ON SATAN'S LIST

- A. The word "unbelieving" means, "faithless." Yes,

it can refer to a pagan. What about a Christian?
Are we not often faithless?

1. The Apostles prayed, "Lord increase our faith" (Luke 17:5).
 2. Christ often rebuked men for being men of little faith.
- B. We can increase our faith by asking God to increase it as the Apostles did (James 4:2).
- C. Faith can be increased with increased exposure to the word of God (Romans 10:17).
- D. Faith that is exercised or worked grows (James 2:17, 24, 26; I Thessalonians 1:6).
- E. Faith is an absolute essential (Hebrews 11:6).

III. THIRDLY, THE ABOMINABLE ARE AMONG THE WHO'S WHO

- A. The "abominable" are the "defiled."
- B. Paul wrote, "Come ye out from among them and be ye separate saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will be unto you as a father, and ye shall be unto me as sons and daughters, saith the Lord almighty. Having therefore these promises beloved, let us cleanse ourselves of all defilement of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (II Corinthians 6:17-18; 7:1).
- C. Christians are to be "unspotted from the world" (James 1:27).

- D. Christ's bride is the church. She is to be "holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:27). There will be nothing in heaven to defile it (Revelation 21:27).

IV. FOURTHLY, MURDERERS ARE HIGH ON THE DEVIL'S LIST

- A. One of the ten commandments carried over into the New Testament is, "Thou shalt not kill" (Romans 13:9).
- B. Certainly, we would never want to take the life of another human being. Yet, it is possible that we could still become guilty of murder. I John 3:15 says, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer and he knows that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him."
- C. It is no wonder that the second great commandment is to "love our neighbor as ourself" (Matthew 22:39). No wonder, we are to love even our enemies (Matthew 5:44-45). Now we understand why Christians are to love each other as Christ loved each of us (John 13:34-35).

V. FORNICATORS ARE ON THIS LIST OF THE DOOM-ED AND DAMNED

- A. Fornication refers to "illicit sexual relations by single people and to having illicit relationships with married people." Fornication and adultery are often used interchangeably.
- B. Fornication is the only Biblical reason for divorce. Matthew 19:9 says, "But I say unto you, whosoever shall put away his wife except for fornication and marrieth another, committeth adultery, and

he that marrieth her that is put away committeth adultery.”

- C. Paul said, “The body is not for fornication but for the Lord. Flee fornication” (I Corinthians 6:13).
- D. As Christians, we would never engage in fornication. But we could be guilty nevertheless. In Matthew 5:28 Christ taught, “But I say unto you, whosoever looketh upon a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.”

VI. THE SIXTH SIN ON THIS LIST IS SORCERY

- A. “Sorcery” is often called “witchcraft.” It refers to those who use potions, drugs, spells, and enchantments. They often have an advanced knowledge of chemistry and utilize astrology.
- B. Sorcery is condemned by Paul as a work of the flesh that will keep one out of the kingdom of God (Galatians 5:20-21). Under the Old Testament law, sorcerers were put to death (Exodus 22:18).
- C. We may not practice sorcery. But I wonder if our fascination with the occult is not condemned by this word. Drug addiction is indirectly condemned also by this word. It certainly tells us that horoscopes are of no value. Man’s destiny is not determined by the stars, but by God who made the stars!

VII. NEXT IDOLATRY IS CONDEMNED

- A. An "idolater" is "one who worships an image that represents a false god." Paul was "provoked when he saw the city (Athens) full of idols" (Acts 17:16).
- B. We may never worship an image, but we can be guilty of idolatry.
- C. Christ said, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15).
- D. Colossians 3:5 says that "covetousness is idolatry!" Thus, with John let us say, "My little children, let us guard ourselves with idolatry" (I John 5:21).

VIII. FINALLY, LIARS ARE IMPORTANT TO THE OLD SERPENT

- A. Solomon said, "Lying lips are an abomination unto Jehovah" (Proverbs 16:22).
- B. Peter taught, "He that would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil and his lips that they speak no guile" (I Peter 3:12).
- C. People not only lie with their tongues, they lie with their lives. Paul warned of those who "profess that they know God but by their works they deny him, being abominable and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate" (Titus 1:16). He also wrote of those who have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof (II Timothy 3:5). Christ rebuked the religious leaders of his day for a

failure to practice what they preached (Matthew 23:3). I once heard of a preacher who preached on the subject, "Can I Preach What You Practice?"

Have you made the Devil's Who's Who list? If you are on that list it is because of one of two things. Either you are an alien sinner who needs to obey the gospel or you are an erring child of God. If you need to become a Christian, do so. If you need to come back home, do that also.

The New Jerusalem

INTRODUCTION: In verse 9, we have one of the seven angels which had the seven bowls of wrath filled with the seven plagues. We first run into him in Revelation 17:1. There, he shows John the judgment of the great whore. In stark contrast, John is now shown the beautiful bride of Christ.

1. The wife of the Lord is the church (Revelation 19:7-9; Romans 7:4; Ephesians 5:25-31; II Corinthians 11:2).
2. The Lamb's wife is described as "that great city, the holy Jerusalem."
3. It is called "the holy city" in Revelation 21:2 and 22:19.
4. It is called the "new Jerusalem" in Revelation 3:12 and 21:2.
5. The bride is called the "beloved city" in Revelation 20:9.
6. Abraham looked for a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God (Hebrews 11:10).
7. Now let us take a closer look at the church in her glorified state. It will be hard not to literalize but we must view this text from a symbolical standpoint.

I. THE EXTERIOR OF THE CITY (21:11-21)

A. The light of the city (vs. 11)

1. The city will be illuminated by "the glory of God." God's glory filled the tabernacle, temple, and church (Exodus 40:34; I Kings 8:11; Ephesians 3:20-21; 5:27).
2. "The light was like unto a stone most precious, even a jasper stone, clear as crystal."
3. The Jasper stone was precious. Many think that it was what we know as the diamond. God himself is like a jasper to look upon (Revelation 4:3). Thus, there will be a glorious and radiant light that will bathe the city of God that we know as heaven.

B. The wall and gates of the city (vss. 12-14)

1. "The wall is great and high." It no doubt stands for "protection and security."
2. It has "twelve gates." Ancient cities had only one gate. Perhaps we have an abundant entrance pictured here (II Peter 1:10).
3. At the gates are "twelve angels." This reminds us of the cherubim at the gate of the garden of Eden (Genesis 3:24). Perhaps they are honor guards or will be stationed there to meet and greet us, when we step over the heavenly portals.
4. The names of the twelve tribes will be on the twelve gates.

5. There are three gates that open in each of the four directions.
 6. The wall has twelve foundations.
 7. The names of the twelve Apostles are on the twelve foundations.
- C. The measurement of the city (vss. 15-17)
1. It is measured with a "golden reed."
 2. From Ezekiel 42:20, we know that measuring is used to stress "the holiness and glory" of the city.
 3. The city is "foursquare." It is cube shaped. The cities of Nineveh and Babylon were four-square in shape. The altar of burnt offering and the altar of incense were cube shaped. The breastplate of the high priest was also cube shaped. The holy of holies was four-square in shape. The idea of "foursquare" in this text stands for "the perfection" of shape.
 4. The city measures "twelve thousand furlongs." This would be about fifteen hundred miles long, wide, and high.
 5. The walls of the city are "one hundred and forty-four cubits." This would be about two hundred and eighteen feet. We do not know if height or thickness is being described here. The walls of Babylon were three hundred feet high. The walls around Solomon's porch were one hundred and eighty feet high. Thus, if the two hundred and eighteen feet refers

to the height of the wall, it would be small. Perhaps this is a way to show that no protection will be needed in heaven.

D. The splendor of the city (vss. 18-21)

1. The wall was jasper. This would denote beauty and eternity.
2. The city was like gold. Here we see the worth and beauty of the city.
3. The foundations of the walls are adorned with all manner of precious stones.
 - a. Jasper - may have been a diamond. Some say it is green and translucent.
 - b. Sapphire - was a hard stone and blue and gold in color.
 - c. Chalcedony - came from Chalcedon and was green silicate copper.
 - d. Emeralds - were green.
 - e. The sardonyx - is what we call onyx.
 - f. Sardius - was a blood red stone.
 - g. Chrysolite - came from Tarsish and was gold in color.
 - h. Beryl - is sea green and believed to be like an emerald.
 - i. Topaz - was green and gold.

- j. Chrysolyte - is believed to have been green and gold. It also may have been like an emerald.
 - k. Jacinth - is blue, violet, purple, and translucent.
 - l. Amethyst - is a wine colored or purple stone.
4. Eight of these stones were in the breastplate of the Jewish high priest (Exodus 28:17-20).
 5. Each of the twelve gates was a "pearl." Pearls were lustrous and multi-colored. They may symbolize suffering. Pearls are highly prized (Matthew 13:45-46).
 6. The street of the city was "pure gold" like transparent glass.

II. THE INTERIOR OF THE CITY (vss. 22-27)

- A. There will be "no temple" in heaven. The word for temple here is "sanctuary." We will not have to look for God in one place in heaven. God will be in our presence at all times. We will be in intimate communion with both God and Christ at all times.
- B. "There will be no need for the sun or moon to shine in it." Why? "For the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."
 1. Isaiah 60:19-20 says, "God shall be an everlasting light."
 2. I John 1:5; John 8:12; Revelation 22:16.

- C. The “saved among the nations shall bring their honor and glory into it.” That is, the best of all nations will be there (Revelation 5:8-9).
- D. “The gates shall not be shut by day for there will be no night there.”
 - 1. Darkness can and often did stand for evil and ignorance in scriptures.
 - 2. It also brought fear.
- E. The gates shall not be shut because there is no way that:
 - 1. Anything unclean, defiled, impure, or polluted will enter in.
 - 2. There will be no abomination or idolatry there.
 - 3. There will be no falsehood or deceit there.
- F. The only inhabitants will be those in the Lamb’s book of life. This we might say is God’s honor roll. This book contains God’s “Who’s Who In Heaven!” (Revelation 20:15).

Heaven is the bottom line as far as Christianity is concerned. Don’t you want to go to heaven? If you do, you must obey the gospel (Mark 16:16). If you have, and you have erred from the truth (James 5:19-20), won’t you return to your first love? (Revelation 2:4-5). Then and only then can you begin to walk the narrow road that leads to eternal life (Matthew 7:13-14).

Heaven

There is no disappointment in heaven,
 No weariness, sorrow or pain;
No hearts that are bleeding or broken,
 No song with a minor refrain,
The clouds on our earthly horizon
 Will never appear in the sky,
For all will be sunshine and gladness,
 With never a sob nor a sigh.

We'll never pay rent for our mansion
 The taxes will never come due,
Our garments will never grow threadbare
 But always be fadeless and new,
We'll never be hungry or thirsty,
 Nor languish in poverty there,
For all the rich bounties of heaven,
 His sanctified children will share.

There'll never be crepe on the doorknob,
 No funeral train in the sky;
No graves on the hillsides of glory,
 For there we shall never more die,
The old will be young forever;
 Transformed in a moment of time,
Immortal we'll stand in His likeness,
 The stars and the sun to outshine.

I'm bound for that beautiful city,
 My Lord has prepared for his own;
Where all the redeemed of all ages,
 Sing glory around the white throne,
Sometimes I grow homesick for heaven,
 And the glory I there shall behold,
What a joy that will be when my Savior I see,
 In that beautiful city of God!

Paradise Regained

INTRODUCTION: There was a time when the church of Christ believed, preached and looked for a literal heaven, where Christians would abide forever with God. Do we still believe this?

1. When God created man, he placed him in a paradise called the Garden of Eden. That paradise was lost when Adam and Eve sinned and plunged the human race into sin.
2. But the good news is that Paradise has been regained. This was made possible through the death of Christ upon the cross.
3. Let us now take a closer look at our paradise home.

I. PARADISE REGAINED (22:1-5)

- A. In our paradise home there will be access to “the river of the water of life, bright as crystal . . .” (vs. 1).
 1. There was a river that went out of Eden and became four heads (Genesis 2:10-14).
 2. This river though proceeds out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. The quality of this life giving water can be seen in the fact that it is as bright as crystal.
 3. This river flows down the center of the golden

streets of heaven. On either side of the river there is the tree of life.

4. Our access to this water of life can be seen in several passages.

- a. Christ as our Shepherd will guide us to the fountains of the water of life (Revelation 7:17).
- b. Revelation 21:6 says, “. . . I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.” See also Revelation 22:1.
- c. David in Psalm 45:4 wrote of “the river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God.”
- d. Jesus in John 4:14 said, “whosoever shall drink of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him, shall become in him, a well of water springing up into eternal life.”

- B. In our paradise home there will be access to “the tree of life.”

1. Genesis 2:9 says that the tree of life was in the midst of the garden. Those who eat of it will live forever (Genesis 3:22).
2. The tree is located in the midst of the streets of gold and is on either side of the river of life.
3. It is no doubt fed by the river of life. It is very fruitful. It bears twelve manner or crops of fruit every month.

4. The leaves of this tree are for the "healing or health" of the nations.
 5. Access to this tree was promised by Jesus to those who overcome (Revelation 2:7).
- C. Now at this point, let us observe that we have been provided with three things necessary to life. They are: water, food, and health.
- D. There will be "no curse" in heaven.
1. The serpent was cursed after tempting Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:14).
 2. Adam and Eve, yea even the earth was cursed because of sin (Genesis 3:16-19).
 3. So, there will be no more pain, sorrow, hunger, thirst, toil, and death in heaven.
- E. The "throne of God and the Lamb" shall be there. The "throne" stands for the power and authority of God. Yes, the Sovereign God of this universe will be there! Truly in heaven, "The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ: and he shall reign forever and ever" (Revelation 11:15).
- F. Heaven will also be a place of service. "His servants shall serve him." Adam and Eve were placed into the Garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it (Genesis 2:15). Thus, in the first paradise there was a service that had to be rendered. There will also be meaningful service rendered to our God in heaven. By the way, the word "service" in this text is translated "worship" in other verses. When the Queen of Sheba came to visit

Solomon she observed, "Happy are thy men, happy are thy servants to stand continually before thee and that hear thy wisdom" (I Kings 10:8). We, too, will be happy servants of God.

G. In our paradise home we "shall see his face." Exodus 33:20 says, ". . . no man shall see me and live." John 1:18 says, "No man hath seen God at any time . . ." But Christians live with the hope of seeing God one day.

1. The pure in heart will see God (Matthew 5:8). See also Hebrews 12:14.

2. David expected to see God's face in the resurrection (Psalm 17:15).

3. John wrote, "we shall be like him: for we shall see him even as he is" (I John 3:2). Yes, good friends, one day faith will become sight.

H. Our paradise home will not know "night." There will be no need of a "lamp nor sun." God's glory will provide all the light we shall need (Revelation 21:23, 25).

II. THE SIXTH BEATITUDE (22:6-7)

A. "These words are faithful and true." We can trust the description of our paradise home.

B. Christ promises "to come quickly." That is, Christ will come "suddenly and without warning."

C. In light of these things, "Blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book." This is essentially what is stated in the first beatitude found in Revelation 1:3. There are

people who have devotion without knowledge. There are those who have knowledge without devotion. This beatitude calls for devotion with knowledge. The Jews had a zeal for God but not according to knowledge (Romans 10:2). Many in the denominational world are like the Jews. Many of us in the church have the knowledge but lack the zeal.

III. ANGEL WORSHIP FORBIDDEN (22:8-9)

- A. Angel worship was forbidden in Revelation 19:10.
- B. Paul also condemned it in Colossians 2:18.
- C. We must worship God alone.
 - 1. John 4:24
 - 2. Matthew 4:10

IV. GOD COMMANDS JOHN NOT TO SEAL UP THIS BOOK (22:10-11)

- A. Daniel is told three times to seal up the book which he was writing (Daniel 8:26; 12:4, 9).
- B. John was not to seal up his book because the time was at hand.
- C. In view of this he wrote, "He that is unrighteous, let him do unrighteousness still: he that is filthy, let him be made filthy still: He that is righteous, let him do righteousness still: and he that is holy, let him be made holy still."
- D. This certainly has been a puzzling verse.

1. Some say that it teaches that we should not hinder the man, who in spite of all the pleadings, admonitions, and exhortations, has completely hardened himself in his wickedness.
2. It may also be that John is saying that in light of the content of this book the unrighteous are seen to be even more unrighteous while on the other hand, the righteous are seen to be even more righteous.
3. In my judgment, it may well be teaching that there will be no last minute opportunities. There will be no deathbed repentance. Thus, you had better put your life in order while there is still time. Paul taught that evil men will wax worse and worse (II Timothy 3:13). He also taught that a man can reach the point when it will be impossible to repent (Hebrews 6:4-6).
4. Whatever else this verse teaches, it certainly shows that the doctrine of universalism is false. It shows also that the doctrine of purgatory is false.

In conclusion, let us remember that paradise was lost in Genesis 2 and 3. The possibility of paradise being restored is seen in Jesus' statement to the thief, "Today thou shalt be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). Paradise was seen by Paul (II Corinthians 12:1-4). It is promised to those who overcome (Revelation 2:7). Now in Revelation 22, we find paradise restored.

Will you go to heaven when you die? If you have not obeyed the gospel, the answer is no. Someone once asked

J. D. Tant, an old gospel preacher, if he thought only members of the church of Christ would go to heaven. He said, "Before God, I don't believe that half of the members of the church will be in heaven."

An indescribably wonderful experience awaits us, if we are faithful Christians. There is coming a day when we will close our eyes to the familiar scenes of earth and will open our eyes in that celestial city of heaven. You may have lived a full life. Your eyes may have feasted on the rare and exotic things of this world. Adventure may have been your goal and you have sailed the seven seas in pursuit of it. But all this will be nothing compared to placing our feet on the streets of gold and drinking the water of life in our paradise home.

There Is More

INTRODUCTION: Someone has written:

More Beyond

“We only see a little of the ocean,
A few miles distant from the rocky shore
But Oh, out there beyond-beyond the eye’s horizon,
There’s more-there’s more!
We see a little of God’s loving,
A few riches from his mighty store
But Oh, out there beyond-beyond life’s shore,
There’s more, there’s more!”

1. Marco Polo left Italy and traveled to the Orient. When he returned, he told stories that were hard to believe. When he was asked to renounce them on his death bed, he said, “The half has not yet been told!”
2. Thank God we can proclaim that there’s more. There’s more beyond life’s horizon. When it comes to the subject of heaven, the half has not yet been told.
3. Let us now return to our final text of Revelation 22:12-21, and find out more great truths about our paradise home.

I. THE PROMISE OF CHRIST (22:12-13)

A. Christ promises to “come quickly.” That is, he

will “come suddenly or unexpectedly” (I Thesalonians 5:2). This text does not stress the immediacy of Christ’s coming.

- B. When he comes, he will “reward.” God is a rewarding God.
 - 1. Hebrews 11:6 says, “Without faith it is impossible to be pleasing unto him. For he that cometh to God must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”
 - 2. Judgment will render to each man according to his works (Romans 2:6). See also II Corinthians 5:10.
- C. Note also that once again God is addressed as the “Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.” All things then have their beginning and ending in the eternal God of heaven.

II. THE LAST BEATITUDE (22:14-15)

- A. The King James version renders this verse, “Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.”
- B. The American Standard version reads somewhat differently. It begins with the phrase, “Blessed are they that wash their robes . . .”
- C. Why the difference? The American Standard version is based on more reliable manuscripts such as the Alexandrinus, Sinaiticus, Latin, and the Coptic.

1. The idea of Christians wearing garments or robes is seen often in Revelation. Christians will be given white garments if they overcome (Revelation 3:5).
 2. Those who came out of the great tribulation are those who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 7:9, 14; 1:5).
- D. The blessed or happy man is the man who washes his robe. Why? Simply because they will enter into heaven and have the right as overcomers to eat of the tree of life and live forever (Revelation 2:7; Genesis 3:22). Think of the joy of entering through those gates made of pearl. Oh, the joy of walking down the streets of gold and drinking from the river of the water of life. Then think of strolling beneath the tree of life and partaking of its life giving fruits, that are for the spiritual healing or health of the nations! Surely, then all of our sacrifices for Christ will be worth it.
- E. But oh, my friends, think of being without the gate! Without are:
1. The “dogs” - They stand for the “polluted, the immoral, the savage, and the unclean.” This term also was used to describe in particular the male prostitute (I Kings 21:19; Deuteronomy 23:17).
 2. “Sorcerers” were people who used things like “magic, astrology, spells, chants, and an advanced knowledge of chemistry.” They are also sometimes labeled as those who engage in “witchcraft” (Galatians 5:19-21).

3. "Whoremongers" or "fornicators" (I Corinthians 6:13).
4. "Murderers" could also include those who hate their brothers (I John 3:15).
5. "Idolatry" or the worship of other gods made by the hands of men and invented by the minds of men was an abomination to God. The covetous are also idolaters (Colossians 3:5).
6. "Those who love and make lies" are despised by God (Proverbs 6:19).

III. THE ROOT AND THE STAR (22:16)

- A. Jesus is described as "the root and the offspring of David." This was foretold in Isaiah 11:1 which says, "And there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots shall bear fruit." Both Christ and David came from the tribe of Judah (Hebrews 7:14; Genesis 49:10).
- B. Christ also is the "bright and morning star."
 1. Numbers 24:17 says, ". . . there shall come forth a star out of Jacob, And a sceptre shall rise out of Israel." Many believe that this Old Testament prophecy was speaking of Christ, the bright and morning star.
 2. Revelation 2:28 also mentions the morning star. Christ is truly the light of the world. Those who follow him shall not walk in darkness (John 8:12).

IV. THE FINAL INVITATION (22:17)

- A. "The Spirit says come." This is the Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit. This is the third person of the Godhead. The Spirit invites through the word of God (John 16:8; Acts 2:21-37; 24:25).
- B. "The bride says come." The bride is the church. Christians or the church is married to Christ (Romans 7:4; II Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:25-31). The church invites men through the preaching of the gospel. Christians are to go out in the world and say, come for all things are now ready (Luke 14:17). We are to go out into the streets and lanes of the city crying out, come! (Luke 14:21). We must go out into the highways and hedges compelling men to come that the house of God might be filled (Luke 14:23).
- C. "He that heareth, let him say come." Each individual Christian must do his or her part in extending the great invitation. Each one of us will be asked to stand before God and give an account of ourselves (Romans 14:12). Each one must teach one (II Timothy 2:2).
- D. "He that is athirst, let him come." Christ said, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6). Over and over again, God has promised to satisfy man's thirst in this book of Revelation.
- E. Men can "take of the water of life freely." Certainly, man could never earn the right to partake of it. There is a sense in which this water is not free. Christ's death upon the cross made it

possible for man to partake of this blessing. All men then should “draw water out of the wells of salvation” that has been provided by the grace of God (Isaiah 12:3; Titus 2:11).

V. A FINAL ADMONITION (22:18-19)

A. Man cannot “add” to the words of this book.

1. Solomon warned, “Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar” (Proverbs 30:6).
2. Paul warns that we are not to go beyond that which is written (I Corinthians 4:6).

B. In the immediate context the consequences are these. “God will add unto him the plagues that are written in this book.” In my judgment, this adds up to the loss of one’s soul in hell. If not, why not? Who is man? What right does he have to add to the words of the all knowing God of this universe?

C. A warning is also issued to those who would try to “take away from this book.” In the long ago God warned, “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish from it, that ye may keep the commandments of Jehovah God which I command you” (Deuteronomy 4:2). These words are just as relevant today as they were when they were written.

D. We are not to preach another gospel. Those who do so will labor under a curse (Galatians 1:6-9). Man adds to God’s word when they want us to obey creed books, manuals, discipline books,

books of catechism, and books of extra revelation such as the so-called Book of Mormon. If these creed books have more than the Bible, they have too much. If they have less than the Bible, they have too little. If they have only what the Bible has, we don't need them. We have had the Bible long before these books came out of the minds of men and from off their presses.

- E. Who can improve on the Bible? "All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work" (II Timothy 3:16, 17). II Peter 1:3, "Seeing that his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of him, that called us by his own glory and virtue." "Man shall not live on bread alone but on every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Luke 4:4).
- F. Those who tamper with God's word will have his privilege of partaking of the tree of life removed. He will also not be able to enter into the city of God. My friends, if we miss heaven, we have missed it all!
- G. The book closes with a prayer. John prays, ". . . come, Lord Jesus" (vs. 20). Can we pray that prayer? Do we pray for the second coming of Christ? Are we ready for his coming? Do we love him that much?

In conclusion, let us observe once again that there is something more beyond life's horizon and it is heaven. In heaven,

we will receive eternal rewards. There will be everlasting bliss for those who have washed their robes. Oh, how wonderful to spend eternity with the Root and the Bright and Morning Star! We will be glad forever, that we have answered the invitation of the Spirit and the bride. How tragic it will be to find one's self outside the gates. Immoral conduct will certainly keep one from the golden city of God. So will a lack of respect for God's word. Disobedience to God's will shall send one to a Devil's hell.

“I want to live earth's little day
In such a God intended way,
That when the sun sets I can say
Stars are beckoning
Golden is the moon,
Night is luminous
Morning cometh soon,
The scarlet dawn when I shall arise
Renewed, released in paradise
For I shall wake in pure delight
Refreshed in soul with quickened sight
With wiser heart and higher skills
To work the Master's lovely will
Oh, I shall leap at break of dawn
To put my shining garments on
I'll clasp the hand of saint and seer
And launch into my real career.”

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