

# **REVELATION OF JOHN**

**BY  
MAXIE B. BOREN**



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction . . . . . 1

Chapters

    One . . . . . 9

    Two . . . . . 15

    Three . . . . . 25

    Four . . . . . 39

    Five . . . . . 47

    Six . . . . . 53

    Seven . . . . . 61

    Eight . . . . . 65

    Nine . . . . . 71

    Ten . . . . . 81

    Eleven . . . . . 87

    Twelve . . . . . 93

    Thirteen . . . . . 101

    Fourteen . . . . . 107

    Fifteen . . . . . 113

    Sixteen . . . . . 117

    Seventeen . . . . . 125

    Eighteen . . . . . 131

    Nineteen . . . . . 137

    Twenty . . . . . 141

    Twenty-One . . . . . 149

    Twenty-Two . . . . . 157



# **AN INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF REVELATION**

**by Maxie B. Boren**

The book of Revelation is also called the "Apocalypse." The former is derived from the Latin, and the latter from the Greek. They both mean the same thing, "to disclose; to uncover; to reveal; to unveil."

## **Author And Time Of Writing.**

It is universally accepted that the apostle John, the son of Zebedee, and one of the twelve chosen by Jesus, is the author of the book of Revelation. He is also the author of one of the four accounts of the gospel, and of three brief epistles, known as 1, 2, and 3 John.

Some scholars contend for a date for the book of Revelation prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70. But the vast majority of scholars date the book around 95 or 96 A. D. It is believed that John was exiled to the isle of Patmos in about 94 A. D. during the reign of Domitian, the Roman emperor who ruled the great empire from 81 to 96 A. D. It is further thought that John was allowed to return to Ephesus about 96 A. D. where, shortly thereafter, he died.

The visions which John received and which are recorded in Revelation, were received while he was on Patmos. Patmos was a rocky, barren island, about 10 miles long and 6 miles wide, located some 50 to 60 miles southwest of Ephesus in the Aegean sea. The Romans used it, as they did other places, for exiles. There is a difference of viewpoint among Biblical scholars as to whether John actually wrote down the Revelation while at Patmos, or immediate upon his return to Ephesus just before he died.

## **The Purpose Of The Book.**

Revelation was addressed "to the seven churches which are in Asia" (1:4). Those seven being at Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. God's purpose in giving John this Revelation for the seven churches of Asia was obviously to comfort those early Christians in the midst of the terrible persecutions and sufferings they were passing through. The zeal of the Roman persecutors was exceeded only by their cruelty and sadism. Those Christians of the last half of the first century who were bearing the brunt of the Empire's efforts to trample under Christianity, must surely have been tempted to think that evil was going to prevail. But not so! Christ shall prevail! And those suffering so much needed that assurance.

In the words of brother George Tipps, gospel preacher in Fort Worth, "The church of Christ is today involved in a struggle against error and sin. It was involved in this same struggle in the first century after its establishment, has so been involved in the nineteen intervening centuries, and will thus be involved until Christ calls all unto judgment. The foe is often the apparent victor, and the church stands in need of blessed assurance. The purpose of the book of Revelation is therefore to reassure Christ's church in its struggle against error and sin."

### **The Theme Of The Book.**

The theme of the book of Revelation is that Christ and His church will triumph over Satan and his hosts! Victory will be to God's people! Though the forces of evil might appear to be prevailing at a given time in history, and though Christians must sometime suffer severe trials and persecutions, still, the Lord's people will ultimately be more than conquerors!

"Over and over again the glorious refrain of the victory of Christ and His church over the devil and his angels is sounded. There can be no mistake that this is the theme of Revelation: Victory!" (Tipps).

"These shall war against the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings; and they also shall overcome that are with him, called and chosen and faithful" (Rev 17:11).

### **Methods Of Interpretation.**

I doubt that there is any portion of Scripture which has been subjected to such wild speculations and interpretations as has the book of Revelation. So much of that which has been written concerning the book and its meaning is valueless. But, on the other hand, there is much good material available that certainly aids us in our understanding, and gives us much insight into the possible meaning of the book.

The sincere student, and the real seeker of truth, will want to know what learned men have thought about the book. There is always profit in at least considering what others think. Then discerningly, he or she can reject what is fanciful and fallacious, and accept that which is reasonable, logical, and in accord with the overall teaching of the Bible.

In order that you might be informed as to how others have, and do, approach a study of Revelation, let me share with you the various methods of interpretation.

- (1) The Preterist Interpretation. A preterist is one whose chief interest is of the past.

Those who embrace this view apply all the visions to the Jewish nation and to pagan Rome, claiming that everything described in the book (or at least most all of it) took place before 70 A. D. and the destruction of Jerusalem. Obviously, these hold to an earlier time of writing than 96 A. D. which is the conviction of most scholars.

None of our brethren I know about give any credence to the Preterist interpretation of Revelation, although I know of some who do believe in assigning an earlier date of writing than 96 A. D.

Most Roman Catholic exegetes subscribe to this method of interpreting the book of Revelation while most Protestant scholars reject it. And it is rather easy to see why Catholic scholars would embrace such an interpretation – mainly to refute the Historical approach advocated by a number of Protestant writers, which casts Catholicism in a very bad light.

## **(2) The Futuristic Theory Of Interpretation.**

This is by far the most speculative of all the methods of interpreting Revelation, believing that nearly all the content of the book is yet to be fulfilled. Those who embrace this approach to the book see in it a return of all the Jews to Palestine, the rebuilding of the temple, and the reigning of Christ in Jerusalem for a thousand years. This is what is called the “premillennial” theory.

This interpretation could not possibly be correct since it conflicts with so many plain passages of Scripture and, thus, it is rejected by all faithful brethren.

## **(3) The Historical Interpretation.**

This method of trying to understand Revelation has been perhaps the most popular approach to the book in times past and is still held by a goodly number among our brethren.

This view interprets the contents of Revelation as a panoramic history of the Christian dispensation, beginning with the time of John and foretelling the future, literal history of the church since that time. The symbols are understood to depict actual and specific happenings in history, much of it now past, but with more yet to happen. This interpretation regards Revelation as a history written beforehand, couched in highly symbolic language.

Those who embrace this method of interpretation are at great variance among themselves as to the events they understand the symbols to represent. While all this makes for interesting reading, and especially for those who enjoy

history, yet it seems to me the method is laden with difficulties and conflicting views, and that the proponents are often forced to really “stretch things” to make it all fit their notions.

I personally, in all good conscience, cannot subscribe to this understanding of the book. Neither do most of our brethren any longer believe it to be the most logical interpretation or explanation of Revelation.

#### **(4) The Spiritual Interpretation.**

This approach to understanding Revelation views the book as a pictorial revealing of great principles that are at work throughout the whole Christian era, and none of the symbols or prophecies are to be understood as specific happenings in history.

Keep this view in mind because it is at least coming close, in my estimation, to the right approach. However, it does fail to consider the historical background in which the Revelation was given.

#### **(5) The Historical Background Interpretation.**

This interpretation takes into account the facts of history as they were in John’s day and time, and endeavors to understand the book not only as a promise of victory to the Christians John addressed, but also for those who would follow them in subsequent times, even until now, and until the end of time. This view is sort of a combination of that which is called the “Spiritual Interpretation” and one that at least considers Historical settings. Instead of the prophecies of things “to come” being understood to refer to specific historical events and dates, and specific individuals as the Historical Interpretation does, these things are viewed as principles of conflict between right and wrong, and truth and error, which were very real in John’s day, but which are equally real at any point in history since then, as surely as they are today.

Brother Charles Roberson departed this earthly life some twenty-five years ago. Before his death he served for twenty years as the head of the Bible Department at Abilene Christian University and was nationally known as a truly great scholar. In his excellent commentary called “Studies In The Revelation” he made this observation: “In recent years very profound students have combined the Spiritual and the Present Historical methods. This group regards the Revelation as presenting great principles which are working themselves out in actual history. . . If this compiler may venture an opinion it seems that this method is along sane and normal lines of interpretation.”

Brother George Tipps, to whom I have already referred, said, "It is from this view point that Revelation can best be approached by Christians living at any point of time. There is a needed message, a divine consolation, a blessed assurance of victory, a sweet promise of hope."

When I was a student at Abilene Christian University, I had the privilege of studying under some of our most learned men of contemporary times. One of these was Dr. Frank Pack, truly one of the greatest scholars to be found anywhere. I had seven courses under brother Pack. The commentary he recommended for the book of Revelation above all others is called "More Than Conquerors" by Dr. W. Hendriksen. Having acquired the book myself over twenty-three years ago, and having read and studied it for myself, I can understand why brother Pack recommended it so highly. It is the most sensible and simple explanation of Revelation I've ever read. In his commentary he said, "A sound interpretation of the Apocalypse must take as its starting-point the position that the book was intended for believers in John's day and age. The book owes its origin, at least in part, to contemporary conditions. It is God's answer to the prayers and tears of severely persecuted Christians scattered about in the cities of Asia-Minor. Nevertheless, although it is true that we must take our starting-point in the age in which John lived, and must even emphasize the fact that the conditions which actually prevailed during the last decade of the first century A. D. furnished the immediate occasion for this prophecy, we should give equal prominence to the fact that this book was intended not only for those who first read it but for all believers throughout this entire dispensation."

### **Concluding Remarks Concerning Methods Of Interpretation.**

The above summaries of some of the methods of interpretation of the book of Revelation are certainly not exhaustive, but intended for the purpose of at least exposing the student to what others have thought, and do think. There are a few other theories of interpretation of lesser consequence, such as the Mythical method, and the Eschatological method, but the above are the main ones.

To my way of thinking, the one generally referred to as the Historical Background interpretation described above is by far the most plausible. Therefore, in this class, we will approach the Apocalypse this way. You certainly have the privilege of disagreeing. I do not claim to have all the answers. But I can promise you, as your teacher in this class, I will do my best to approach our study together of the book of Revelation humbly, honestly, sincerely, and reverently.

Though we will most likely not agree 100% on everything we study, yet I feel that this class can be most profitable to all of us. I suggest that we all refrain from a dogmatic attitude as to what we might think a certain symbol means, etc. For any individual to

maintain his views are precisely and exactly “IT” in a study of Revelation is to say the least, “far-fetched.” Brother Roberson, to whom I’ve already referred, said, “It would be idle to say that the Revelation is not a difficult book.” Yes indeed, it can be considered a difficult book to completely understand. That is not to say that we can’t understand it, because I believe the main thrust is clear (as I’ve already pointed out on my remarks as to the purpose and theme of the book.) The book itself says, “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things that are written therein...” Revelation 1:3. So it seems readily apparent to me that we can all gain a great deal from it that will help us to live better, that it will give us hope and assurance that truth and right will ultimately prevail, and that the faithful followers of the Lamb will triumph for ever and ever.

## **A Simple Outline Of The Book Of Revelation.**

In order that we might have an overall view of the book, I share an outline I believe will be helpful. Quoting from brother Tipps again, he said, “Revelation is divided into . . . seven sections. The effect is that the same message, viewed from a different aspect, is repeated seven times; the church proclaims the God-given gospel and is persecuted by her enemies; God warns the persecutors, urging them to repent, and exhorts the elect to remain faithful, promising victory at last; when victory by the unrighteous seems inevitable, the saints prevail and are rewarded by the Almighty.”

### **Outline.**

#### **Section 1 – Chapters 1-3.**

This section contains the letters of Christ to the seven churches in Asia. The number “seven” occurs time and again in the book of Revelation and is symbolic of “completeness.” Thus, the letters should not only be viewed to those seven specific congregations, but also to the church as a whole throughout the Christian era. The teachings and principles given are true for all times and all places, and are relevant to our needs the same as they were to those early Christians.

#### **Section 2 – Chapters 4-7.**

The opening of the seven seals.

#### **Section 3 – Chapters 8-11.**

The sounding of the seven trumpets.

#### **Section 4 – Chapters 12-14.**

The woman and her child persecuted by the dragon and his helpers.

## **Section 5 – Chapters 15,16.**

The seven bowls of wrath.

## **Section 6 – Chapters 17-19.**

The fall of the great harlot and the beasts.

## **Section 7 – Chapters 20-22.**

The judgment upon the dragon, followed by the vision of the Holy City.

Note: These seven sections can be lumped under two headings:

Chapters 1-11.

- (1) The Christ-filled church shines in the darkness of this world – Chapters 1-3.
- (2) The world hates the light and persecutes the church so that the souls of the slaughtered saints appear underneath the altar – Chapters 4-7.
- (3) The blood of the saints is avenged; their prayers are answered; judgments of every description fall upon the world while the church triumphs – Chapters 8-11.

Chapters 12-22.

- (1) The struggle between the church and the world is but the outward manifestation of the conflict between Christ and Satan. Christ is called the “man child.” Satan is called the “dragon.” The dragon attempts to devour the child. Failing in this, he persecutes the woman, (“God’s people”; in times past the nation of Israel, but today the church) the church – Chapters 12-14.
- (2) God’s wrath is poured out – Chapters 15,16.
- (3) Babylon, the great harlot, falls. Christ has conquered, and we are more than conquerors through Him – Chapters 17-19.
- (4) The utter defeat of the forces of evil, and the saints reign with Christ forever – Chapters 20-22.

### **Suggested Bibliography.**

“More Than Conquerors” by Dr. W. Hendriksen, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

“Studies In The Revelation” by Dr. Charles H. Roberson, The Nanney company, Ft. Worth.

“Commentary On Revelation” by Homer Hailey, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids.

“Commentary On Revelation” by John T. Hinds, Gospel Advocate Co., Nashville.

“Interpretation Of Revelation” by R. C. H. Lenski, The Wartburg Press, Columbus, Ohio.

The above five books are the main ones I will use in teaching the class on the book of Revelation. I also will check the commentaries of Albert Barnes, Adam Clarke, Charles R. Erdman and The Pulpit Commentary. Fortunately I have access also to materials by brothers Frank Pack and George Tipps, from which I hope to glean additional insights.

Brother Johnny Ramsey, well known to most all of us, has a lengthy and informative section in his latest book “Bible Treasures” on the book of Revelation, pages 133-224. You can order this book from Johnny at 927 W Yellowjacket Ln, Rockwall, TX 75087. I do not plan to refer to his writings often, and the three books I will mostly use for our study are the first three listed above.

### **Summary.**

With this brief introduction to the book of Revelation in mind we will now proceed to a study of the book. Please read it carefully in view of our approach and the outline given.

# CHAPTER ONE

## Introduction – verses 1-3.

This is the Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to Him. Notice, the origin of the book is Divine, and not from any human source. It is the making known of the Father's will through His Son Jesus Christ. And this is in harmony with the very thing made known to us in many other places of Scripture concerning God and His Son. Consider:

- (1) John 1:14,16; 5:17-23; 6:38,40,44-48; 8:12-19,24-29,38,54,55; 10:14-18, 25-30; 12:44-50; 14:1-11, etc.
- (2) Matthew 28:18; Acts 2:22; 32,33, 36; Ephesians 1:20-23; Colossians 1:12-20 and Philippians 2:5-11.
- (3) It was God who gave Jesus to be the great high priest, the mediator between God and man, and who gave Him to be head of the church! In turn, Jesus sent His angel to communicate the message to John who, in turn, has written it for all Christians – for those of the first century, and the second, the third, the fourth, on to the twentieth, and until the end of the world. Please note verse 3. We can read the book of Revelation, and we can understand (hear) its message for us, and we do need to be very careful in keeping the teachings thereof.

## Salutation and remarks of adoration and praise concerning Jesus Christ – verses 4-6.

“John to the seven churches which are in Asia.” These seven churches are mentioned by name in verse 11. The student should familiarize himself with the geographical location of these seven churches and, through the reading of commentaries and/or other reference works, learn as much concerning these places as they were in the closing part of the first century as possible. (I will give you information concerning each as we come to each of them in our study of chapters 2 and 3.)

The main thing I want us to consider is this - it is the considered judgment of your teacher, and naturally I believe I am right in this understanding, that these “seven” churches of Asia are representative of the churches of our Lord throughout the Christian era - where ever and whenever. It certainly was directly to those seven mentioned, but I believe representatively to every other congregation that was in existence then, too, and all others since then. The number seven denotes completeness and as we get further into our study and look more closely at numbers and their significance, we will see this to be true.

Grace and peace, which are often mentioned in salutations of New Testament writers, are gifts of God to His people. The “seven Spirits” is most likely a reference to the Holy Spirit. The immediate reference to Jesus Christ in verse 5 completes a mentioning of the entire Godhead – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The adoration and praise of Jesus Christ in verses 5 and 6 is deserving of careful notation.

### **Announcement of Christ’s second coming – verse 7.**

The fact that Jesus is coming again would certainly be a source of comfort to those afflicted believers in Him. His coming will be visible and in glory. Note Mark 14:62, Acts 1:11, and 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10. The “mourning” will not be the mourning of penitent hearts, but the “weeping and wailing” mourning of those who are lost!

### **Christ’s self-designation – verse 8.**

Similar references are found in verse 17, and also in 21:6-8 and 22:13. “Alpha” and “Omega” are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, describing His eternal nature. This is the message to those persecuted Christians: “Take courage, all the forces of evil cannot destroy God’s anointed!” He is the Almighty! Remember John 10:30 and John 17:10. We may not be able to fully fathom it, but it is a truth clearly set forth in Scripture. The Father and Son, though two persons, are yet one in power, eternal nature, etc.

### **The circumstances of the writing – verses 9-11.**

John had been exiled to the island of Patmos (see introduction notes) in about 94 A.D. by Domitian, the Roman emperor at that time. His “crime” was being a Christian, and bearing testimony that Jesus was indeed the Son of God.

The “Lord’s day” is the first day of the week – Sunday. Being “in the Spirit” probably means only that John was lost in a worshipful frame of mind in his communion with God. The capitalizing of the word “Spirit/spirit” is arbitrary with the translators. If indeed it should be “Spirit” as it is rendered in nearly all the translations, then it would simply mean that the visions he was about to receive were somehow connected with the power and agency of the Holy Spirit.

Notice John heard a voice “as of a trumpet.” Hendriksen said, “Whenever God had anything to impart to his people during the Old Testament dispensation, He gathered them by means of trumpet-sound” (Ex 19:16,19; Lev 25:9; Josh 6:5; Isa 58:1, etc.).

## **The vision of the Son of man (Jesus Christ) – verses 12-16.**

To go into minute detail in analyzing this vision would go beyond my plan in sharing with you but brief remarks, in outline form, as to an exposition of Revelation. Thus, I will be concise in giving you what I believe is the main thrust to gain.

Verse 20 defines for us what the “seven candlesticks” (or lampstands) are – the seven churches. Jesus is seen in the midst of them! Christ is with His church; among His people, and in their hearts!

The total picture of the Christ John sees depicts Him as glorious and fearful. Notice, His hair white as snow, His eyes as a flame of fire, His feet like burnished brass, His voice as the sound of many waters, His countenance as the sun shining in its strength, and out of His mouth was a sharp, two-edged sword! I believe this vision denotes Christ, the Holy One, coming to purge His church with judgment and wrath upon evil doers, and especially those who persecute His faithful ones. This understanding becomes more clear as we go deeper into our study of the Revelation, such as in 2:16, “Repent, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.” See also 2:18,23. Certainly much of the book revolves around the “bowls of wrath” being poured out on the persecutors of the Lord’s people.

## **John’s reaction, Christ’s tender words, and His instruction and explanation to John – verses 17-20.**

The effect of the vision on John seems to have terrified him, as he fell at Jesus’ feet as one dead. While the Lord undoubtedly wanted to impress upon John (and his readers) His great power, might, and splendor, His real purpose was to comfort the saints, not terrify them. They were experiencing enough terror at the hands of the Romans. Christ wanted them to know He was mightier than the Romans or anyone else! Thus, He tells John of His eternal nature and, that though He was dead, yet now He is alive forever more! And not only that, He has “the keys” of death and hades. We all know what death is; hades is the abode of disembodied spirits. So Christ is actually saying that He has the power and authority over death and hades. Death could not claim Him for long, nor hades retain Him. He arose victorious over death and the grave! The New Testament is filled with this truth. What a great comfort to believers, persecuted unto death, to know that their Lord and Christ is, after all, the one who holds the keys to death and hades.

John is instructed to write what he had seen, and the things “that are” and “which shall be.” Please re-read the introduction and the supplement to the introduction, remembering the historical background approach to seeing the same things repeated again and again throughout the Christian dispensation.

The church (Christians - individually and collectively) is indeed the light of the world, as it radiates the glory of Christ and holds forth His word of truth (Jn 8:12; Eph 5:14; Mt 5:14-16; Phil 2:15,16; etc.).

The “seven stars” as the “seven angels” of the churches is understood by most to signify the bishops, or pastors, or possibly the preachers.

### **The Letter to the church at Ephesus – verses 1-7.**

“And unto the angel . . .” Perhaps the use of the word “angel” of the church deserves a little more comment than what we gave it in our observations on chapter 1:20. The word “angel” is from the Greek word, *aggelos*, and simply means “messenger.” In the Scriptures it is applied to both heavenly and human messengers. There are countless references to the use of the word “angels” in the former sense. One example of the use of the word in the latter sense is John, the forerunner of our Lord. Malachi 3:1, “Behold I send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me . . .” is obviously fulfilled in John as Matthew 11:7-14 plainly teaches. But the question is, to whom does the word angel apply here, and/or what does it signify?

Very few commentators understand “the angel” in the letters to the seven churches to refer to heavenly messengers. The “heavenly messenger” was engaged in revealing to John the message of God, (Revelation 1:1 - *aggelos* - the same word but with an obviously different import than in the other uses of it in Revelation 1:20, and in 2:1,8,12,18, and in 3:1,7, and 14) but the “messenger” of the church of Ephesus was simply to relate the message on to the church there.

But who is “the angel” in each of the seven churches? There is a divergence of views and I do want to share with you what different ones think.

- (1) A number of denominationalists believe it signifies “the bishop” or “the pastor” of each church. Obviously, those who embrace this idea have allowed their denominational concept of “the pastor” to color their thinking, and ignore the plurality of the bishops in the New Testament church (Acts 14:23; 20:17; Titus 1:5; Phil 1:1 and 1 Pet 5:1-3).
- (2) Others feel that the word could very well be used in the “collective” sense to refer to the eldership, or body of bishops (or pastors) as a unit. Brother Hinds holds this view in his commentary, page 33. Lenski gives credence to the same view in his commentary, page 82. It is not quite clear from Hendriksen whether he understands it to refer to “the bishop” or “the bishops” from his remarks but he does say, “Angels must be taken in the sense of pastors, ministers” (page 73).

- (3) Adam Clark in his commentary, Vol. 6, page 974, states his belief that the “minister” (preacher, evangelist) of each church is meant. B. W. Johnson, in his “People’s New Testament,” Vol. 2, page 418, agrees with that idea.
- (4) Brother Richard Rogers feels “the angel” represents the church itself. He says, “The angel is the inward nature of the church and the candlestick is the outward manifestation of the church. This is why he wrote to the angel, i.e., to him who is held responsible.”

Brother Roberson, now deceased, had a similar view: “The true idea is that they (the angels) are symbolic representatives of the church, in which the active life of the church is brought out in contrast to the passive life” (page 16).

Brother Pack writes: “The best view, it seems to this writer, is to take the angel as the symbol of the spiritual life of the church, as the candlestick symbolizes its outward embodiment or its visible existence.” (Vol. 1, page 27 of his commentary on Revelation.)

Ephesus was the most important city in the Roman province of Asia, which occupied the western part of the country known of today as Turkey. It was located at the mouth of the Cayster river and, due to its rise from the sea and its being on a main road, made it perhaps the most vital commercial center of the province. It was the site of the temple of Diana, considered one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The temple was a truly magnificent structure with 120 columns, each one of which was 60 ft. in height. It was a great and wealthy city, cultured in the Greek and pagan ways of the time.

Certainly the city of Ephesus was a focal point of early Christianity in that area. The apostle Paul evidently established the Lord’s church there, possibly as early as about 52 or 53 A.D. when he first visited Ephesus on his second missionary journey, as recorded in Acts 18:19-21. On his third journey he returned to Ephesus - Acts 19:1ff. For some three months he preached in the Jewish synagogue - Acts 19:8,9. He then started teaching in the “school of Tyrannus,” continuing for two years, and during that time the gospel message was spread throughout the whole area - Acts 19:10.

Paul proclaimed the One true and living God to the city and “there arose no small stir concerning the Way” - Acts 19:23. Paul then left Ephesus - Acts 20:1. All of this is believed to have taken place from about 54 to 57 A.D. After completing his third missionary journey, he started back to Jerusalem and stopped in Miletus, calling for the elders from Ephesus, and addressed them in one of the most touching contexts in all Scripture. Read Acts 20:17-38. It was in this discourse that Paul himself mentioned the time he had spent with them in Ephesus as being three years - Acts 20:31. Later on when imprisoned in Rome the first time, he wrote four “prison epistles,” one of which was to the church in

Ephesus, known as “the book of Ephesians.” This was written in about 62 A.D. It is believed that Paul was released from prison in Rome shortly after he wrote the epistles of Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon, and that he probably journeyed immediately to the region of Asia.

It is further believed he then left Timothy in Ephesus to strengthen and protect the church from erroneous doctrine, but he himself went on into Macedonia, the date being around 63 A.D., and it was from there he wrote the epistle of 1 Timothy in which he said, “I exhorted thee to tarry at Ephesus, when I was going into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge certain men not to teach a different doctrine.” (1:3.)

Tradition suggests that when the Romans started the “Jewish wars” which culminated in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, many of the Jews fled from Judea during that time to various places. It is believed that the apostle John was one of those, coming to Ephesus sometime around 70 A.D., and becoming the beloved apostle in that area for a time spanning nearly 30 years. Exiled to Patmos by the Romans in around 94 A.D. as a very aged man, he received the visions known as “Revelation.” It is then believed he was allowed to return to Ephesus in about 96 A.D., shortly after which he died. This all gives the interested student some idea as to the history of the church in Ephesus and the setting when the letter to them (Rev 2:1-7) was written. The church had been in existence in Ephesus for nearly 50 years. Some great preachers had worked among them - Paul, Apollos, Timothy, and John being the most noteworthy. Others probably were such men as Luke, Titus, Tychicus, Epaphras, Aristarchus, and Gaius.

## CHAPTER TWO

In verse 1 we have the self-designation of Christ walking in the midst of the churches and holding in his right hand the “seven stars” the messengers), whatever, or whoever they might be, as we’ve already discussed. In verse 2 the Lord makes them aware of His great, comprehensive knowledge. “I know thy works . . .” He praises their labor and their steadfastness. Evidently they had persevered through all kinds of difficulties without growing weary or quitting (verse 3). He commended them for not allowing “false apostles” to continue in their midst. They had somehow “tried” (or tested) those who claimed to be apostles, and had found them false. How they did this is not revealed but we might surmise a few things. Paul had warned the church there years before of false teachers (see Acts 20:29-32), and in his first epistle to Timothy, which was written to him in Ephesus, he had warned about the impending departure from truth (1 Tim 4:1-6). Timothy was plainly told to “put the brethren in mind of these things.” Later the apostle John also warned of “false prophets” (1 Jn 4:1-3). So the church there had been made aware of the danger of false teachers.

Also we know that as early as 57 A.D. there were those claiming to be apostles who were not (2 Cor 11:13-15). Paul taught that “the signs (evidence) of an apostle were wrought among you in all steadfastness, by signs, and wonders, and mighty work “ (2 Cor 12:12). When there came in among the brethren at Ephesus those claiming to be apostles, the brethren there “tested” them. In my considered judgment, they tested them by comparing what they were teaching with what they knew to be the truth, from the preaching of the true spokesmen of God that had been among them, and from the inspired writings that were then in their possession. And they very likely challenged them to do some of the signs of the apostles. At any rate, they determined them to be false teachers and did not tolerate their disrupting the church. The Lord commended them for this yet, in verse 4 the Lord rebuked the church for having “left thy first love” and deliverer them an ultimatum to repent in verse 5. Verse 4 could certainly not mean that they had lost their zeal for truth, as they had refused false teachers, and it could not mean that they were no longer working for the Lord because He commended them for their toil and labor. It must mean, therefore, that their spirit of devotion to the Lord and their love for Him as the Savior had cooled. A lot of things can be done for Christ “mechanically” that are not motivated by hearts that genuinely love Jesus more than anyone or anything else in the world. He must be talking about the kind of “heartfelt love” that would cause a Christian in deep devotion and worship to unashamedly shed tears. Somehow the spirit of profound love and gratitude had begun to escape them. They were careful to guard against heresy and to do the Lord’s work, but something had happened to their hearts that made it all seem rather hollow to the Lord. And brethren, it is my sincere conviction that this is one of the main problems facing the church today! Too many of us cannot really honestly say that, “Jesus Christ, and His cause, means more to me than life itself. From way down deep inside I love my blessed Lord and Savior.”

Let me illustrate it in a way that all of us can understand. A young man and woman marry. For the first few years there is a real burning love for one another but somehow, in time, they begin to “grow apart.” Oh they are still faithful to each other. He still provides for her and she still cooks for him and irons his clothes, but “something” is missing! A sense of duty may cause them to continue in all the outward manifestations of fidelity and loyalty, but that “spark of love” is no longer there. Now, in like manner, a member of the church, who once really loved the Savior, now serves Him more or less in a “mechanical” manner. Oh, he still attends the services of the church and goes through the routine of worship, but “something” is missing. What is it? That deep devotion . . . that heartfelt feeling of love . . . those tears from a heart “touched” during the Lord’s Supper, or at a baptism . . . those “chills” that run up the spine when we blend our voices together in a great gospel song, or when we hear a preacher proclaim the powerful truth of God’s word!

Somehow, brethren, the church at Ephesus had lost this! And, somehow, I’m afraid we’re just as guilty of having lost it as they were! God doesn’t want “lip service!” God doesn’t want “mechanical” acts of worship! God wants our hearts! He wants our affection! He wants our gratitude! He wants our devotion! He wants us to really, sincerely, genuinely love Him! And, of course, the same is true concerning His Son Jesus Christ. And He promised retribution upon them if they didn’t rekindle that fire of love and devotion that was just about to die out! And we need not expect it to be any different with us.

In verse 6 the Nicolaitans are mentioned. Who were the Nicolaitans? The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Vol. 4, page 2142, tells us that they were a “Christian” sect of the first century. Nothing much is known for certain concerning them as to their origin or to their practices. They are mentioned only twice in the Scriptures and both of these references are in Revelation chapter 2 – once here in verse 6 and again in verse 15. Some believe they originated with Nicolaus mentioned in Acts 6:5, who is reputed to have “gone off” from the straight and narrow way (somewhat like Paul warned could happen in Acts 20:29-31) and formed this sect within the general frame-work of Christianity. That the sect continued for some time beyond the apostolic age is attested to by the fact that the Nicolaitans are mentioned and condemned by name in the writings of Irenaeus (120-192 A.D.), Clement (150-217 A.D.) and Tertullian (150- 220 A.D.) (Ibid, ISBE). They were closely identified in Revelation 2:14,15 with eating things sacrificed to idols and committing fornication. “Apparently they were those who were teaching that it was all right to compromise with the world, to engage in the heathen festivals as Christians, etc.” (Pack, page 32, Vol. 1). It is believed that they embraced and taught that the spirit of man was not responsible for what the flesh of man did. With such a concept they thought they could commit fornication without being guilty spiritually. Regardless of who they were or what exactly their beliefs and practices were, obviously they were acting contrary to what was right and pleasing to the Lord. The Lord hated what they were doing, and so did the church in Ephesus. The Bible says, “The fear of the Lord is to hate evil” (Prov 8:13). David said, “I hate every false way” (Psa 119:104). Again he said, “Ye that love the Lord, hate evil” (Psa 97:10).

In verse 7 we find the tender entreaty, “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.” (Notice the plurality of “churches.”) This message is not only to the church in Ephesus, but to the Lord’s church in all places at all times! How desperately we need to heed the message here, as throughout the Revelation!

Here we have the first precious promise given to those who “overcome.” “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.” Notice, that while the letter is to the church in Ephesus collectively, yet the promise is to the individual (whoever or however many among them) who overcomes! Each of us will face judgment as individuals (2 Cor 5:10; Rom 14:12).

Brother Pack says, “To eat of the tree of life means to partake of life everlasting, which man forfeited in his sin in Eden. Christ restores what Adam lost for man, yet it must depend on individual faithfulness to share in this blessedness.” “Paradise” is a word borrowed from the Persian language meaning “a park, or garden.” In the New Testament paradise is used to depict the place of the “blessed dead” (Lk 23:43) and is equated with the “third heaven” by Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:1-4.

Hendriksen comments: “The expression ‘to him that overcomes’ means to the conqueror . . . the conqueror is the man who fights against sin, the devil, and his whole dominion and in his love for Christ perseveres unto the very end . . . The conqueror will be given to eat of the tree of life (see Gen 3:22; Rev 22:2,14-19), that is, he would inherit eternal life in the Paradise of heaven.”

### **Letter to the church at Smyrna – verses 8-11.**

Smyrna was located to the north of Ephesus approximately thirty-five miles. It had an excellent harbor at the head of a deep gulf of the Aegean sea. It was built in the third century B.C. by the Greeks. It was a natural outlet of trade, blessed with a good climate and was an attractive place to live. With the emerging of the Roman Empire, Smyrna quickly made itself an ally to Rome and built a temple to the goddess Roma to be counted among temples to other “gods.” Because of such acts of devotion to Rome the Roman Cicero, in 195 B.C., referred to Smyrna as being “one of our most faithful and our most ancient allies.” So, it is not strange that the worship of the Roman Emperor was commonplace there in New Testament times. When you consider the native population of the city being worshipers of pagan gods, and in particular the Emperor, it is not surprising that you would find a hostile environment to Christianity. Especially when the rather large Jewish population which had settled there is included in the total picture. The Jews as a whole were antagonistic toward Jesus and His church and at the time John recorded Revelation, the pagans were also stirring in their anger against Christians. This brief letter is a warning of the coming sufferings.

In verse 8 the Lord describes Himself as one that was dead, but is alive. This self-designation of our Savior is in beautiful harmony with the general tenor of what is said in Revelation about Him. He is the conqueror of death! He has the keys of death and Hades! These on His side need not fear! He ever lives!

In verse 9 Jesus again expresses complete knowledge, as He did in verse 2 in His letter to the church in Ephesus, and as He does in each of the seven. The Lord knew the saints in Smyrna were experiencing tribulation and poverty. Christians need never fear that the Lord doesn't know of their trials and difficulties, and we can be assured He cares! Concerning the plight of the Christians in Smyrna, Hendriksen states, "These people were often thrown out of employment as a result of the very fact of their conversion. Besides, they were usually very poor to begin with. Becoming a Christian was, from an earthly point of view, a real sacrifice. It meant poverty, hunger, imprisonment, often death by means of the wild beasts or the stake." Thus, the Lord comforts them by assuring them that the true riches are theirs!

The "Jews" were those rejecters of Jesus as the Christ but who yet fancied themselves as being God's people. In the same way Saul of Tarsus thought he was doing right in persecuting the church before his conversion. He himself eventually used the term "Jew" in this way – to represent these who thought they were God's people as compared to these who really were (Rom 2:28,29). Those Jews in Smyrna were very much the enemies of God and Jesus referred to them as "the synagogue of Satan."

In verse 10 Jesus promises the crown of life to these of His people who would remain faithful unto death. Notice, He did not promise them that they would not have to endure these severe trials, but only that they would be greatly rewarded if they did! Jesus Himself suffered and the faithful follower of Jesus must be prepared to do the same. Read such Scriptures as Matthew 10:17,18,21-39; 24:9-13; 2 Timothy 3:12; 1 Peter 3:13;4:12ff.

The tribulation of "ten days" is believed to signify the relative brevity and yet, at the same time, hints at the severity of the persecution they were about to endure. The devil could be counted on to take advantage of the senseless pagan's heart, and the heart of the hardened Jew, in instigating outrages against God's people.

"Crown" comes from the Greek word used to describe the wreath of victory placed upon the head of these who triumphed in the games that were common in that day, even as our sports contests are common today. It signifies eternal life to the faithful believer. Notice, faithfulness "unto death." That includes "until death," but goes far beyond that. Christians are to be faithful even if it means dying for Christ and His cause!

In verse 11 the promise is to "him that overcometh." We must surmount the obstacles in our earthly pathway. Hendriksen observed, "Even though believers may be put to death, namely the first death, they are not going to be hurt by the second death, that is,

they will not be cast, body and soul, into the lake of fire at Christ's second coming." See chapter 20:14,15. The "second death" is eternal separation from God and all that is right and good.

### **Letter to the church at Pergamos – verses 12-17.**

Pergamos (or Pergamum as it is more frequently referred to in ancient writings and inscriptions) was the northernmost of the seven cities mentioned in Revelation 2 and 3. It was located about fifty-five miles northeast of Smyrna, situated on a rocky hill overlooking the Caicus valley. It was the center of the kingdom of Pergamum which was bequeathed to the Romans in its entirety in 133 B.C. It was designated to be the Roman administrative capitol of the province of Asia.

Pergamos was filled with the worship of pagan gods. Many idolatrous temples and altars were built there. It was in Pergamos that the god of healing, Aesculapius, was worshiped - the symbol of which was a serpent coiled around a wand. (This symbol is still used by the medical profession today.) The city became the center of healing of those ancient times, much the same as some cities today are known as great medical centers. A great altar to the god Zeus (or Jupiter) was located in front of a temple to Athena. This altar was built on a ledge of rock and looked like a great throne, whence the smoke of sacrifices ascended daily. Some scholars feel that this explains the expression "where Satan's seat is" of verse 13.

Along with all its other gods, Pergamos became the first city in Asia to begin worshipping the Roman emperor and here was a temple erected, dedicated "to the divine Augustus and the goddess Rome." Thus, by the time of Domitian, who reigned from 81-96 A.D., emperor worship was made a test of loyalty to Rome. Whoever would not bow down and worship the emperor was considered a traitor to Rome and this, of course, had terrible repercussions for the Christians of that day. If they would not offer incense to Caesar's image and be willing to say, "Caesar Lord," they were subjected to the most horrible cruelties and deaths imaginable. (I wonder what we would do in such a situation?)

In verse 12 we have Christ's self-designation. "He which hath the sharp sword with two edges." In my considered judgment, this symbolizes the power of the Lord's impending judgment upon the evils persecuting the church and upon false teachers within the church. Both will surely be subjects of condemnation!

In verse 13 we find the Lord expressing to the church in Pergamos His comprehensive knowledge of their works and of "where thou dwellest." The Lord knew they were living midst very adverse circumstances. Whether "Satan's seat" (throne) refers to the altar to Zeus, or to emperor worship, or to a combination of all the pagan idolatry that existed in Pergamos is uncertain, but obviously Jesus considered it to be the very heart and center of Satan's dwelling place. The pressure must have surely been great for Christians to

compromise and to tolerate compromise in other Christians. But to the credit of the church in Pergamos Jesus said to them, “Thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith,” and then cites the martyrdom of one particular noteworthy saint, Antipas. Jesus called him “my faithful martyr” (“my witness, my faithful one” - ASV). We have no information on exactly who Antipas was or the nature of his martyrdom. Much in speculation has emerged saying that perhaps he was a gospel preacher brought before the altar of incense to Caesar and given a choice of saying “Caesar is Lord,” or affirming faith in Christ “as Lord,” valiantly chose the latter and was put to death. Regardless of who Antipas was, very likely something like that must surely have happened. Notice that Christians held fast the “name” of Christ. This was their big test. To say, “Caesar is lord” would be to acknowledge something that wasn’t true. The Bible teaches plainly “there is one Lord!” (Eph 4:5). Almighty God had made Jesus that one “Lord!” (Acts 2:36). Paul affirmed there is “one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things . . .” (1 Cor 8:6). Concerning Him Paul wrote, “Wherefore God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father” (Phil 2:9-11). To “hold fast” to His name, however, in Pergamos, meant certain and fearful persecution. Jesus commended these for being loyal, regardless.

In verse 14 Jesus expressed what He had against them. They were allowing some among them to hold to false and immoral doctrines. You can hear the story of Balaam in Numbers, chapters 22-24. Balaam’s desire for material gain, which prompted him to go with the princes of Moab to Balak despite God’s plainly telling him not to do so, placed him in a situation whereby he evidently “taught Balak” to place a stumbling block in Israel’s path in the matter of idol worship and fornication (Num 25:1-5; 31:16).

In encouraging Christians to eat from “the table of pagan gods,” and evidently to participate in the licentious part of idol worship - fornication was commonly practiced as worship to various pagan gods - these followers of Balaam, and the Nicolaitans, were guilty of the worst sort of compromise. Christians are to be a holy people (1 Pet 1:15,16; 2:9-12; 4:1-4; Titus 2:11,12; Eph 5:3-11; 1 Cor 10:1-22; 2 Cor 6:14-7:1; etc.) and there is no way they could participate in the pagan rituals and still be loyal Christians. These undoubtedly had tried to “rationalize” their conduct in view of their situation. But we must stand up for what is right regardless of the consequences. “Right is right, and wrong is wrong, and it never is right to do wrong!” We certainly need to try to apply these principles to ourselves in the twenty-first century. While we are not tempted to actually eat things sacrificed to pagan gods, nor to indulge in fornication before a heathen altar, yet we are living today in perhaps one of the most blatantly immoral times there could be! It is so much easier “to go along with the crowd” than it is to be faithful to Christ and His teachings. From youth through adulthood, the pressure to conform is great! Yet the Bible is clear - Romans 12:1,2.

In verse 16 Christ delivers an ultimatum - "Repent, or else!" There is no doubt that the Lord will bring heavy judgment upon those of His own people who forsake the right way and compromise with evil. Read Hebrews 10:26-31 - "The Lord will judge his people!" The parable of the tares in Matthew 13:40-43 makes it clear that the Lord "shall gather out of his kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity" . . . the ones that "know the Lord's will" and yet don't do according to His will "shall be beaten with many stripes" (Lk 12:47). Paul was writing to Christians when he said, "For we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad." (2 Cor 5:10.)

NOTE: Brethren, there is a lesson for us here that we cannot afford to miss. Remember that the Lord said He had something against the church in Pergamos? What was it? The answer is this they were tolerating false doctrines and immoral practices without correcting the matters. The church in Pergamos should have disciplined those who were teaching wrong or doing wrong. But they didn't. And the Lord was not pleased.

Read carefully 1 Corinthians 5:1-13, and notice how Paul closed that chapter - "Put away the wicked man from among yourselves!" The apostle also commanded the church in Thessalonica to do the same: "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly" (2 Thess 3:6). Notice that Paul didn't say, "I suggest this as a viable alternative," or "It might be a pretty good idea," or "Will you brethren have a business meeting and discuss the pros and cons and decide for yourselves what to do," but "We command you . . . withdraw from every brother that walketh disorderly!"

Unfortunately, sadly, and tragically the church, as a whole in our day and time, has been equally neglectful of its duty in discipline as was the church in Pergamos. Let us remember that these letters to the "seven churches in Asia" are really to the church at any place and at any time - that includes the church here, and now!

In verse 17 the Lord admonishes them to "hear" (heed) what is said. We had better heed it too! The promise to them that "overcometh" is to eat of the "hidden manna," and to be given a white stone with a new name on it. The "hidden manna" undoubtedly refers to spiritual nourishment and strength which the Lord will supply to those who refuse to eat from "the tables of pagan gods." As Hendriksen observes, "The grace of Christ and all its glorious fruits will be their food, invisible, spiritual, and hidden, indeed, but nevertheless very real and very blessed. They receive the bread from heaven." As to the stone and the name on it, many possible explanations have been advanced. The use of a white stone with one's name on it varied: (1) Given to a man acquitted of a crime; (2) Given to a man freed from slavery and made a citizen; (3) Given to a winner in the games as a trophy or reward; (4) Given to warriors returning victoriously.

Two other views are these: (1) That it is symbolic of the stones on the breastplate of the high-priest (Ex 28:15-21). The whiteness of the stone symbolizes holiness, beauty, glory, and the stone itself durability and imperishability. The “new name” is the name the Lord will give the overcoming saint. (2) As in the Old Testament the high-priest had the words HOLINESS TO THE LORD upon their foreheads (Ex 28:36- 38), so shall the faithful ones have the Lord’s own name on their foreheads, the meaning of which no one else could know or appreciate - meaning “here is one that truly belongs to the Lord forever.”

### **Letter to the church at Thyatira – verses 18-29.**

Thyatira was a wealthy, but relatively small, town located about thirty miles southeast of Pergamos. The name “Thyatira” actually means “the castle of Thya.” Therefore, scholars have speculated sometime in antiquity a man by that name built a castle there. There is considerable evidence to indicate that Thyatira was a trade center, of sorts, dealing in such items as dyes, cloth-making, pottery, and brass-making. This gave rise to the famous “trade guilds” of Thyatira. The guilds were well organized and each had its own god. Each guild had its own pagan feasts accompanied by the immoral practices always associated with such functions. The guilds became very powerful and if a craftsman did not belong to guild, it was exceedingly difficult for him. (Somewhat like our system of unionization in some parts of the country today.) One whom all of us remember as being from Thyatira was Lydia, a “seller of purple,” who obviously had journeyed to Philippi to do business (Acts 16:12-15). Upon hearing the gospel preached by Paul, she believed it and obeyed it. The purple dye she sold is believed to have been what is called today “turkey red.” It is believed to have been made from a root called “madder root” instead of from shell fish. Undoubtedly Paul must surely have talked with Lydia about what all she would have to give up to be a Christian. There was no way she could continue in all the activities of the dyers’ guild and be faithful to Christ. Paul made such things plain in many of his teachings (Eph 4:17-24; 5:3-11; 1 Thess 4:1-8; Col 3:5-11). Peter also did in 1 Peter 4:1-5.

For our own good, we need to try to understand the circumstances in which people in such cases as Thyatira found themselves. What would we have done had we been living in Thyatira, eking out a living as a member of one of the trade guilds? A person just almost had to belong to one of the guilds just to survive and “get ahead.” He would be expected to attend the guild-festivals, to worship the guild god, to eat the food sacrificed to it, and then participate in the sexual orgies that always followed. Concerning this, Hendriksen observes, “In this difficult situation what must a Christian do? If he quits the union, he loses his position and his standing in society. He may have to suffer want, hunger, persecution. On the other hand, if he remains in the guild and attends the immoral feasts, eating things sacrificed to idols and committing fornications, he denies the Lord. In this difficult situation the prophetess Jezebel pretended to know the real solution of the problem, the way out of the difficulty. She apparently argued thus: in order to conquer Satan, you must know him. You will never be able to conquer sin unless you have become thoroughly acquainted with it

by experience. In brief, a Christian should learn to know 'the deep things of Satan.' Hence by all means attend the guild-feasts and commit fornication . . . and still remain a Christian; nay rather, become a better Christian! But if church members can persuade themselves that this course is right, they cannot deceive the One who has eyes 'like a flame of fire' and feet that are ready trample upon the wicked" (page 88).

While we, at this point in history and under much more favorable circumstances, shudder at the persuasions of the prophetess Jezebel, yet we can at least understand that what she was telling the Christians there was finding receptive ears - ears tuned in to the frequency of wanting to "rationalize."

In verse 18 Jesus said of Himself, "These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass." This is the only place in the book of Revelation where He refers to Himself as "the Son of God." His description of having "eyes like unto a flame of fire" indicates His ability to pierce the thin veneer of our outward hypocrisies, and plumb the innermost depths of our souls. "And His feet like unto burnished brass" is a warning of impending judgment when He shall surely trample under those who work iniquity.

In verse 19 the Lord informs them of His comprehensive knowledge and commends them for their love, service, faith, and steadfast works. The indication is that they were doing more the time when the Lord wrote them this letter than in time past. But in verse 20 He emphatically states what He has against the church in Thyatira. They are allowing a woman named Jezebel (some understand the name "Jezebel" to be used figuratively here, depicting some evil woman within the church there who by her life and actions characterized what the name "Jezebel" brings to our minds). We read of Jezebel, the wife of Ahab, in the book of 1 Kings chapters 16-21, and in 2 Kings 9. Her name is synonymous with idolatry, murder, immorality, and wickedness in general.

Others feel that there indeed was a woman there in Thyatira who was named Jezebel (cut out of the same mold as the one of centuries earlier) who taught, and evidently encouraged Christians to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication - i.e., attend and participate in the guild festivals, as commented on ready.

In verses 21-23 the Lord indicates that He had given her time to repent but she had failed to do so. Now it was time for the pronouncement of judgment upon her, and also upon those who were being deceived by her teachings, unless they should repent! "Her children" are understood by some to be her physical children born of her fornications, while others understand them to be those whom she had influenced spiritually to follow her teaching. I personally think it is the latter, though there could also be some of the former involved, such as the son of David and Bathsheba. Both the Old and New Testaments speak of "spiritual adultery" (Ex 34:15,16; Deut 31:16; Hos 9:1; Mt 12:39; Mk 8:38, etc.). Anytime we forsake truth and follow after that which is not true and is wrong, we are guilty

of betraying our “marriage vows” to Christ (Rom 7:4). Certainly, literal fornication is two-fold unfaithfulness to God. Judgement was going to be rendered in such a way that all the “churches shall know” that Christ means business, somewhat like Acts 5:11 indicates.

In verses 24,25 Jesus exhorts those who have not imbibed the teachings of Jezebel to continue to be faithful. The true Christian knows the “deep things of God” through the teachings of God’s word (1 Cor 2:10-12) and should not want to know the depths of Satan, which things are even shameful to speak of (Eph 5:11,12). The Lord did not want these faithful ones to be unduly disturbed or anxious over His pronouncement of judgment against Jezebel and her follows. His concern for them was singular - that they remain faithful!

In verses 26-29 we have the Lord’s promise of blessing to “he that overcometh” and His closing admonition “to hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.” Christ promises those faithful “unto the end” power (authority) over the nations. In the words of brother Pack: “The language of this passage agrees with Psalms 2:9, which was regarded as a Messianic Psalm. The word translated ‘rule’ has the meaning of ‘act as a shepherd,’ but it is used also in a destructive sense, meaning ‘to lay waste and devastate,’ and is undoubtedly used here with that meaning (see 12:5 and 19:15). Thus the idea is that he shall destroy as with a rod of iron and dash in pieces like vessels of the potter those who fail to follow the Lord. This is another way of saying that the Christian will share in the triumph of the Lord over his enemies, since they must be broken up completely and entirely like the vessels of a potter. In addition, the one who overcomes will receive the morning star, which Revelation 22:16 applies to Jesus. The victorious Christian shares in Christ’s glorious triumph and authority, and possesses Christ as an everlasting treasure. Whatever may be his inconveniences, difficulties and hardships in this life, he will share in all of the joy and “triumph of the victorious Christ” (page 41).

During the earthly sojourn, the “world” oppresses the Christian who is trying to live right and obey Christ. In the passing of time, and when comes the final judgment, the Christian’s faithful life will truly condemn the sinful. On that day, the evil will be broken into shivers, and the righteous will triumph in glory with the One who is indeed the bright and morning star!

## CHAPTER THREE

### Letter to the church at Sardis – verses 1-6.

Sardis was located some fifty to sixty miles east (and a little north) of Ephesus, and about forty miles southeast of Thyatira. “It was one of the oldest and most important cities of Asia minor, and until 549 B.C., the capital of the kingdom of Lydia. It stood on the northern slope of Mt. Tmolus; its acropolis (i.e., the upper fortified part, or citadel of a city; any height of a city or district fortified or strengthened as a place of refuge) occupied one of the spurs of the mountain. At the base flowed the river Pactolus which served as a moat, rendering the city practically impregnable” (ISBE, Vol. IV, page 2692). The ancient city was known for its fruit and wool, and for its temple of the goddess Cybele, whose worship resembled that of Diana of the Ephesians. It was in Sardis that gold and silver coins were first made. Sardis was taken by Alexander the Great in 334 B.C. and remained largely under Greek domination until the times of the Roman Empire. In 17 A.D. it was destroyed by an earthquake, but the Roman emperor Tiberius had the city rebuilt, though it never regained its former importance.

Sardis, the history of which spanned three major kingdoms - that of Persia, Greece, and Rome - was a city of degeneration at the time of the writing of Revelation. Its wealth was legendary. Its inhabitants are believed to have been quite proud and boastful, self-satisfied, and confident. They gloried in the past fame of their city, and felt secure in their material wealth. As a result, the “flesh” was emphasized and immorality was commonplace. It seems that the followers of Christ had also imbibed the attitude of the city in general. They were content to live on their reputation, but true fidelity and faithfulness were lacking.

In verse 1 Jesus introduces Himself. “These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars . . .” Brother Pack understands the “seven Spirits” of God to refer to the Holy Spirit, thus understanding Jesus to simply be saying that the Holy Spirit’s gifts and power were possessed by Him. Ray Summers, in his well-known work, “Worthy Is The Lamb,” page 119, evidently understands Jesus to be asserting His deity here, and suggesting that He Himself possessed complete power and wisdom. The “seven stars” refers to the messengers of these “seven churches of Asia,” and would most assuredly include the message they bore (see 1:20). Therefore, we suggest that Jesus is saying something like this, in His description of Himself: “I am the possessor of infinite and total wisdom and power and am the author of the message to my church; thus, you had better sit-up and take heed what I have to say . . .”

In the next part of the verse Jesus informs the church in Sardis, “I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.” Like the city itself, the church also was living on its past glory . . . its “reputation.” They evidently had once been a very dedicated and zealous church which had made quite a name for itself, but meanwhile had become

half-hearted and indifferent, and nearly dead, spiritually. While they still had a good reputation (because of past achievements) they no longer deserved it! The churches at Ephesus, at Smyrna, at Pergamos and at Thyatira seemed to have been in the middle of a real fight with Satan and his efforts to disrupt the Lord's cause, etc. But at Sardis the church was "not even interested enough to be troubled about false teaching, nor to be engaged in the struggle" (Pack, Vol. 1, page 43). Wherever the church stands for truth and against sin, there will indeed be opposition to it! But this particular congregation was obviously so "blah" that the folks in Sardis had no reason to be concerned with it. The brethren at Sardis had evidently become so identified with the world that they had assuredly defiled their garments and had provoked neither Jew nor Gentile. They were at peace with the community but as Hendriksen points out, its peace was "the peace of the cemetery! Christ tells these dead church members that they must wake up and must remain awake and must make firm the rest of the things that are on the verge of death" (More Than Conquerors, page 91).

Brethren, let's take this to heart! If Jesus were writing a letter to us today, do you think maybe it could be almost verbatim to this one? We have good reputations far and wide as being excited, sacrificing, involved congregations of the Lord. Are such reputations fully deserved?

In verses 2 and 3 the Lord urges them to remember, and repent, and come alive once again! The fire was in desperate need of being stoked! The flame that once burned bright was growing dimmer by the moment and was just about to go out. It needed immediate attention!

It seems that the church in Sardis had perhaps started a number of times to work for the Lord, but were lacking in seeing the start through to the finish. How like that is the church today! We often "start out with a bang" but then "drop out like flies" through the long haul and when the going gets a little rough and weary. None of their works had been perfected (fulfilled or completed) before God. Yes, the long haul - that is what is important. Do we possess the quality of persistence and perseverance? We have too many members of the church who are like light bulbs - they're turned on for awhile, and then off - on and off, on and off. We need to detach our "off switches" and let our lights shine continuously!

Jesus warns them that He will come at a time when they are not expecting it - as a thief. The New Testament often uses this figure to depict the fact that we, as God's people, are to be vigilant, prepared, and ready for His coming - because we do not know when it will be! The wisest thing for us to do is to remember what the Lord has done for us, and remember, too, His word and the joy of being faithful to Him, and once again cleave to that which we know is right and true!

In verse 4 Jesus expresses awareness that there were some within the church who had indeed remained faithful - who had "not defiled their garments." Their faithfulness was even more noteworthy when you consider that most of the church in Sardis was not what it should have been. It is always easier to do that which is right when those around you are doing the same thing, but if you're in the midst of those who are indifferent to the cause of truth, and who are worldly-minded, etc., then it is more difficult, though still possible, to be faithful and true. This is the reason it is so important that the whole church be faithful and dedicated, so that through the preciousness of fellowship and mutual encouragement, help, and exhortation, we might all be saved without the loss of any. Brother Pack points out that while the condemnation of the church in Sardis as a whole was severe, yet there was a "small nucleus of faithful members to whom the Lord addresses a word of encouragement. This reminds us that even if we as individuals should be a part of a church that the Lord would describe as dead, if we are faithful and devoted to him, we can still stand in a relationship of life and be among those who overcome. We need not lose heart because we feel the church we attend is spiritually dying" (page 44).

Notice, the Lord said "a few names." (Remember, only few there be that find it - Matthew 7:13,14.) That is just as true today as it was then! How desperately brethren need to be informed that just because they happen to have their name on the church roll or in the church directory, that that does not insure their ultimate salvation! Probably the greatest tragedy in the twentieth century church is that we have so many "nominal" members. These must be warned they will be lost unless they repent!

Being conversant with such teachings as this and many more prompts me, as a preacher, to try my best to sound the warning and to reach out to my brethren who are obviously in the spiritual condition as most of the church was in at Sardis. Thus, you have noted, I have spoken as plainly and as pungently as I know how about the folly of being a "Sunday-morning only type Christian." I want to be able to say with Paul, "I testify unto you this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I shrank not from declaring unto you the whole counsel of God" - Acts 20:26,27.

Concerning the phrase, "... they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy," let me share with you some insights. Hendriksen points out that God knows the few who are His own - "They are as shining lights in the midst of the darkness of the world. These few who kept unspotted the garment of grace here would by and by wear the white garment of glory. White indicates holiness, purity, perfection" (page 91). Peter taught, "And the God of all grace, who called you unto his eternal glory in Christ, after that ye have suffered a little while, shall himself perfect, establish, strengthen you" (1 Pet 5:10). So this is the Lord's way of saying these few would be saved eternally.

As to the expression "for they are worthy," we must not make the mistake of getting it in our minds that we are deserving of salvation, or that we have earned it. Only the Lord is truly worthy, as Revelation 4:11 and 5:9,12 indicate. The word "worthy" means "having

worth or excellence; possessing merit; deserving of honor, and such like.” Again, only the Lord is truly worthy in the full sense. In a secondary sense, faithful Christians can be described as being worthy, as these at Sardis were. Brother Pack comments, “There is a worthiness that comes through faithful living that attaches to the follower of Christ through close fellowship with him.” As we are made righteous through faith in Christ (Rom 3:22) and are purified in obedience to Him (1 Pet 1:22) so also are we worthy. As we “become the righteousness of God in him” (2 Cor 5:21) so also does God account us worthy in Him. Actually, there are several thoughts we need to ponder in this: (1) The Lord is totally worthy. He is truly deserving of all honor and glory; (2) Through the grace of God, we are counted worthy through Christ though there is no way we could be considered worthy apart from Him. Jesus said, “Apart from me ye can do nothing” (Jn 15:5); (3) There is, of course, that other sense also, that though we make many mistakes as frail human beings yet we, as Christians, do indeed try to conduct our lives in accordance with His will, and through our efforts and the Lord’s help and guidance our lives stand out as “lights in the world” (Mt 5:14,16; Phil 2:15; 1 Pet 2:9). But at very best, we are unprofitable servants as Jesus taught us in Luke 17:10.

Our lives are to be conducted “worthy of the gospel” (“as it becometh the gospel” KJV - Phil 1:27). Thus, “Be ye holy, even as he who called you is holy, in all manner of living” (1 Pet 1:15). That is, we are to really try to live holy lives . . . not that we will attain holiness in the absolute sense, as He is holy.

One last thought on this. Pertaining to the partaking of the Lord’s supper, the King James Version has caused some to think they must be “worthy” (deserving) in order to partake of the Lord’s supper. If so, then none of us could ever partake, because none of us are deserving of what Christ did for us! Paul is actually warning against partaking of the Lord’s supper in an “unworthy *manner*” (flippantly and without proper reverence and respect for the Lord and His sacrifice for us. Read 1 Corinthians 11:27 in the American Standard Version.

In verse 5 the promise of being “clothed in white raiment” is only to those who overcome. Their names will not be blotted out of the book of life, but obviously those who defile their spiritual garments will be blotted out! This passage not only teaches the possibility of apostasy but the fact of it among many who were once identified with Christ. The term “book of life” appears a number of time in the Scriptures, though not always identified with those precise words - sometimes it is just a reference to “God’s book” or to the fact that the names of Christ’s disciples “are written in heaven.” Note these Scriptures: Exodus 32:32,33; Psalm 69:28; Daniel 12:1b; Luke 10:20; Philippians 4:3; Revelation 3:5; 13:8; 17:8b; 20:12,15; 21:27. It was called the “book of remembrance” in Malachi 3:16. There may be other such references, but these are all I can think of at this time. A person’s name is inscribed in the “book of life” when he through faith and obedience comes into the realm of spiritual life which is only in Christ!

“God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in His Son; he that hath the Son hath the life, and he that hath not the Son hath not the life” (1 Jn 5:11,12). It is just that simple! Such a person’s name remains in the book of life unless he turns his back on the Lord and goes back into the world, or becomes cold and indifferent to the cause for which Christ died. Obviously, many in Sardis had done both, and the Lord strongly intimates that their names had been “blotted out” of the book of life. This last state is worse than the first - it had been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from it (2 Pet 2:20-22; Heb 10:26-31).

In verse 6 we have the admonition to “hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.” No doubt about it, we had better “listen” good!

### **Letter to the church at Philadelphia – verse 7-13.**

The city of Philadelphia was founded by King Attalus II sometime during his reign from 159 to 138 B.C. King Attalus was also called by the term “Philadelphus” which means “brother-lover” because of his well known affection for his brother, Ecumenus II, who preceded him as king. Thus the city Philadelphus built became known as Philadelphia, the “city of brotherly love.” It was located twenty-eight miles southeast of Sardis on the Cogamus river. The purpose Attalus had in building the city was to spread Greek culture eastward from Greece, among the Lydians. The soil and climate about the city made it just right for the growing of grapes and the city became well known as a center of wine production. Thus, it is no surprise to learn that the Greek “god of wine,” Dionysus, became the most honored god of numerous ones honored there. No mention is made of pagan persecutions.

Verse 9 certainly indicates opposition to the church by the Jews in the city, but nothing specific is said concerning what they actually did. We can only surmise. Along with a number of other cities and villages in the immediate region, Philadelphia was virtually destroyed by an earthquake in 17 A.D. but was rebuilt by the direction of Tiberius, the Emperor of Rome at the time.

In verse 7 Jesus describes Himself this way: “These things saith He that is holy, He that is true, He that hath the key of David, He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth.” The perfect characteristics possessed by deity are attributed to belonging to the Father and the Son. Here, Jesus affirms that He is “holy and true.” The Father is called “holy” in 1 Peter 1:15-17a and repeatedly throughout the Old Testament. All that pertains to God is holy and Jesus demonstrated by His perfectly lived life the ideal demanded by God of absolute separation from iniquity. Likewise, the Father is true; as Paul said, “Let God be found true” (Rom 3:4). Jesus came to reveal the Father (Jn 14: 7-11), and was the epitome of truth and holiness. The word rendered “true” means “dependable, genuine, real.” Jesus is that, and the apostle John often used that word to

describe certain characteristics of Jesus - for example: Jesus is "the true light," (Jn 1:9) "the true bread," (Jn 6:32) "the true vine," (Jn 15:1) etc.

Having "the key of David" identifies Him with the power and rule belonging to the One who would sit on David's throne. The word "key" implies authority. "The key of David" was a recognized Messianic expression. Through the prophet Isaiah God had said, "And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open" (Isa 22:22). Only the One upon David's throne can open and shut the door into the kingdom of heaven. Compare Isaiah 9:6,7 with Luke 1:31-33; Acts 2:29-36, Ephesians 1:20-23 and 1 Peter 3:22. They are all related Scriptures of great interest in this regard. Christ has all authority (Mt 28:18)!

In verse 8 the Lord Jesus expresses knowledge of their works, as He had in all the letters previous to this one. His knowledge of us - our activities, and even our thoughts - is marvelous, and past tracing out.

The word "door" is here used metaphorically (a metaphor is a figure of speech in which a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of an object or idea is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them, as in "a ship plows the sea") as in a number of other places in the New Testament: God opened "a door of faith" to the Gentiles (Acts 14:27) meaning that through the preaching of Paul, done by God's directive, Gentiles had believed the message: in 1 Corinthians 16:9 Paul speaks of "a great door and effectual" being opened for him at Ephesus, simply meaning that he had a great opportunity there to disseminate truth; likewise "a door" was opened at Troas, 2 Corinthians 2:12; and he solicited the prayers of the brethren in Colosse that "God may open unto us a door for the word" (Col 4:3). So here, Jesus had set before the church in Philadelphia an "open door" of opportunity to spread the gospel and He wasn't going to let anyone shut it. The Lord was aware that the church in Philadelphia had only "little strength" (or power), but evidently felt they were sufficient to the task He wanted them to accomplish. Was their little strength in fewness of numbers, or its economic status, or because of their low social standing, or what? We can't know - but the important thing is that the Lord was confident of their ability to do what He had in mind for them. We too may be less than powerful, but let us remember, our strength is in Him. (Note 2 Corinthians 12:10 and Philippians 4:13 and the principle of God's way evidenced in the lives of the heroes of faith - "from weakness were made strong" - Hebrew 11:34.)

These in Philadelphia had "kept" the word of the Lord - simply meaning that they had been true to His word through some sort of testing or trial. Neither had they denied the name of the Lord Jesus. As observed by brother Hailey on page 151, "As the word is to be in the heart and kept by obedience, so the name is to be revered and confessed always (Rom 10:9,10; Phil 2:9-11). To deny His name under pressure from external forces is to fall away; it is to crucify Christ afresh. The Philadelphian saints had stood fast."

In verse 9 reference is made to perhaps the greatest enemy the early church had - the Jews. While they fancied themselves as exclusively belonging to God they were, in fact, the very "assembly of Satan." The name "Jew," which had for many years been used to describe the descendants of Abraham, was also given a spiritual connotation by New Testament writers, referring to God's people under the New Covenant of Christ. Thus, Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome and said, "For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart" (Rom 2:28,29a). Under the law of Moses anyone born of the fleshly seed of Abraham was automatically of the nation of Israel and counted as among God's chosen people; and circumcision of the flesh was a token or sign of that covenant. Even in the day that Jesus wrote this letter to the church in Philadelphia through John, the Jews felt very strongly that they were the people of God because of who they were, and they had only contempt for any of their number who left to be aligned with the followers of Jesus. They literally hated Christians. But the Lord points out in this letter that they were the ones believing and teaching a lie. He also promises that someday He would cause them to recognize this fact, and acknowledge the church as "the true Israel of God." (Read Gal 3:28,29 and 6:16.) Some understand these words of Jesus here to imply the eventual conversion of the Jews. It is true that there were Jews (according to the flesh) that were converted and many of them were faithful and dedicated (such as the apostles), but it is also true that even among the Jews converted there were those who still had many misconceptions and insisted on binding upon Gentile converts certain facets of the law of Moses and especially circumcision. (See Gal 4:21 through 5:12.) These were called Judaizing teachers and were a major problem to the early church. I personally do not think Jesus had in mind that the Jews (as a total body of people) would be converted, but that they would come to know someday, probably at the judgment, that Jesus Christ and His way - the church - was (is) indeed the true Way! (See Phil 2:9-11 and Rom 14:11,12.) Whereas the Jews (in the flesh) hated the church at the times Jesus wrote this letter, He promises that it would come to pass that they (the Jews) would know that the Lord loved the church.

In verse 10 Jesus gives a promise to the church that is comforting indeed. The promise was as a result of their fidelity to Christ and His word - "Because thou didst keep the word of my patience." Brother Hailey thinks that "the word of my patience" refers more to the example of Christ's own steadfastness than it does to His word's exhortations to steadfastness. In other words he thinks Jesus is saying, "Because you have emulated my example of steadfastness." Paul had admonished the Thessalonians, and conveyed to them assurance in saying, "And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patience (steadfastness) of Christ" (2 Thess 3:5). Paul was encouraging them to follow the example of Jesus and this coincides with what Peter said of the Lord, "For hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow in his steps" (1 Pet 2:21). Perhaps what the Lord said would include both. The church in Philadelphia had taken the exhortations of the Lord's word to heart and had followed His example of steadfastness. It was because of this that He makes the promise

to “keep thee from the hour of trial.” The word “hour” may signify “a period of time,” and not necessarily a literal hour. Obviously a severe trial was to come upon the earth and Jesus promises to keep them from it. The noted scholar, Alford, observed, concerning the promise “to keep thee from,” that the preposition used does not clearly define “how” - whether by immunity from, or by being brought safely through.” This “trial” of whatever nature was to “come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.” The word rendered “earth” is found 81 different times in the book of Revelation and is used in different ways, frequently in a metonymic ( “metonymy” is a figure of speech consisting of the use of the name of one thing for that of another) way to denote the realm of unbelieving, or unregenerate people. This is evident in various places where the redeemed are distinguished from “them that dwell upon the earth” (see Rev 11:10; 13:8,12,14; 17:8). Brother Hailey observes, “The church will have its trials which test faith, but it will be kept from trials which would affect the earthlings, the world of the unregenerated. Those of the world, those in conflict with Christ and His church, will be, in this instance, the ones tried” (page 153). Brother Pack observed, “Just what this hour of test actually was we cannot say.” Some refer it to persecutions among warring nations, others to natural calamities, and still others to the day of judgment. Perhaps it refers to some of the former, but more specifically the latter. We just can’t know for certain.

In verse 11 Jesus warns the saints (those in Philadelphia - and us, too!) that He will “come quickly” and admonishes them (and us!) to “hold fast” and not allow any man to take away “thy crown.” In other words Christians are exhorted to be faithful to the Lord and His word, the assurance of which is “the crown of life.” If we should allow anyone to seduce us or to cause us to become unfaithful, then we have let them take away from us that which is eternally precious! Thus, as I have often taught our young people, “Give up anything or anybody for Christ, but don’t give up Christ for anything or anybody.” We do not know when Christ is coming. We need to be ready!

In verse 12 the Lord gives a promise to them that overcome: that they will be made pillars “in the temple of my God.” A pillar is something fixed and permanent. It means the eternally saved will be a part of the eternal abiding place of God. No wonder David had this as his one desire: “One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple” (Psa 27:4). Hendriksen remarks on this precious promise: “No earthquake will ever fill them with fear or drive them out of the heavenly city. They will abide there!” (Page 93.)

As to the names of God, of Christ, and the new Jerusalem being written upon the redeemed Hendriksen observes, “The conqueror will be given the assurance that he belongs to God and to the new Jerusalem and to Christ, and that he will everlastingly share in all the blessings and privileges of all three.” The name of God being upon the redeemed would clearly “mark” or “brand” them, as it were, as belonging permanently to God. The name of the “new Jerusalem” identifies the victorious saint as a citizen of the heavenly city.

With this name written upon him, the saved person has the right to enter by the gates into the city (Rev 22:14). Christ's name upon the redeemed would mark them as having been His faithful followers, "called, chosen, and faithful" (Rev 17:14). But what does the Lord mean in referring to "my new name?" As to what that "new name" is, no one knows - only He knows. (Rev 19:11,12. Also go back and review comments on 2:17.)

Brother Hailey comments: "This name summarizes all that He is, even beyond that which is known or comprehensible to us while in the flesh" (page 155). He then suggests that we consider the glory that shall be the faithful's to enjoy in being so enmeshed with Christ as "to be like him, at his coming" (read 1 Jn 3:2, Col 3:4 and Phil 3:20,21). Whatever His "new name" is, I believe we will be able to comprehend it then and to understand and appreciate its full significance. We know so little now in comparison to what there is to know; and we understand so little. It is my conviction that to those who are eternally saved, God will share with them a grasp of it all that will enthrall our souls forever! The very thought of it makes me shudder to think of not being there to be a part of it! Brethren, we just must remain faithful and true, though feeling so limited and inadequate now, that the fulness of heavenly joy and understanding might be ours someday!

The Lord closes the letter in verse 13 with the same exhortation used in each of the seven: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

#### **Letter to the church at Laodicea – verses 14-22.**

Antiochus II, king of Syria, founded the city of Laodicea sometime during his reign, (261-246 B.C.), naming it after his wife, Laodice. It was located somewhat over forty miles southeast of the city of Philadelphia, about ninety miles east of Ephesus, about ten miles or so west of Colosse, and about six miles south of Hierapolis. It was probably because of its close proximity to Hierapolis that caused Paul to mention the two together in the book of Colossians chapter 4, verse 13. Colosse, Hierapolis, and Laodicea were all situated in the Lycus river valley. Originally built as a military garrison, Laodicea in time became a center of Hellenic (Greek) culture and had attained a place of much importance and wealth when the whole region of Asia became a Roman province in about 190 B.C. The chief religious worship of Laodicea to that time had been that of the Greek god Zeus, whom the Romans identified with their god, Jupiter. The Romans built many roads throughout the area, and three main routes came through Laodicea which greatly enhanced it as a commercial trading center, making it a city of great prominence. Around 60 A.D. it was severely damaged by an earthquake but refused aid from Rome, choosing to rebuild on its own. By this time Laodicea was one of the wealthiest cities in the world. Two things contributed greatly to its fame and wealth - (1) a special breed of sheep that produced a soft, glossy, black wool used to make highly prized clothing, flourished in the immediate surrounding countryside, and this wool sold at premium prices; (2) a famous school of medicine, located only a few miles from Laodicea, developed an eye medicine known as Phrygian powder which became widely used, bringing fame and additional revenues to

Laodicea. These two factors, along with the city's strategic location and favored status, made it a center of immense wealth; a city of banking and high finance.

The city and its citizens were rich, and they knew it. Thus, the "spirit" of the city was victimized by its own success, becoming somewhat arrogantly independent, conceited, and puffed up with self importance and pride. Its wealth and fame attracted the affluent from other areas and made it an appealing retirement site for the elderly rich. Also its trade and money attracted many Jews who came there with great expectations of claiming "a piece of the action." To summarize, the population of Laodicea (by the time the Lord wrote the church there this letter) was comprised of people who were largely enamored with material wealth, who were generally arrogant and haughty, fancying themselves as totally self-sufficient, and in need of nothing. Unfortunately this disgusting spirit of the city was reflected in the attitude of those who were members of the church. (While we know nothing definite as to the origin of the church in Laodicea, it is assumed that it began during the time the apostle Paul was in Ephesus, teaching in the school of Tyrannus for the period of some two years, during which time Luke records "that all they that dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 19:8-10). It is believed that perhaps Epaphras was the actual preacher of the gospel who took the message to Laodicea, since he was from nearby Colosse (Col 1:7, 4:12,13). Certainly verse 13 would indicate he had indeed labored there. It appears from Colossians 4:16 that Paul had once written a letter to the church at Laodicea, presumed to have been lost, unless the reference is to the Ephesian epistle, as some believe. Paul could have well written a letter to the Laodiceans that, in time, was lost even as he had apparently written another letter (which we do not have) to the Corinthians (1 Cor 5:9,11).

God, in His providence, has seen to it that we have what He wanted us to have. We can be confident in this belief. It was this "haughty attitude" and spiritual indifference which prompted the Lord to write this pungent, indicting, humbling letter. May God grant us discerning eyes to see ourselves in this, if need be.

In verse 14 Jesus identifies Himself as the "Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God." The word "amen" is a transliteration from a Hebrew word, the root meaning of which means to "confirm" or "support"; generally associated with the truth and the faithfulness of God. (A transliterated word differs from a translated word. A translated word is a word taken from one language and given a corresponding word in another language which conveys the same or most similar meaning in the language thus translated. A transliterated word is one that has simply been given a spelling from the alphabet of the language into which it is being introduced.) It is used frequently in both the Old and New Testaments. Sometimes the word was indeed translated, especially when Jesus used it in His teachings. We often read it in our English versions as "verily" or "of a truth." Vine's very reliable word study book makes this observation on the word "amen" on page 53: "Amen said by God equals 'it is and shall be so,' and by men, 'so let it be.' Once in the N. T. 'Amen' is a title of Christ, Rev. 3:14, because through Him the purposes of God

are established.” Brother Hailey, pages 156,157, points out that “amen” conveys “certainty.” “In writing of the promise of God, Paul says that in Christ is the ‘amen,’ the certainty of these promises (2 Cor 1:20). The word is used as a proper noun only here (Rev 3:14),and as His name it guarantees all that He says. In the synoptic gospels Jesus often used the word translated ‘verily’ to introduce His teaching, finding in it the proper guarantee of His own authority and the absolute faithfulness of His message. In the gospel of John the word is doubled, ‘verily, verily,’ probably for emphasis. This name, ‘Amen,’ gave fixity to Christ’s purpose and character; this the Laodiceans lacked.”

See the comments under 1:5 and 3:6 for the expression “the faithful and true witness.” It simply means that His testimony is absolutely reliable and trustworthy. As brother Hailey points out - “As the supreme and rightful critic of the church and the absolutely trustworthy one, His criticisms and warnings should be heeded.”

Commenting on the last identifying expression of Jesus in verse 14 Ray Summers, in “Worthy Is The Lamb,” said, “He is the beginning of the creation of God - not that he was the first thing which God created but that he is the original agent in God’s creative work” (page 124). Brother Frank Pack, in his commentary, part one, page 47 comments, “The New English Bible renders the expression ‘the beginning of the creation of God’ more accurately as ‘the prime source of all God’s creation.’ Christ is the creator, not a part of the creation.” On this profound matter, the student is urged to consider Genesis 1:26, John 1:1-3, Hebrews 1:10, and especially Colossians 1:15-18.

In verses 15,16 Jesus informs the Laodicean Christians of His knowledge of their works and of their sick spiritual condition. While they were not 100% ice cold, (they at least professed to be identified with Christ), yet neither were they “on fire” for Him, content rather to be “lukewarm” (which means indifferent, half-hearted, listless, non-energetic, “bored- with-it-all” attitude, unexcited, etc.).

Hendriksen, pages 94,95, makes the following observations: “The author of this book has become personally acquainted with this attitude on the part of some church members. You cannot do anything with such people. With the heathen, that is, with those who have never come into contact with the gospel and who are therefore ‘cold’ with respect to it, you can do something. With sincere, humble Christians you can work with joy. But with these ‘we’re all such very good folks here in Laodicea’ people you can do nothing. Even Christ himself cannot stand them. An emotion, a feeling is here ascribed to the Lord which is not predicted of him anywhere else in the Good Book. We do not read that he is grieved with them. Neither do we read that he is angry with them. No, he is disgusted with these straddlers. And not just slightly disgusted either. No, thoroughly disgusted.”

Brother Hailey points out that Jesus used the expression “lukewarm” metaphorically to depict a condition that produces nausea. Thus, the idea, to expel by spitting or vomiting

because of nausea. In other words, their spiritual indifference and their attitude of self-sufficiency mentioned in the succeeding verse was making our Lord ill, and the Laodiceans in their present status (at the time of His writing) could not long be tolerated. Something had to be done! Either they had to repent, and Christ tenderly admonishes them to do in verse 16, or they would indeed be “vomited out.”

In verse 17 Jesus reveals to them the cause for their lukewarmness. They fancied themselves as rich and felt secure in their material affluence and felt no “need of nothing.” Jesus lets them know in no uncertain words their true spiritual condition: “knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” Notice that the Lord hits hard at the very things in which they had so much pride and in which evidently they had placed their trust: (1) their fine clothing made from the premium wool of their famed sheep; (2) the eye medicine developed by their famed medical school; and (3) their general wealth of money and material things. Christ told them they were in reality (1) naked, (2) blind and (3) poor and wretched.

These so-called Christians in Laodicea had really missed the heart of true Christianity. They felt self-righteous in their pretense and hypocrisy, and secure in their trust of things. How careful we should be not to make the same mistake. In this connection, each of us might be greatly profited to read the following Scriptures: Luke 18:9-14, all of Matthew 23, Luke 2:15-21, 1 Timothy 6:7-11,17, etc.

Actually, the words of Jesus in verse 17 could very well describe many congregations today. We, too, live in an affluent environment. We, too, are generally well-clothed, well-fed, and relatively rich compared to the vast majority in the world. We live in comfortable houses with all sorts of modern conveniences, drive to a nice church building in fine cars, adorned in the latest fashions, and sit down with full stomachs to listen in cool comfort to a (generally) college educated preacher expound the Scriptures to us and, I’m afraid, with an all too often “entertain me” spectator type attitude. Perhaps this is why we have so many lukewarm, half-hearted, nominal members of the church today. We’ve never had to really sacrifice - we’ve never really suffered - we are, in the present day, looked upon with respect in the community and we don’t bother anyone and no one bothers us. It is so easy in such a situation to fall into the same “snare of the devil” that the Laodiceans fell into in the long ago.

Notice in verse 18 the tender entreaty of the Lord - “I counsel thee to buy of me.” The Lord is the possessor of the true riches, and all we need to make us whole. He counseled them to buy of Him, which incisively points out they did not have these things they thought they had; they must obtain them from the Lord if they were to possess them in fact! (1) “Gold tried in the fire.” While the Laodiceans had material wealth, they were spiritually poverty stricken! While the church in Smyrna was the “poor-rich” congregation, the church in Laodicea was the “rich-poor” one! The true riches - the true gold - comes only from the Lord! The true riches are spiritual – “faith proved by fire, tested in the crucible

of trials and found genuine” as mentioned in 1 Peter 1:7. Only in Christ are the true treasures of “wisdom and knowledge” (Col 2.3). In the words of brother Hailey, “to obtain these one must dispose of that on which he has set false value in this life; his own self-sufficiency, and buy these true riches of Him.” (See Mt 13:44-46, Phil 3:7-10, etc.) (2) “white raiment.” While they might have been decked out in the latest fashions and expensive garments of their day, they were spiritually naked before God.

As Summers observed, “Their robes of haughty self-sufficiency did not cover them up before God as well as they did before men. What they called clothing left them naked before God” (page 126). Only spiritual garments, cleaned and made white by the blood of the Lamb (see 7:14) causes one to be adequately clothed before God. (3) “Eye salve to anoint thine eyes.” Hailey remarks, “Blind to their own faults and to their materialistic and worldly interests, these church members needed divine enlightenment that they might see their pitiable condition” (page 161). Remember, brethren, that “the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Cor 4:18). Many people who can see with their physical eyes, for some reason or another refuse “to see” and understand spiritually. The Pharisees were like that (Mt 13:10-16) and in a somewhat different, but similar way, the church in Laodicea was in the same condition.

In verse 19 Jesus tenderly informs them that He would not be rebuking them so stingingly if it weren’t for the fact He loved them, and wanted them to repent.

In verse 20 Christ depicts Himself as one standing at the door of our hearts, seeking entrance. But He will not force His way in. We must be willing to “open the door” and invite the heavenly Guest within. What a truly beautiful picture!

Verses 21,22, as in all six letters, the promise of reward is to the “overcomers!” As Christ shares in the throne of His Father (seated at His right hand: Heb 1:3; 12:2; 1 Pet 3:22, etc.), in like manner the faithful are promised to share in such glory and honor. Even now such joy is begun (Eph 2:6) and shall be more fully realized in eternity! Also refer to such Scriptures as 2 Timothy 2:11,12; Revelation 5:9,10 and 22:5.



## CHAPTER FOUR

As a brief reminder of what we have studied thus far that continuity might be maintained, brother Homer Hailey writes, “In chapter one the scope of Christ’s ministry and His present glory were revealed. As King and Priest He holds the destiny of the churches in His hand as He walks among the congregations. The conflict involving tribulation, which John shared with the saints, was also introduced. Following this introduction of Jesus, John stood with Him among the churches beholding their conditions, problems, and possibilities of victory through their Lord (chapters 2 and 3). John heard and wrote the Savior’s words of commendation, condemnation, warning, and promise of reward to those who would overcome. Though variously expressed, the reward is victory over the enemy now and eternal life hereafter. In the letters, the conflict of the church with the forces of evil within and without and the grounds of ultimate victory of the faithful were clearly set forth” (page 164).

Remember, Jesus Christ is the central figure of Chapter 1, and He continues to be the dominant personality throughout the book of Revelation. His greatness as our Redeemer - His deity, His glory - this is all clearly established in what John sees and writes. Keep in mind this entire Revelation is from the Lord to John, for him to communicate to the church. Jesus Christ is in the midst of His church. He knows, He sees, He understands and He has a message for us!

In chapters 2 and 3 the Lord writes to the seven churches of Asia which are representative of the church wherever it meets throughout the whole world at any time in history. There was a definite application to those actual congregations the Lord wrote through John in 96 A.D. and there’s an application for us also. But keeping in mind the historical background of the book of Revelation, we need to recall that Christians in 96 A.D. had already felt the sting of persecution, and it was going to get much worse. What follows, then, in the book beginning with chapter 4, had a tremendous significance to those early saints in the plight they were then experiencing and would continue to experience for a long time. But remember, brethren, persecution was not something limited to the first three or four centuries A.D.; it is something that has flared up again and again at various times and in various places, as history records. While we have never yet experienced a full-fledged persecution, none of us know what turn of events in this present volatile world might trigger one, and we, too, may someday know how the early disciples of Lord must have felt under the heavy hand of oppression and deprivation.

Let us note some reflective introductory thoughts to chapter four. In his comments of introduction to chapter four Summers writes: “Here begins the main part of the Apocalypse. Up to this point the materials presented have been preparatory. John is about to witness the ‘Drama of Redemption.’ The way is prepared by the vision of the living, victorious Christ in chapter 1. The audience for whose benefit the drama is produced is presented with its vices and virtues in chapters 2-3. Now it is time to draw the curtain and

reveal the stage set for the drama. From here forward, in rapid sequence, will be presented scenes to assure the persecuted Christians that the cause of Christ is not a lost cause. Hard and bitter is to be the struggle, but when the final curtain falls at the end of the play (22:21), complete assurance of victory is demonstrated" (page 129).

Brother Pack writes, "It is clear that with the beginning of this chapter one passes into another part of Revelation. As chapters 2 and 3 with their short letters are related to the opening vision and concern themselves with the church and its struggles on earth, chapter four pictures to us God upon his throne, with the spiritual beings surrounding him, and the adoration of the heavenly hosts given in worship to God on his throne. The exalted expressions of worship, with their beautiful poetical reminders of Old Testament adorations, lift one above the struggles, discouragements, and strife of the church in the world. To see God as sovereign upon his throne ruling in his universe must have been of tremendous encouragement to the scattered, struggling Christians at the close of the first century." (Part 1, page 49.)

Charles H. Roberson, page 28, wrote, "The fourth chapter conveys to the church the assurance that He who is the ultimate source of all existence is on her side; and the fifth chapter that she may depend on Christ and His redeeming work. These two chapters are a cry to the church from her glorified Lord, before she enters into the tribulation that awaits her."

In "More Than Conquerors" W. Hendriksen comments, "Chapters 4 and 5 teach us that our affairs rest in the hands not of men but of God! Hence, when the world is enkindling the flames of hatred and slaughter and when the earth is drenched with blood, may our tear-dimmed eye catch a vision of The Throne which rules the universe. In the midst of trial and tribulation may our gaze be riveted upon the One who is King of kings and Lord of lords. The purpose of this vision is to show us, in beautiful symbolism, that all things are governed by the Throne-Occupant. Chapters 4 and 5 teach one main lesson. Unless we really grasp this point, we shall never see the glorious unity of the Apocalypse. We shall lose ourselves in allegorization. That one main lesson may be expressed in the words of the Psalmist: 'Jehovah reigns; let the peoples tremble! He sits above the cherubim; let the earth be moved.' (Psa 99:1) The assurance of this truth should impart comfort to believers in the midst of fiery trials. Hence, this vision of the universe governed by the Throne precedes the symbolic description of the trials through which the church must pass, chapter 6" (pages 100-103).

In summary of the thoughts of the writers quoted above and others we could cite, as well as from our own insight, may we impress upon the student's mind that the main thing to gain from chapter four is the Sovereignty of Almighty God - His greatness, His majesty, His glory. He is in control of the whole universe. The Christian needs to know that, and believe it without reservation; knowing that the Eternal God that rules over all is his loving Heavenly father, and that the father is going to take care of His own. Knowing everything is

going to work out all right in the ultimate analysis should be a source of great comfort and consolation when we experience the trials, difficulties, disappointments, and heartaches of earthly life.

#### **Verse by verse comments on Chapter four.**

Verse 1 - "After this. . ." Remember, John is receiving a series of visions; following one comes another. So, following what he had seen and received in chapters 1-3, he is now about to receive another. He saw an open door into the heavenly realm and heard a voice as of a trumpet (see chapter 1:10ff where the voice is clearly that of the Lord Jesus; thus, we are safe in assuming that it is Christ who once again speaks to John here) saying, "Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter."

Surely those first century, persecuted Christians were anxious to know what the future held for them. Was there to be relief from their horrid trials? Would they be avenged of all their sufferings brought upon them by heathen enemies? What would come of them? The conflict between right and wrong, between truth and error, between good and evil, which for all the centuries since creation has been fought among men, was about to enter into new and severe dimensions, and there were some things these embattled Christians needed to know to see them through it. "However, before describing the conflict which was already beginning and which would grow in intensity, God draws aside the curtain of heaven and gives to John, and through him to His persecuted saints, a vision of the throne and majestic court of the Ruler of the universe. Let the reader of Revelation always bear in mind that what John sees is a vision in which symbols are pictures of ideas. In the rest of the New Testament truth is imparted to the mind, but in Revelation it is communicated to the eye. Truth that had been preached and written by apostles, prophets, and evangelists is now emphasized in pictorial action. An evening spent watching the movie, 'The Longest Day,' will leave the viewer shaken by the horrors of war as could no amount of newspaper and magazine copy. Books and maps of Bible cities may be read and studied for years, but seeing the sites and ruins of ancient Philippi, Ephesus, Pergamum, Patmos and others makes vivid the grandeur and power of ancient Rome as no words can possibly do. As one reads Revelation let him imagine himself seated in a great theater on Patmos watching a pageant of truth and error in deadly conflict, with God directing and Christ leading the forces of truth and right while the devil champions the cause of falsehood and sin. As scene follows scene, the reader must NOT become bogged down in efforts to interpret and apply stage settings and incidentals to the point of missing the overall theme and lesson of the book. He must watch, listen, and strive to learn what God, the author of the script, is revealing in His spectacular drama of the ages. To the literalistic mind lacking the power of imagination, Revelation will forever be a sealed book; to the speculative and visionary mind the book will provide fuel to inflame far-fetched assumptions and conjectures which totally miss the truth. But to the mind prepared by the rest of the Bible for reality in picture and action, impressions of truth will be made that give strength for victory in every conflict of life." (Hailey.)

Verse 2 - The expression, "I was in the Spirit" is identical with its use in 1:10. The capitalizing of the word "spirit" is arbitrary with the translators - some evidently believing the reference is to the Holy Spirit and thus capitalizing it, and others seemingly believing the reference is to the human spirit and not capitalizing it. There is no question that John was going to receive a "spiritual" vision and it may mean nothing more than that he was in the proper frame of mind (his spirit prepared to receive it by his dedication and commitment . . . being "spiritually minded" (see 1 Cor 2:14), or it could well mean that through the agency of the Holy Spirit he was transported spiritually into the heavenly realm to behold the vision. This is really an inconsequential point and one that can never be settled to everyone's satisfaction.

What John saw is very important - a throne set in heaven, and one sitting on the throne. Summers makes this very fine observation, "From John's point of view on Patmos there is a dark picture meeting the eye. But when he is able to see things from God's point of view, the coloring is changed radically. From that point of view he can see the eternal throne of God, which does not shake before the threats of Domitian and men of such character. From the heavenly angle there is no doubt about the outcome of the struggle in which the Christians are engaged. Immediately the spiritual experience was intensified, and John saw the first guarantee of victory - God on his throne. The Christians needed assurance; here it is; God has not abdicated in favor of Domitian or any other. In the very center of the vision is the sovereign God on his throne" (page 130).

Verse 3 - What John sees is the effulgence (radiant splendor, brilliance, brightness) of God's glory. Notice, there is no mention of any physical form for God is a spirit and a spirit has no physical form. To my knowledge, nowhere in Sacred Writ is God described as having physical form. It is true that through a figure of speech known as "anthropomorphism" that various facets of human anatomy and characteristics are ascribed to God to accommodate our limited understanding. Thus, we sometimes read in the Scriptures of the "hand of God," the "eyes of God," etc. But surely we all understand such language not to be literal, but accommodative.

A lot of commentators quibble over what kind of stones are the "jasper" and "sardine" stones of the KJV, and variations in other translations; some think the jasper stone denotes what we call a diamond, and that the sardius is what is better known to us as the carnelian. I don't think anyone knows for certain. But all seem to agree that what John saw was "brilliantly flashing gem-like stones of resplendent glory." (Hailey.)

Lenski, page 171, commented, "Let us think of the flashing, white light of the diamond and of the brilliant, burning (blood-red) of the glowing carnelian, of majesty joined to judgment." Hailey seems to concur with Lenski's observation, "The jasper stone is probably descriptive of God's holiness and righteousness, and the sardius is a symbol of His justice in the divine judgments. This conclusion is justified by the psalmists who said, 'Righteousness and justice are the foundations of his throne.'" (Psa 89:14,15.)

As for the rainbow “round about the throne, in sight, like unto an emerald, “ ”The rainbow was a sign in the Old Testament of the covenant that God had made with his people not to destroy them by water (see Gen 9:11-16). Some see this as a token of God as a covenant-making God, while others see it only as a symbol of his splendor” (Pack, page 51). Most commentators understand the emerald green rainbow to be symbolic of God’s grace and mercy, thus further symbolic of hope. You recall from the account concerning Noah that the flood waters were the outpouring of God’s righteous judgment on the exceedingly sinful people of that day, but the rainbow which God set in the clouds was a token of His covenant with Noah; a symbol of God’s faithfulness, and a “bow of hope and assurance” for Noah.

Hailey summarizes, “If these suggestions are correct, these verses describe the holiness and righteousness of God’s character, ‘dwelling in light unapproachable’ ( 1 Tim 6:16), and the justice of His divine judgments encompassed and tempered by His infinite mercy.”

Verse 4 - Around the throne John sees twenty-four seats (or thrones) occupied by twenty-four elders arrayed in white garments with crowns of gold upon their heads. First of all, we observe that white is the “heavenly color,” representing holiness and purity (refer back to 3:4,5). The golden crowns surely must signify “victory crowns” (remember 2:10 - “the crown of life” and 2 Tim 4:8 - “the crown of righteousness”). Brother Pack observes, “Two Greek words are used in Revelation for ‘crown.’ The one used here refers to the wreath of victory which the winners in the athletic contests received to mark their triumph. The crowns here signify a victorious consummation for the 24 elders.”

Not for one moment should we lose sight of the center of the vision - the Almighty One on His throne! So superior is He that the twenty-four elders cast their crowns before His throne (4:10) and worship Him who sits upon the throne (4:11; 5:11,12,14: 11:16; 19:4). Hendriksen states, “We must not lose sight of the fact, that the real reason why these twenty-four thrones with their occupants are mentioned here is to enhance the glory of the Throne that stands in the center. That Throne represents God’s sovereignty. The twenty-four elders are constantly rendering homage to the Being upon the Throne” (page 105).

The question arises, who are these twenty-four elders? Various explanations are advanced by commentators as to their identity but without going into all the ideas concerning it, let me share with you what seems to be the most logical, plausible, and reasonable view. In the Old Testament the twelve sons of Jacob (whose name was changed to Israel) became the fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel and, representatively, of “God’s people” of times past. In like manner, the twelve apostles are representative of “God’s people” in the Christian dispensation. The number twenty-four is the addition of twelve and twelve. Brother Pack, commenting on this understanding of the passage, says, “The idea here would be that the elders represent God’s people under covenant, whether the Old or New

Covenant people. A variation of this view looks upon the elders as heavenly representatives of all the faithful, particularly as a royal priesthood offering worship and service to God” (see 1:6).

The last view seems more likely to this writer. Johnny Ramsey in his book, “Bible Treasures,” page 209, observes concerning the twenty-four elders, “They represent the redeemed of all ages in a general way . . . I believe because of several things later to be presented in the book, that these 24 elders represent the saved of the Old Covenant and those of the New. The 24 standing for the 12 tribes of Israel and the 12 apostles.” (For further study compare Mt 19:28 and Lk 22:30.)

Verse 5 - The lightnings, thunderings, and voices, are graphic imageries of power! All you have to do is observe an intense thunder and lightning storm and you will get the idea quickly! (See Ex 19:16 for a comparable expression relating to God’s presence and speaking - the people trembled.) Summers sees in this a symbol of God’s punitive wrath that shall come upon those who are the enemies of righteousness. He observes, “These terror-striking signs of his presence and power are given to show the latent powers of his omnipotence as they threaten vengeance to those who are the enemies of the ones symbolized in the four and twenty elders. God has not left his people to the mercy of their foes” (page 132). Hailey comments, “These mighty phenomena symbolize the divine power, majesty, and glory which are intensely awesome to the beholder.” He then cites the context in Exodus 19, Psalms 18:13,14 and 144:6, and comparative verses in Revelation 8:5; 11:19, and 16:18 for further consideration.

The “seven Spirits” (1:4) is symbolic of the Holy Spirit and the lamps of the illumination coming from or by the agency of the Spirit. Hailey observes, “In contrast to the terror generated by the thunder and lightning of judgment, the Spirit instructs, illuminates, and comforts.”

Verse 6 - Lenski, page 178, sets forth an interesting idea that “the sea of glass like unto crystal” which was before the throne is symbolic of the providence of God. This is a more reasonable explanation than many give. Hailey considered Lenski’s view, but then said, “It seems more probable, however, that the sea of glass before the throne indicates the transcendence of God and marks the differential between creature and Creator, between believer and God. This differential will ever exist in time, and the saints’ approach to God and His throne must be accomplished as through the fire before one can sing the victory song (1 :2). But when the present order shall have passed away and the saints are at home with God, the sea is no more (21:1); for we shall be like Him (1 Jn 3:2).”

What about the four living creatures with eyes before and behind in the midst and round about the throne? Who are they and what is symbolized? First of all, the rendering of the King James Version is unfortunate - the Greek word does not signify “beasts” but “living creatures” or “living beings.” They are distinguished from the angels (5:11) and from

“every created thing” that praises God and the Lamb (5:13ff). Their many eyes indicate ability to see in every direction, maintaining total insight over all God’s creation, nothing escaping their view. “The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the good and the evil” (Prov 15:3). “And there is no creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do” (Heb 4:13).

Verse 7 - One creature (being) was like a lion, one like a calf (rendered “ox” in RSV and NIV), the third with the face as a man, and the fourth was like a flying eagle. A commentator by the name of Henry B. Swete observed, “The four forms suggest whatever is noblest, strongest, wisest and swiftest in animate nature.”

Verse 8 - Each of these four creatures, or living beings, full of eyes, and each with six wings, ascribe praise and honor to God night and day. That there is a marked similarity between the seraphim of Isaiah 6:2-6 and the cherubim of Ezekiel chapters 1 and 10 is readily apparent to Bible readers. The word “seraphim” means “burning ones,” and from comparison to a related Arabic word, it is thought by some to have the significance of “angel leader.” It is only used once in the Bible and that is in Isaiah 6 which certainly corresponds in many ways with Revelation 4. Though Ezekiel’s vision of the four living creatures differs in a number of respects from John’s, yet there is much similarity also. They are identified by Ezekiel as being “cherubim” in Ezekiel 10:20. Unlike the seraphim, the cherubim are mentioned frequently by name throughout the Old Testament, being first named in Genesis 3:24 as guarding the entrance way into the garden of Eden. Moses was instructed of God to place two cherubim of gold on the mercy seat above the ark of the covenant, which would be the place signifying God’s presence with His people (Ex 25:18-22; 37:7-9). The only mention of cherubim in the New Testament is in this connection (see Heb 9:5).

To summarize, the four living creatures of Revelation 4 are evidently seraphim and/or cherubim, angelic beings assigned of God to be ever vigilant and watchful, and ready to carry out His will with strength, endurance, speed, and wisdom. So awe-struck are they with the glory, majesty, power, and greatness of the One that sitteth on the throne that continually they verbalize praise to Him!

\*NOTE - As I have tried to point out in this outline, the Almighty God, sitting on His throne of sovereignty and absolute rule in the universe, is the heart and center of John’s vision - all else in the vision demonstrates the glory of the one on the throne!

Verses 9,10 and 11 - The chapter ends with the twenty-four elders and the four living beings worshipping God. So great is the One that sits upon the throne that the cherubim, this highest order of angels, humble themselves in reverence, awe, and adoration, ascribing glory, honor, and thanksgiving to the Almighty One, the One who lives forever! And immediately, God’s covenant people of all time, the redeemed of the ages, cast their crowns before His throne, and say, “Thou art worthy, our Lord and our God, to

receive glory and honor and power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”

My brethren, God is to be the object of our adoration and worship! Any form of “creature worship” (such as in the case of the Roman pope) or “thing worship” is idolatry! Unto God be the glory, both now and forever!

## CHAPTER FIVE

As chapter four unfolds before John's view a picture of the glory and majesty of the almighty God, the supreme sovereign of the universe, chapter five unfolds before his eyes (and ours!) the greatness and the worthiness of Jesus Christ, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Lamb slain to purchase precious souls unto God! The Lamb, slain but alive again forever, is the only one worthy to open the book in the hand of the Almighty One. He, too, is worthy of praise, and glory, and honor!

Keep in mind that Revelation was first a message from God to the Christians who were living at the close of apostolic times, and who were facing the dreadful persecutions of the Roman pagan Empire of those trying years. They needed assurance! They needed to know for a certainty that God was in control! They needed to know that everything was going to ultimately turn out right! The throne scene of chapter 4 is to assure them that God is almighty and is in control of the universe!

Also, chapter five is to assure them of redemption, and that there is One who is able - One who is a Lion and yet a Lamb - to open for them and cause them to understand the "book" of the Almighty One's plans for that which was yet to come. What those early Christians needed to know, we who are the children of God in the twenty-first century need also to know, as have the saints who lived in between. Remember, Revelation is God's communication to the church wherever and whenever!

Verse 1 - John saw in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne a book, written on the backside as well as the inside. The book was sealed with seven seals. Scholars are in agreement that the "book" was in actuality a "scroll." According to H. S. Miller in his invaluable work "General Biblical Introduction," page 172, the codex (or book form, which was the early forerunner of the "books" with which we are familiar today) was not in common use until the fourth century A.D., the papyrus roll (or scroll) being used almost exclusively prior to that. Miller observes, "The history of the transition from papyrus to vellum, from the roll to the codex, or modern book form, has been obscure." A book is simply a "writing in form, order, or sequence." So certainly a scroll was a book.

Both sides of the book were covered in writing. Ray Summers comments, "The fact that it was covered on both sides with writing indicates that it was filled with meaning and importance" (page 134). Brother Hailey succinctly states that the writing within and on the back of the book indicates "fulness and completeness" (page 174). Hendriksen, page 108, says, "On the right hand of the father lies a scroll. It represents God's eternal plan, his decree which is all-comprehensive. It symbolizes God's purpose with respect to the entire universe throughout history, and concerning all creatures in all ages and unto all eternity. Hence, it is full of writing on both sides!" Brother Pack, on page 55 of part one makes this comment: "This book symbolizes the things that are to occur. The book that John saw was a sort of book of destiny for the universe that will be unfolded by the Lord and given to his

people through John.” Hailey believes “the book symbolizes God’s eternal purpose for man’s salvation, the grand scheme of redemption” (page 179). Summers observes, “The book appears to hold the destiny of men faced by the visitations of God’s just wrath upon their sins. The fact that the book was securely sealed indicates the impossibility of anyone’s explaining the destiny of man. Here it is in God’s hand. The Christians feel their hearts leap within them at the sight of it when they think of the unfolding and reading of it. But it is perfectly sealed and closed to their eyes. Here are God’s providential dealings with the world, but they cannot be seen; the outcome of the struggle is yet unknown. Here is the future of Christianity in its struggle with emperor worship, but it is sealed up and cannot be seen. No wonder John ‘started weeping much’ . . . when he heard no one respond to the invitation, ‘Who is morally worthy to open the book?’ There was no one found thus worthy. It appeared that the mystery would still be unsolved, and John, thinking of the distressed condition of the churches and longing to know the outcome, fell to the loud weeping of disappointment and pain which was more than physical” (pages 134,135). As to the seven seals brother Pack comments: “It is so closely sealed that only divine power can make it known . . . the seals are part of the will. In the breaking of the seals, and the consequent sounding of the trumpets that occupy the visions of the remainder of the first half of the book through chapter 11, there are aspects of the will being carried out. Therefore, this is the will of God . . . each seal being broken adds to the picture.” Hailey comments, “The seven symbolized perfection, completeness; thus, the full roll was thoroughly sealed for its protection . . . to safeguard the material from being tampered with or exposed to view and to assure its reaching the proper destination.”

Roberson said, “The book-roll is sealed against inspection; it is not offered to John to read. The contents will be learned from the contents of the seals as they are successively disclosed in the following chapters” (page 32.)

Hendriksen gives this view: “The closed scroll indicates the plan of God unrevealed and unexecuted. If that scroll remains sealed God’s purposes are not realized; his plan is not carried out. To open the scroll by breaking the seals means not merely ‘to reveal’ but to carry out God’s plan” (pages 108,109).

Verse 2 - A strong angel inquires with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?” The “strong” angel would indicate one that was mighty and powerful, no doubt having a forceful and penetrating voice which could be heard throughout the whole universe, heralding the divine challenge.

Verse 3 - No one in heaven, nor on earth, or under the earth was able to answer the challenge! “To open the book meant loosing the seals and exposing its content. To look upon it meant more than merely viewing it, for John had already seen it lying on God’s right hand. To open and look thereon meant to comprehend, disclose, and execute its contents” (Hailey, page 175).

The mention of three regions - "in heaven, on the earth, and under the earth" - are intended to be all inclusive. In other words, no where in the whole universe is one found that is worthy and able to open the book. It is perhaps significant that the apostle Paul used the same terminology to tell of those whom God intended to confess Jesus as Lord. See Philippians 2:9-11. Hailey seems to think the term "under the earth" refers to the hadean world - the place of the spirits in the unseen world.

Verse 4 - Because no one could be found that was worthy to open and to read the book, John begins to weep greatly. Remember, the breaking of the seals and the opening of the book is symbolic of God's will being carried out and as Hendriksen notes "if the scroll is not opened . . . then no protection for God's children in the hours of bitter trial; no judgments upon a persecuting world; no ultimate triumph for believers; no new heaven and earth; no future inheritance."

Brother Hailey perceptively observes, "John was weeping much, not from self-pity or because his curiosity regarding the book's content would not be gratified, but because it appeared that the purpose for which he had been caught up to heaven, 'to see the things which must come to pass hereafter' (4:1), would not be realized. Therefore, he and the saints would be deprived of this knowledge and purpose of God by the want of one qualified to open the book; for as yet the Lamb had not been revealed to him in the vision."

Verse 5 - One of the elders tells John to quit weeping because, after all, there is one who has overcome so as to be able and worthy to open the book and to loose the seals thereof. It is significant that "one of the elders" spoke to John to tell him that there was one worthy to open the book. One who had experienced redemption, with first-hand knowledge of the wonderful Savior, calls upon John to cease his weeping. Who is this One that is able to open the book? (1) The Lion of the tribe of Judah - "This phrase looks back to the time when Jacob (Israel) blessed his sons and said of Judah, 'Judah is a lion's whelp . . . the sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet' (Gen 49: 9,10). Brother Pack observes, "The noblest son of the tribe was called the lion of the tribe in Old Testament times. The 'lion that is of the tribe of Judah' would then be the outstanding member of the tribe of Judah." And Hailey adds, "This long expected descendant of Judah, who would possess the strength of a lion, bear the sceptre of rule over the people, and speak peace or bring rest to men, had now come: 'For it is evident that our Lord hath sprung out of Judah.' Hebrews 7:14." Summers comments, "The Lion represents absolute strength and bravery." (2) The Root of David - Hendriksen, in calling attention to Matthew 22:41-45, says of Christ that He is "the very Root to which David owes his origin. On the cross this Lion of Judah, this Root of David had conquered and had thereby earned the right to open the book and to break the seals, that is, to rule the universe in accordance with God's plan" (page 110).

In pointing out that Genesis 49:9,10 was considered as a Messianic passage by the Jews, it has been said, "Isaiah 11:1-10 was likewise applied to the Messiah in times

before the birth of Christ. Jesus Christ came of the line of David (Mt 1:1-16) of the tribe of Judah. The meaning of the expression 'root of David' is that the Messiah would come from the line of David . . . Christ thus fulfills the Messianic premises of the Old Testament which is what the apostolic preaching had affirmed (see Acts 2:30, 34, 35; 3:24, and others)."

In considering this Scripture, brother Hailey calls attention to God's promise to David in 2 Samuel 7:11-14 , which covenant is referred to in Psalm 89:3,4, as other key Scriptures of which to study in this connection. He makes the following observation: "As the Root of Jesse, the Seed of David, He has overcome, conquered, prevailed, and made Himself worthy to loose the seals, open the book, and make known and carry out its contents. In His conflict with Satan, the Lamb overcame him, and in the conflict and through the cross He wrested from him the keys of death and hades, and has sat down on the right hand of God . . . therefore, only He is worthy to open the book."

Verse 6 - The elder, having mentioned the Lion, the reader would expect that is what John would then see. Instead, in the "midst of the throne" he sees a Lamb " as it had been slain." This Lamb had seven horns and seven eyes. Jesus, depicted as the Lamb slain, reveals to us the sacrificial and redemptive work of the One who is counted worthy to open the book. Hailey notes, "He had overcome to open the book not by the power of kingly might, but by sacrifice through love. By this He had defeated His foes and had overcome the world (Jn 16:33) and by this His subjects must now conquer." Seeing Jesus as the sacrificial Lamb, the Bible student is reminded of the great Messianic passage of Isaiah 53. The lamb is representative of goodness, innocence, and purity. Although this Lamb had been slain, He is now alive yea forever, and standing in the presence and near the Almighty One, sharing now in His glory, approved and accepted and exalted, and ready to execute the fulfillment of the Eternal will contained in the book."

"Horns" in apocalyptic writing are symbolic of power, and "seven" is the number for completeness - thus, complete power! The seven eyes are the seven Spirits of God, representing, as Summers thinks, "ceaseless and perfect vigilance on behalf of His people." Christ knows all, and He sees all. The prophet Zechariah had spoken of the eyes of the Lord " which run to and fro through the whole earth" (Zech 4:10). Solomon said, "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the good and the evil" (Prov 15:3). If the reference is to the Holy Spirit, as some think, it would simply mean that the Spirit was sent forth to do the will of the One who is worthy.

Verse 10 - The Lamb, having taken the book out of the hand of He who sits on the throne, is now adored by the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders who sing a new song depicting what the Lamb had done in making redemption a glorious reality.

Observations - In taking the book from the father, the Lamb is able to unfold the future and make known the "ultimate consummation of God's purposes" - Pack. "Later in the book (22:1) the throne is called 'the throne of God and of the Lamb' because it is a

throne that is shared by Christ with God. God rules the world through Christ.” The harp and the golden bowls full of incense are obviously symbolic, the latter being defined as the prayers of the saints – the former undoubtedly as an active expression of worship and praise, as in the singing of hymns to the honor of God (Eph 5:19 and Col 3:16). This Scripture in Revelation 5:8 offers no support whatsoever to the practice of using mechanical instruments of music, or the burning of incense in worship to God in the church on earth. What John saw was in heaven and the language is obviously symbolic. The introduction of incense and instruments of music in Christian worship came centuries after the time John received the Revelation on Patmos.

The song is called a “new” song because of its theme - redemption in Christ. Brother Pack comments, “The new song is a part of a number of things described as new in the book: the new name (2:17; 3:12), the new Jerusalem (3:12; 21:2), the new heaven and the new earth (21:1), all things new (21:5). The significance of the word translated ‘new’ emphasizes that it is something that is different from anything that has ever been and therefore, new in quality. The emphasis in this song is upon Christ’s great sacrificial death by which men are redeemed. He is ‘worthy’ not because of His perfect life on earth, nor of His unique relationship to God as His Son (although these are all true), but because of the greatness of His sacrifice.”

As Christ reigns over His kingdom now, “so are the redeemed endued with kingly power to rule with Him upon the earth at this present time. These who are saved by grace were raised up to sit with Him in this spiritual realm (Eph 2:5ff) and through this abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness they ‘reign in life’ through Him (Rom 5:17)” - Hailey. Brother Pack observes, “The KJV reads here ‘and hath made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth,’ following a different manuscript tradition, but the meaning is . . . because He has triumphed, they also live triumphantly. No reference is made here to a political sovereignty, nor to a millennial reign on earth, but rather to a spiritual ruling that they share with Jesus Christ.” The reign with Christ is now, through allegiance to and proclamation of truth. In a fuller sense than perhaps we comprehend, we shall reign with Him forever (see Rev 22:5).

Verses 11-14 - In verse 11 not only do the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders praise the Lamb, but “ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands” angels join in. “The sevenfold ascription of praise in verse 12 is representative of ‘all virtues and excellencies in heaven and on earth’” - Hendriksen. Brother Tillit S. Teddlie wrote a beautiful song entitled, “Worthy Art Thou.” With Revelation 5 in mind, we should be able to sing it with profound feeling and meaning.

Verses 13 and 14 depict the entirety of the creation expressing praise “to him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.” Hendriksen states, “We have here the climax of what is found in chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 4 relates to God and creation; chapter 5:1-12, has reference to the Lamb and redemption. Hence, these last

two verses, 5:13,14, relate to the conjoined glory and adoration of God and the Lamb. All the universe praises God and the Lamb because of their work in creation and redemption.” Again he observes, “All things ultimately must glorify God: his will is carried out in the universe. The Throne rules. The Lamb reigns. Hence, believers need not fear in times of persecution, tribulation, and anguish. Let the trials come.”

Summers comments, “Such a scene was calculated to bring new courage and new hope to the hearts of John’s first readers, the persecuted Christians of Asia; it brings the same cheer to Christian hearts in any age. Believing in the power of God (chapter 4) and the redeeming love of Christ (chapter 5), there is no enemy or force of evil which Christians need to fear. They can enter the conflict or endure the evil knowing that God is still on his throne; he has not laid aside his scepter; he has not abandoned his throne to any other. He is mightier than all the forces arrayed against his people. Faith in him gives man the proper evaluation of life, of its issues and their outcome” (page 137).

## CHAPTER SIX

Chapter 4 revealed the supreme sovereignty of God, His glory and His majesty! Chapter 5 revealed the worthy Lamb, Jesus Christ. Only He is worthy to open the book that was held in the right hand of the One seated upon the throne. Chapter 6 pertains to the opening of six of the seven seals of the book. What these seals reveal as they are opened, and what is represented and meant by what each reveals constitutes the challenging study of chapter 6. As chapters 4 and 5 gave blessed assurance to those early Christians who were being severely tested by bitter persecutions, chapter 6 allows them to see realistically why these things were coming upon them - that stringent opposition will be the response to truth and right; but that God's justice will ultimately prevail!

Interpretations differ as to the precise meaning of the "four horses." This should not surprise us, however, as I have already pointed unto you that the book of Revelation by its very nature of symbolism is subject to various understandings. Many of these are outlandish and speculative, while others merit much reflection. But I am convinced we can be very confident in our understanding of this chapter as well as the others by taking a sensible, reasonable, and "harmonious with other Scripture" viewpoint.

I believe that in the opening of these seals God is revealing to us the unfolding of His plan for human redemption. As brother Hailey states, "The long-anticipated Messiah has come, and the words of the prophets and the hope of Israel have been fulfilled in Him. He has been completely victorious over all foes; and now the work of world redemption, the rule over the whole creation and the final destruction of all enemies who withstand Him and spiritual truth are in His hand. Whatever we see in the coming visions will pertain to that eternal purpose and the Lamb's place in it" (page 186).

In the book of Revelation God reveals His purposes and plans in symbols. I do not believe these symbols represent any particular character of history, any particular historical event, nor do they point at any single point in time. Certainly they had a very graphic fulfillment or realization for the people of 96 A.D. and shortly beyond that, as John tells us in chapter 1, verse 1, that the revelation dealt with "things which must shortly come to pass." What we do need to keep in mind is that the struggle between right and wrong, between truth and error, has not been limited to the days of the pagan Roman empire alone - they have continued in repetitious succession with each passing century.

Much more could be said by way of introduction to chapter 6 but, hopefully, the above observations will at least partially suffice in helping you approach the chapter in study.

Verse 1 - As you recall from our remarks on chapter 4, verses 7 and 8, we gave our understanding of the "four living creatures" as being probably cherubim or seraphim, signifying angelic beings. Because of their prominence we might safely conclude that they

are of the highest order of such beings, occupying an important role of responsibility before the Almighty One. Here in chapter 6 these four creatures, evidently in successive order, immediately following the opening of each of the first four seals, who “call forth” the horse and rider - which brings me to this point - the call is simply, “come” and not “come and see” in the KJV. At least that is the consensus of nearly all Biblical scholars. The KJV rendering was based on one manuscript, the Codex Sinaiticus, whereas such manuscripts as the Codex Alexandrinus, which is considered a superior text with the least evidence of alterations, has only the single imperative, “Come.” Thus, most all commentators are of the opinion that the “call” is to the rider of each horse and not to John. John was already there, and ready to see whatever was to be revealed.

The “noise of thunder” probably indicates that this vision is “of God.” Though it was one of the living creatures speaking, yet the noise of thunder is suggestive of God - His power and might.

Verse 2 - What John saw in the opening of the first seal is a white horse. The rider upon the horse had a bow, and a crown was given him, and he went forth conquering. Ray Summers’ observes, “There are no lines and no action other than the riding of the horse across the path of vision. From the color of the horse and the description of the rider, we must identify him.”

There are two main interpretations as to the identity of the white horse and its rider. Whichever view one takes it does affect, to some extent, the view of the other three horses and their riders. Some very capable commentators interpret the white horse and its rider to signify victorious militarism, depicting the imperialistic nations in history which have been successful in conquering others. In this view white represents victory, the bow the weapons of war, and the crown the fruits of triumph. I will cite three oft-quoted expositors who hold basically to this understanding of verse 2. Summers, page 140, gives this understanding. Also, brother Pack, page 64, takes essentially the same view, and brother Hinds, on page 88, takes the same view.

The other main interpretation is as follows: white is representative of purity, and the rider of the white horse is representative of either Christ Himself, or of the gospel cause and perhaps the word of God personified; the bow would be the weapon, symbolically speaking, that would sink the gospel message deep within the hearts of people, and the crown is symbolic of the certain victory of the Cause. More commentators take this view than the former and to me, their reasons for doing so are convincing. Among those who do are Hendriksen in “More Than Conquerors,” page 113 ff.; Hailey, pages 188,189; Lenski, pages 220,223; Roberson, page 38; Richard Rogers in his booklet, “Hallelujah Anyway,” page 26; Adam Clarke in Volume VI of his commentary series, page 993; and Matthew Henry, in Volume VI of his commentary, page 1143.

While the above two views are far and away the most prominent, it might be well to mention that Charles Erdman in his commentary, pages 78-79, takes the view that the white horse and its rider is symbolic of peace. Also, brother Johnny Ramsey evidently holds this view though he does not amplify as to why, page 210.

After lengthy consideration and study, I must concur with the view that the white horse and its rider is symbolic of the holy cause of Christ. Since one's understanding of this particular seal is vital to an understanding of the others, I am going to take the time to briefly explain why I am convinced this is the correct view. I will forego any effort to refute other views, but just positively present the credibility of this one that I believe is correct.

As Hendriksen writes, "First of all, this view is in harmony with the context. Remember that in the first three chapters we saw the Christ-indwelt church shining in the midst of the world. You recall, no doubt, the very vivid portrayal of the Son of Man revealing his presence among the lampstands, 1:13 ff. Whenever Christ appears, Satan gets busy - trials are in store for God's children. Now, In the section which we are studying, chapters 4-7, we have already seen this same Christ pictured as the Lamb who takes the scroll of God's decree and opens the seals. Concerning this Lamb we read: 'Behold, he has conquered, namely, the Lion, the one out of the tribe of Judah.' This was stated in 5:5. The rest of that fifth chapter contains the description of the adoration of the Lamb. Now, chapter 6 opens with the symbolism of the Rider who went out 'conquering and to conquer.' Does not the conclusion seem warranted that in both chapters the 'conqueror' is the same person?" (page 114).

Hendriksen then shows how that the color white is ever associated with that which is holy and heavenly, i.e., the white garments, the white cloud, the white throne, the white stone, etc. The rider of the white horse was given a crown, and certainly we know that Christ indeed has received that (Rev 14:14, and especially 19:11-16 point it out rather clearly as to the identity). Time and again the tenor of the book of Revelation depicts the idea of Christ as having conquered (overcome), or in the process of conquering, or shall conquer. Hendriksen states, "The idea of the Conquering Christ is as a thread running through this book from beginning to end!" Revelation 17:14 is given as a prime reference, along with any number of others.

We don't necessarily have to understand the rider to be Christ Himself, though I think it could be. Hailey says, "The rider of the white horse symbolizes a heavenly mission of conquest." Lenski expressed this idea: "The Word of God rides forth into all the world. Its carrier, the horse, is white, which is the color of holiness and heaven." Roberson believes the rider to be the "Cause of the Master" (page 38). While the weapon of Christianity is not a carnal weapon, yet it is a mighty one in "casting down strongholds." Read 2 Corinthians 10:3-5. Here in Revelation 6:2 the rider of the white horse has a bow. Perhaps a passage from Psalm 45:3-5, which is a Psalm concerning the Messiah, will give us some insight: "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy

majesty. And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies . . ." etc. The LXX (Septuagint) rendering of verse 4 has it, "And in thy majesty ride, and bend the bow, and prosper and reign . . ." (Emphasis mine - MBB.) Other Old Testament references which are considered by Hailey are Psalm 7:2, Habakkuk 3: 8-13, plus some others, and concludes, "From these symbolic uses of horses, bows, and arrows, it is evident that this is a picture of the victorious Christ carrying out the content of the hitherto sealed book. Though He may lead the armies of earth in accomplishing God's purpose, He goes forth here not in military strength of war, but in the gospel to conquer the souls of men according to God's plan."

Verses 3 and 4 - Brother Pack, Ray Summers and others who hold the position they do on the white horse, interpret the red horse and its rider with a sword to represent carnal war in general. Matthew 24:6,7 is given as a supporting Scripture to this understanding. But to my way of thinking there is just too much overlapping between their understanding of the white horse as "victorious militarism" and the red horse as "war in general." Thus, I must reject that viewpoint as being highly improbable. But accepting the understanding suggested that the white horse and its rider represent the Cause of purity and truth, aggressively preached, as we have record in the book of Acts that the early church did, then what naturally follows is persecution against the church as depicted by the red horse and the sword-wielding rider. Certainly the facts bear this out as what happened with the early church and what will still happen today and in the future . . . read Matthew 10:16-39. In that context the Lord was preparing His followers as to what would happen when they went out into the world on His mission! And one would only have to read Acts 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 12, etc. to see what happened.

Hendriksen aptly states, "We believe that this horse and its rider refers to religious persecution of God's children rather than to war between nations; to slaughter and sacrifice rather than to warfare. Believers are slaughtered for 'his name's sake.'" Hailey expresses my understanding exactly when he writes, "This persecution that would follow the preaching of the gospel seems best to fit the symbolic rider of the red horse. Here is the historical record: the Jews had opposed Christ and the gospel and persecuted the saints; Nero had bathed Rome in their blood; Domitian was beginning a persecution that had the whole empire steeped in their suffering before Constantine issued his edict of toleration more than two hundred years later. Persecution in some form has always been the lot of faithful children of God." Consider 2 Timothy 3:12,13; Hebrews 11:32 through 12:11, 1 Peter 3:14; 4:12-16 and Matthew 5:10-12, etc. There are a number of other things which could be said on these two verses relative to the kind of sword in the rider's hand (a "butchering" sword used to slay and slaughter in sacrifice - *machaira* - as opposed to the *romphia*, which was the large sword used in war), observations concerning the "power" given persecutors (as related to the principles in the book of Job where God gave Satan certain leeway with His servant Job), etc., but in keeping with the design of these

outlines, I am trying to mainly offer the gist of Revelation with but enough detail to be rather thorough without being exhaustive.

I would like to share with you a last thought or two expressed by Hendriksen before leaving verses 3 and 4. He said, "Finally, let us constantly bear in mind that the Lord Jesus Christ in this book is speaking to believers who, when this vision was first revealed, were being persecuted unto death. The slaughter of believers was their immediate problem. That, more than warfare in general . . . wherever the Rider on the white horse - the Christ - makes his appearance, the rider on the red horse follows . . . the rider on the red horse does not refer to one definite person. He does not belong to one particular age. No century is without its rider upon the red horse: the world is ever persecuting the church. Christ always brings the sword! Peace is taken from the earth. Yet, glory to God! The sacrificial knife or short-sword is 'given' to this rider. All things are in the hands of God. The Lamb reigns."

Verses 5 and 6 - Those who interpret the white horse as victorious militarism, and the red horse as war, understand the black horse as representing famine that comes as a result of war. But I cannot accept this viewpoint as being what is meant here, though we would all agree that famine results from war. Let me share with you what I think is a better understanding, and one that is in keeping with my general interpretation of chapter 6 - that the white horse and its rider are symbolic of purity, truth, and the cause of Christ; the red horse and its rider are symbolic of the opposition to the church which results in terrible persecution; and now the opening of the third seal, and the black horse with its rider holding a balance and the voice of one of the living creatures giving the cost of food and drink. What does it mean? First of all, black is a symbol of grief and mourning. It has been so in ages past and still is. "The rider of the black horse therefore symbolizes grief, woe, and mourning, the lot of persecuted saints who followed the preaching of the gospel. The grief would result from scarcity of food, symbolized by the balance in the rider's hand and the eating by weight. It was said of old that when Jehovah 'should break the staff of bread in Jerusalem,' the people would eat bread by weight and drink water by measure and 'in dismay' Ezekiel 4:16" (Hailey).

Hendriksen observes, "To eat bread by weight refers to a condition of economic hardship. A voice comes from somewhere among the four living ones saying: 'A quart of wheat for a penny (denarius), and three quarts of barley for a penny.' In other words, a whole day's wages for a quantity of wheat that will last one person just one day. At this rate a man could support himself, but what about his family? To be sure, he could buy barley, the coarser food, at one-third the price and thus provide for his family. But is food all a family needs? What about all the other necessities? When such prices prevail it becomes very difficult for a person to make both ends meet. No famine as such is indicated here; for these prices, though high, are by no means famine prices. Besides, one can get all the wheat he wants providing he has the money to pay for it! But that exactly is the point. How can a man who is earning very little provide for his family when prices are so high? A

certain class of people is going to be hard pressed . . . the question arises . . . of whom is he thinking? The answer is obvious. That believers were poor, lacking the comforts which others enjoyed is very clear from the book of Revelation. The first readers would immediately understand this symbol. From the Apocalypse itself we receive the following information with respect to economic conditions prevailing in the church at that time: we learn, first of all, that one could hardly remain a member of his trade-guild without sacrificing his religious principles and convictions. (Remember our comments about the church in Thyatira?) Then, too, we learn that any one who did not have the 'mark of the beast' was unable to buy or to sell! (See Rev 13:17). Has not this been true throughout the ages? Is it not a principle of human conduct to oppress believers and to cause them to suffer physical want? How often have not the children of God been crowded out of their job, business, or profession, because they insisted on being true to their convictions? The rich oppressor, meanwhile, has abundance. No one damages his wine and oil."

In view of these reflections, surely we can all see where a Christian in such troubled circumstances as were those Christians who first read this book of Revelation, could identify easily the black horse and its rider. If not actually put to the sword, as were so many, he could barely eke out a living under the economic blackballing to which he was subjected.

Hailey observes, "The Christian who refused to compromise his conscience by sustaining membership in a pagan guild, as at Thyatira (2:18ff), or bow to the emperor's image in worship, as at Pergamum (2:12ff), or be injured in his occupation by Jewish influence, as at Smyrna (2:8ff), would be hard-pressed to find work whereby he could earn a living. As the luxury items were not hurt, it appears that the rider of the black horse symbolizes hardship and suffering through prejudice against Christians."

Verses 7 and 8 - The opening of the fourth seal reveals a pale horse (translated from a word that means an "indefinite hue," but generally conceded to be a greenish color) whose rider was Death. Hades (the unseen state of the dead or place of disembodied spirits) is seen as following the pale horse with its rider, Death, given power over the fourth part of the earth to kill with sword, famine, pestilence, and with wild beasts. Again we ask, what does all this mean?

Death, personified, is the rider of the pale horse. It naturally follows that Hades is always present wherever death is present, to lay claim to disembodied souls. (But even here, remember that Christ has the keys of death and Hades - 1:18.) Death was given authority over the fourth part of the earth. Note that Christ, who has all authority, had evidently given limited authority, or power, to death. This apparently is in keeping with God's overall plan of things. Hailey observes, "In some way the Lord uses the service of the rider to carry out and accomplish the divine purpose which is bound up in the sealed book." The "fourth part" indicates to me that while death will take its toll upon humankind, that this is not the "final thing." Death is limited in what it can do!

Death kills in four ways. (1) With the sword - the word here is *rhomphaia*, to be distinguished from the butchering or sacrificial sword (*machaira*) used by the rider of the red horse. Here the word means the sword of "war." Thus, Death kills by means of war! God allows and permits this and, yea, can well use it to execute judgment upon those who pay Him no heed! (2) With hunger or famine - famine often comes as a result of war, but not necessarily. God can surely use this to teach men that they need to learn not to live by bread alone, "but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." It might be observed that those who interpret the red horse to mean war and the black horse to mean famine, are hard pressed to explain why then that war and famine are clearly depicted in this fourth seal. (3) With death or pestilence - the word means a contagious or infectious epidemic disease that is devastating, such as the "black death," or bubonic plague. (4) With wild beasts - in ancient times one was much more likely to meet this particular kind of death than now. It is probably symbolic of natural dangers and calamities that can come upon human beings. Literally, wild beasts did in fact slay many, especially in the arenas of Roman strongholds where persecutions flourished. But I think the symbol is probably more comprehensive and is more than likely inclusive of other natural or "wild" disasters.

Hendriksen observes, "These four, moreover, are symbolical of all universal woes which believers suffer along with the rest of humanity throughout the entire dispensation." These four things here correspond to God's four judgments as recorded in Ezekiel 5:15-17 and 14:21. Hailey states, "The judgment symbolized by this rider is against the world of unregenerate people, but in such judgments Christians must necessarily suffer with the rest:"

Verses 9-11 - The opening of the fifth seal revealed to John's eyes the souls of slain Christian martyrs who were inquiring as to the time involved before God's righteous judgment would be executed upon the persecutors of His people. He saw them given white robes and told to "rest yet for a little season" until others also proved faithful to the Lord.

The altar referred to brings to mind the brazen altar of sacrifice in the tabernacle and later in the temple, at the foot of which the blood of slain offerings were poured. (See Lev 4:7 and 17:11.)

The souls of the martyred Christians were asking God a question - "how much longer" before true justice would be meted out? As Hailey observed, "The cry is not for revenge, but for a vindication of their death and the cause for which they had died." Brother Pack states, "They cry out for justice and vindication of a righteous God upon a rebellious and God-forgetful world. The expression 'them that dwell on the earth,' the earth dwellers, throughout the book refers to those who are not God's people . . . this is not so much a matter of personal vindication as it is for the bringing of his justice upon evil in all of its entrenched power and persecuting force." While Christians are fully aware that vengeance belongs to God (Rom 12:19), yet there is a right and good way in which we can

legitimately long for its carrying out - reflect on Luke 18:1-8. These, in essence, were told to be patient; to rest for awhile yet. God's great redemptive purpose in history must be worked out, even though more suffering is involved."

Verses 12-17 - The opening of the sixth seal. Opinions vary widely here as to what exactly is depicted here. I believe brother Pack is correct in his understanding of this sixth seal. He said, "Our view is that it is a view of the last day, looked at proleptically here and more fully later . . . the seal emphasizes the terror of godless men as they confront the presence of God and Christ. The four horsemen of Revelation have ridden many times through human history, and the people of God have suffered persecutions many times. The assurance of this lesson is that the persecuted triumph and the godless are judged." (My understanding of this word "proleptically" is this: a figure of speech by which an event is anticipated and related before actually happening. I am not really sure that is what brother Pack meant by the use of the term but I assume it is at least close to what he had in mind.)

Hendriksen writes, "The sixth seal . . . introduces the judgment day. It describes the one great catastrophe at the end of this age. The dread and terror, the awe and consternation of that day is pictured under the twofold symbolism of a crashing universe and a thoroughly frightened human race. The terror of that great day refers, of course, only to the wicked."

In order to stimulate your minds with what others have thought, it should be stated that some see in this sixth seal not the final judgment, but a judgment of sorts that comes upon human kind from time to time in natural calamities such as earthquakes, etc. Others view it as only symbolical of judgment which is to come. One thing everyone seems to agree on - it refers to God's judgment, and the terror which shall pervade the hearts of those who have pursued evil, walked apart from God's way, and have persecuted His own.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

In Chapter 6 we have recorded the opening of six of the seven seals of the book which was in the right hand of God. The first four seals opened depicted four horses and their riders - (1) the white horse representative of the going forth of the gospel of Christ and the cause of righteousness, (2) the red horse representative of opposition and persecution against the church, (3) the black horse representative of the hardship, economic oppression, and grief upon the church because of those antagonistic to truth, (4) and the pale horse representative of all the universal ways in which death visits humankind. The opening of the fifth seal revealed the slain martyrs who cried, "How long, O Lord" before judgment is brought upon the wicked? The opening of the sixth seal assures them that the day of judgment is most assuredly coming and none shall be able to stand against God's wrath!

In Chapter 7 we would expect the opening of the seventh seal but instead there is an interlude with John beholding a two-part vision: (1) the restraining of the avenging angels until all God's people are sealed, the number being 144,000, and (2) the redeemed of all the ages before God's throne in bliss and happiness forever.

In his introduction to Chapter 7 Hailey comments, "The reader waits breathlessly for the seventh seal to be broken that he may see the final outcome of this drama of God's divine purpose. With the judgment of earth described and the question asked, "Who is able to stand? the reader wishes to know whether the saints on earth are able to stand and what happens to those underneath the altar. However, there is an interlude between the opening of the sixth and seventh seals. During this interlude John sees a vision of two parts which answers our questions about the saints on earth and those underneath the altar. The saints on earth are sealed unto God and those who had died for Him are before His throne praising Him in glory. In these two scenes God assures His saints that He watches after each one, keeping an accurate account . . . He assures His suffering saints that He is mindful of each one, whether living on earth or having died in the faith" (page 200).

Brother Pack, by way of introduction to Chapter 7, observed, "Between the sixth and the seventh seal there are two visions that are given to answer the question, 'What about the people of God during this time?' 'Are they to be forgotten? Or will God take care of them?' The first vision concerns the sealing of the 144,000, while the second vision describes the innumerable company around the throne in glory. The first vision concerns God's people upon earth, while the second looks to the ultimate consummation of God's great protection in the final salvation of His own. Despite the riding of the four horsemen, and the persecution of God's people, in the sealing of the 144,000, God's purpose is to bring them safely through any evil which the world with all of its power can bring upon them. This does not mean to say that God's people will be exempt from all tragedy and suffering.

Rather, they shall be secured by an inner spiritual sealing so that passing through the fires of suffering they shall not be hurt.”

Verse 1 - Four angels are seen by John, “standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth.” These four angels are observed restraining the “wind,” keeping it from blowing upon the earth, the sea, or the trees. Questions naturally arise in our minds – “Who are these four angels? What is meant by the four corners of the earth? What significance is the wind? And what significance is there here of the earth, sea, and trees?

First of all, the four angels are undoubtedly heavenly messengers waiting for, and ready to carry out God’s bidding. The “four corners” of the earth is accommodative language (an expression often used that is understood by us to have a somewhat different meaning than what is “technically” said such as is evidenced in the description of heaven: “streets of gold and walls of jasper” is accommodative language to help us understand how beautiful heaven must be!) actually signifying the four directions of north, east, south, and west. Winds are generally associated in Scripture with the idea of destructive forces (such as in Jonah 1:4; Jer 51:1; Mt 14:24 etc.) and probably signify here the momentarily restrained outpouring of God’s righteous judgment. Verse 2 certainly indicates these winds would be hurtful winds! The earth, sea, and tree are representative of the all encompassing scope of God’s judgment upon all humanity which has rejected Him . . . as Hailey said, “These may symbolize God’s complete control over and use of His creation. Nothing can deter the carrying out of His purpose.”

Verses 2 and 3 - John saw another angel coming from the east, having the seal of the living God, instructing the first four angels not to hurt the earth, sea, or the trees, “till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.”

Coming from the east, or the direction of the rising sun, probably suggests that this angel comes bearing a message of gladness and hope, as certainly is apparent in what was actually stated.

A “seal” generally accomplished two main things: (1) It protected against tampering and thievery and gave security, as the stone was rolled before the entrance of our Lord’s tomb to “seal it” Matthew 27:66. (2) It signified ownership. Jesus spoke of those who were hungering for the food unto eternal life as having been “sealed by the Father” (Jn 6:27). And the Bible declares, “. . . the firm foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his . . .” (2 Tim 2:19). Concerning the “seal,” it seems obvious to me that the emphasis is on Divine ownership and protection. “Note that this seal is placed upon the forehead and will be later referred to in contrast to the ‘mark of the beast’ which is the distinguishing mark of those who follow this agent of the dragon. See chapter 13” (Pack). Though rather lengthy, I feel I must share with you the excellent comments of brother Hailey on these two verses: “In his cry to the four angels holding the four winds, the

angel stated that the function of the winds was to 'hurt.' but whatever the hurt was, whether the judgment of the sixth seal or some other, it was not to fall until the servants of God were sealed. Nothing can happen to thwart God's purpose; no sparrow 'shall fall on the ground without your father'; and 'the very hairs of your head are numbered' (Mt 10:29f). God sees, knows, and controls all the forces of the universe and will allow nothing to hinder the sealing of His elect unto Himself. This sealing of His servants brings us to the heart of this first phase of the vision . . . The scene is reminiscent of Ezekiel's vision before destruction was turned loose on Jerusalem (586 B.C.). The ancient prophet saw six men approaching the altar, each carrying a slaughter weapon in his hand. In the midst of the six was a man clothed in linen and having an inkhorn by his side. This seventh man was to go through Jerusalem, 'and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry over all the abominations that are done in the midst thereof'; in other words, those concerned for the things of God. The six were to go through the city slaying without pity or mercy all the wicked people of the city; 'but come not near any man upon whom is the mark: and begin at my sanctuary' (Ezek 9:1-8). There is this difference: in Ezekiel's vision the faithful received 'a mark' upon their forehead, while in John's vision the servants received 'a seal.' In either case those who belonged to Jehovah received a visible sign which distinguished them from all others . . . It should be observed that those to be sealed are on earth, and although sealed unto God and therefore preserved against destruction, these are not spared from persecution, for this would continue to plague God's people until victory should be completely won in the eternal home."

Verses 4-8 - The number sealed was 144,000. This is obviously a symbolic number since exactly the same number comes from each of the twelve tribes. To interpret this number literally, as the Jehovah's Witnesses do, is ridiculous. Without question, the figure 144,000 signifies the "full" or "complete" number of God's people. Twelve is a number often used of God, such as is seen in the "twelve tribes of Israel" and the "twelve apostles." Many other uses of the number twelve in the Scriptures could be given (see Hailey, page 12 for several of them), but that would go beyond my purposes. I will give you this one observation by Hailey, however: "From its numerous appearances in both Covenants, and its close relation to persons forming the foundation of the Hebrew and Christian economies, twelve is thought to be the religious number, bearing a symbolic religious idea or concept."

There are a number of commentators who believe that since the tribes of Israel are mentioned, the 144,000 are to be understood as Jewish Christians. But, as the number is symbolic of the total redeemed on earth, so also the tribes are symbolic of spiritual Israel. Hendriksen "nails it down exactly" when he comments, "The one hundred forty-four thousand sealed individuals out of the twelve tribes of literal Israel symbolize spiritual Israel, the church of God" (page 10).

As to the listing of the twelve tribes in verses 5 through 8, Hailey observes, "No discernable reason is disclosed for the arrangement of names as they appear in this list . .

. It is interesting to note that Ephraim and Dan are not listed, though Manasseh and Joseph are, who received no land inheritance, appears among the twelve, although his name does not appear in some of the Old Testament lists, e.g., the three lists in Numbers 1 and 2. Why Ephraim and Dan are omitted is not made known and we can only speculate. A possible explanation is that through Jeroboam I, a descendant (1 Kgs 11:26), Ephraim led Israel into idolatry (1 Kgs 12:25-33) and Dan left his inheritance and moved north to Laish (later called Dan) where he settled and practiced idolatry (Jud 18)."

Verses -1 - In the vision related to us in these verses, John sees a great multitude of people arrayed in white robes, carrying palm branches in their hands, standing before the throne, and before the Lamb. These are crying with a loud voice, "Salvation unto our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." They are literally saying, as Hendriksen points out, "Our salvation is the work of God, the One sitting on the throne, and of the Lamb . . . not salvation in general but that very definite salvation from sin and all its consequences which these redeemed are now enjoying. They ascribe this work of salvation to God and to the Lamb and not to their own wisdom or goodness." Concerning this same matter, Hailey writes, "The shout of salvation is a shout of praise and gratitude to God and the Lamb for the salvation provided; the multitude acknowledges both to be the source of salvation."

John sees a beautiful scene of the angels, and of the multitude, worshiping God! Then one of the elders inquires of John as to the identity of the multitude. He asks not for information sake, but to stimulate John's awareness of them, and to cause John to want to know more about them. John defers to the elder and learns that, "These are they which came out of the great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

Following in verses 16 and 17 is given the information of the redeemed's wonderful state of heavenly bliss. No more hunger, no more thirst, and all tears wiped away! Much amplification could be given on all these verses on practically every phrase, every word. But the design of these notes is to give anyone who reads them the only the gist of what it is all about, and perhaps some helpful insight to aid in their own private studies of the book.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

After the interlude found in chapter seven, where John learns of the sealing of God's 144,000 on earth (verses 1-8) and where he sees the innumerable host washed in the blood of the Lamb before the throne (verses 9-17), the book of Revelation now returns to the opening the seals of the book. Six of the seals have already been opened (chapter six) and chapter eight concerns itself with the opening of the seventh seal. It should be noted that the opening of the seventh seal involves the seven angels sounding forth the seven trumpets, which is not completed until toward the end of the eleventh chapter.

While chapter eight deals with the sounding forth of only four of the seven trumpets, it might be well to quote this observation from Hendriksen, page 140. "These trumpets of judgment, chapters 8-11, indicate [a] series of happenings, that is, calamities that will occur again and again throughout this dispensation. They do not symbolize single and separate events, but they refer to woes that may be seen any day of the year in any part of the be . . . Terrible calamities befall the wicked in order to punish them for their opposition to cause of Christ and for their persecution of the saints. Yet even by means of these judgments God is constantly calling the ungodly unto repentance. These woes do not symbolize God's final and complete displeasure. On the contrary, they indicate his initial judgments. They are charged with serious warning, not with final doom . . . the very function of the trumpet is to warn."

Verse 1 - With the opening of the seventh seal there is silence in heaven "about the space of half an hour." Hailey comments (page 215), "'About the space of half an hour' indicates dramatic suspense. A half hour is ordinarily a short period of time, but it seems long when one is waiting. The impressive pause focuses attention on heaven's interest as all wait in breathless suspense and expectation for what is to follow."

Hendriksen delves into the matter this way: "Why this silence? Was it in order that the prayers of God's persecuted children on earth might be heard in heaven? We rather incline to the view that here as always we must look for the interpretation in Old Testament symbolism. Now, in the prophets the going forth of the Almighty in judgment is again and again introduced by a reference to silence . . . Here in Revelation, in similar vein, the silence is introduced to prepare us for the terrible character of the judgments that are about to be related. This silence makes the manifestations of the wrath of God all the more impressive. So fearful and awful is even this initial retribution which is about to be inflicted upon the wicked that the inhabitants of heaven stand spell-bound, lost for a long time - half an hour - in breathless, in silent amazement." In other words, this is somewhat like the proverbial "calm before the storm."

Verse 2 - John sees seven angels standing before God, and to each was given a trumpet.

Verse 3 - Still another angel, with a golden censer, came and stood before the altar. To him was given "much incense" that he might offer it "with the prayers of all saints" upon the golden altar which was before the throne. On this verse, brother Pack comments: "The golden altar was the altar in the tabernacle that stood just before the veil that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. Here both morning and evening incense was offered to God from the golden censer filled with coals of fire from the brazen altar in the court and with incense from the table of shewbread inside the tabernacle. The golden altar is here described as standing before the throne of God in heaven. Probably, the 'much incense' represents Christ's intercession added to the saints' prayers, for he is the saints' Advocate with the Father (1 Jn 2:1). There is no idea here of a special angelic mediation in addition to Christ's . . . Note again that 'all the saints,' the struggling, suffering saints on earth, are included. The prayers of the saints accompanied by the sweet perfume of the incense, representing Christ's intercession, are purged of everything selfish and come up acceptably before God" (Vol. 1, page 76).

Verses 4 and 5 - The smoke of the incense, along with the prayers of the saints, ascends out of the angel's hand before God. The angel takes the censer and, filling it with fire from the altar, casts it upon the earth. Then "there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake." Hendriksen observes - "These saints in persecution and tribulation are praying. But their prayer life is imperfect. It needs to be incensed with the intercession of Christ (Heb 7:25). Once these prayers have been incensed, the seer notices that the smoke ascends to the very presence of God; that is, the prayers of the saints, which accompany the smoke of the incense, are heard in heaven. The Throne-Occupant sees the sighs and sufferings, he hears the requests and the thanksgiving of his children who are in the midst of tribulation. The angel understands this: he realizes that the prayers are heard. Hence, he takes the censer, now emptied of its incense, and fills it with fire of the altar, and empties it upon the earth; that is, God has heard the prayers of the saints, and the judgments upon earth are his answer to them."

Hailey comments, "In the vision, the prayers of the saints on earth, crying that they be avenged, now come before the Father. He responds to their cry by casting the fire of His righteous judgment upon the world of the ungodly. As in so many instances in Revelation, 'the earth' signifies the realm of the unregenerate in contrast with the kingdom of God's blood-bought people. Thunders, voices, and lightning were introduced earlier as proceeding out of the throne (4:5, see comments). To these (which express the divine power, majesty, and glory of God) is added, 'and an earthquake.' The earthquake as an expression of judgment was introduced at the opening of the sixth seal in response to the cry of the souls beneath the altar . . . The earthquake was a familiar Old Testament figure used to describe Jehovah's judgment against heathen powers and the enemies of His people . . . So now, as the prayers of Jehovah's servants come before His throne, He responds with the fire of judgment upon the world of the wicked. The fire from the altar sums up the judgments of the trumpets which follow. Since the prayer 'of all the saints' were before the throne, it follows that the judgments cannot be localized or made to fit into

any specific time and event; they are God's judgments against the wicked in answer to the prayers of His people at any point in time. It is true that this also includes judgments against the Roman Empire."

Verse 6 The seven angels with the seven trumpets prepare to sound.

Verse 7 - With the sounding of the first trumpet, hail and fire, mingled with blood, were cast upon the earth, and a third part of the earth, the trees, and the grass was burned up. Trumpets were used in the Old Testament to call an assembly of the people, at festivities, to announce war, to sound an alarm of approaching danger, or to announce impending judgment from God (see such Scriptures as Num 10:1-10; Amos 3:6; Hos 5:8; Joel 2:1; Ezek 33:3-6). Here I think we could conclude that the sounding forth of the trumpets include: (1) a call to all people; (2) warning of danger and (3) judgment. Ray Summers writes: "The first four trumpets are represented as bringing woes upon nature, or partial destruction of the world. They represent woes upon nature in its fourfold aspect. This is the classification of nature as it was known to men in that day: land, sea, fresh waters, heavenly bodies. Part of the symbolism is taken from the plagues of Egypt; part is from the historical events of John's own day. This should not be looked upon as a prediction of literal events which are to take place and destroy one third of everything. It is simply a picture of God's warning judgments sent upon wicked men. This is not final judgment; only one third of everything touched is destroyed. It is partial judgment to warn wicked men" (page 155).

In speaking of the trumpets, Hailey says, "When the first four are blown, various aspects of the physical or natural world are affected; and at the sounding of the last three the physical and spiritual lives of men are involved. The first four trumpets are closely related; the last three are more independent of each other. In the judgments which follow the sounding of the trumpets, many features similar to the Egyptian plagues are discernible . . . Any explanation of these phenomena which follow the trumpet sounds is generally unsatisfactory . . . To interpret them literally and apply them to certain places and definite periods in history is impossible . . . To view these evils as physical calamities which occurred throughout the Roman Empire is likewise not satisfactory. It can, however, be concluded with certainty that these trumpets represent warnings of a supernatural judgment from the Almighty. Hail and fire are spoken of in the Old Testament as God's arsenal of weapons for us in the day of battle, in the destruction of His enemies, as instruments of judgment against the rebellious, and against the falsehood of idolaters - 'the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies.' . . . The blood could represent blood shed amid the hail and fire; but since these were 'cast upon the earth,' it seems more reasonable to conclude that in this judgment the blood of the wicked people was returned upon their own heads. From the time immediately following the flood God has demanded blood for blood (Gen 9:6); that blood can be expiated only by the blood of the one who shed it (Num 35:33). When Jehovah would 'punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain' (Isa 26:21); nations such as Egypt

would be made a desolate wilderness 'because they have shed innocent blood in their land' (Joel 3:19). Furthermore, the avenging of the blood of God's servants, which has been ruthlessly shed, should be known among the nations (Psa 79:10). All this seems to point to judgment upon the heathen as their blood is brought upon their heads."

Pack states, "One is reminded here of the plague of hail and fire in Exodus 9:24. The partial destruction gives men an opportunity for repentance and turning to God." It seems to be the consensus view of all the commentators that the destruction of the third part of the earth, the trees, and the grass has one main thought for us – the text is talking about partial destruction, not total! So, whenever and wherever any "natural" calamity comes upon the earth - be it earthquake, forest fire, hail storm, tornado, or what have you, we can understand this as a warning from God concerning the impending final judgment to come.

Verses 8 and 9 - The second angel sounds the second trumpet, and "as it were," a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea, a third part of the sea became blood, a third part of the sea creatures died, and a third part of the ships were destroyed. Pack observes, "A mountain ablaze (or being moved) in the Old Testament symbolized great trouble and commotion (Psa 46:2; Isa 54:10; Ezek 38:20; Mic 1:4; Nah 1:5; etc.) Like the Nile smitten in the first plague, the sea becomes blood (Ex 7:20,21). As the first trumpet had affected the vegetation and plant life of the earth, the second trumpet affects the sea and its life. Not even in the vast sea can man escape God's warning judgments, yet God does not here completely destroy."

From Hendriksen's pen we read: "What he saw symbolized the terror of God's judgment upon the sea. Not only does our ascended Lord use calamities on land as an instrument to punish and warn the wicked; he also employs the sea as a tool against them. We are to interpret all the disasters that take place on the sea in that light."

Whenever and whatever calamity comes at sea, from the Titanic going down to typhoons, hurricanes, etc., we can certainly view them as additional warnings from God concerning final and complete retribution upon the evil and wicked.

Verses 10 and 11 - As the first trumpet pertained to catastrophes on earth, and the second to calamities at sea, the third pertains to fresh water - the lakes, rivers, streams, springs, etc. John sees a great star fall from heaven, burning as a torch and falling upon the fresh waters. The star was called "Wormwood," and many died from the bitter waters. "Wormwood" - a bitter wood mentioned a number of times in the Old Testament, usually in connection with the consequences of idolatry. God warned the people of Israel that their turning to idols would bear the fruit of wormwood (Deut 29:18); for as a divine chastisement He would feed the idolaters of His people with wormwood and give them water of gall to drink (Jer 9:15); the prophets who would lead them into idolatry would share the same fate Jer. 23:15) . . . Wormwood and gall aptly symbolize calamity and sorrow and bitterness of life. The fall of this star, Wormwood, caused a third of the inland waters to become

wormwood, that is, charged with trouble, sorrow, and death. Wormwood . . . brings bitterness and death to men. Pride and arrogance, which are part of idolatry and rebellion against God, are destined to fall, carrying misery and sorrow with them. When men prefer the bitter waters of idolatry to the fountain of living water, they will receive these bitter waters with the fatal consequences which follow" (Hailey).

Hendriksen writes: "John sees a huge star blazing like a torch which is dropped out of the sky. What could produce a greater fear than this? What symbol would be better adapted to indicate that which strikes terror into the hearts of men? Remember, moreover, that this huge star blazing like a torch is dropped out of the sky, in other words, these judgments upon the land-waters are the acts of God! That is usually forgotten: the newspapers tell you all about floods and about epidemics originating in the marshes, etc., but they fail to point out that these judgments are God's warning voices! Do you remember the terrible Ohio River flood? Did any one view this disaster - as well as all other floods, etc., throughout the age - as God's trumpet calling men to repentance? The name of the star is Wormwood, symbolical of bitter sorrow (Lam 3:19). The meaning is: bitter sorrow will fill the hearts of the wicked as a result of the plague indicated."

Verse 12 - The sounding of the fourth trumpet affects the heavenly bodies . . . the sun, the moon, the stars.

Evil, and the attending gloom, darkness, and the despair it brings, has always been contrasted with the light in the Bible. Darkness is generally something man dreads when subjected to it for any length of time, and this probably accounts for "darkness over the whole land" as being one of the plagues brought upon the Egyptians. Hailey writes, "Throughout the Old Testament, light from the sun, moon, and stars signifies salvation, well-being, happiness, truth, wisdom, and joy. The fading of light in the removal of these heavenly bodies symbolizes judgment from God (Isa 13:10; Joel 3:15; Amos 8:9). In describing the moral decay and physical destruction of Jerusalem the prophet cried, 'I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was waste and void; and the heavens, and they had no light' (Jer 4:23). These symbols of joy and wisdom are ashamed at earth's wickedness, and in the vision a third of them are smitten, indicating a partial judgment meant to serve as a warning to the ungodly."

Verse 13 - John saw and heard an eagle flying in the midst of heaven, saying, with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound."

I am no linguistic scholar, but those who are say there is no justification for the KJV rendering of "angel" in verse 13. Brother Hailey points out that the Greek word is precisely the same as used in Matthew 24:28 and Luke 17:37 where even the KJV translates the word "eagle." The eagle is strong, keen-sighted and swift. Maybe it was because of these

traits that are suggested to us by the eagle, that God chose the eagle to bear this message of “Woe!”

Pack states, “This expression ‘them that dwell on the earth’ is used throughout this book to denote the earthbound, unbelieving, rebellious, sinful, worldly inhabitants of the earth. These woes come because of the nature of the trumpets blown by the three angels yet to sound. One is reminded of the fact that the woes are the negative side of the gospel’s blessings, as Jesus showed in Luke 6:24-26. God intends to arouse men to see their terrible condition apart from him and to place the responsibility for the evil and tragedy of the world upon the wickedness of men.”

Concerning what the eagle had to say, Hendriksen succinctly observes, “The voice is loud and clear so that it can be heard everywhere. The meaning is clear: the three remaining woes will be worse than the first four.”

## CHAPTER NINE

Please don't lose sight of the subject of the overall context going all the way back to chapter five. In chapter five we are introduced to the book sealed with seven seals which was in the right hand of God. Only the Lamb (Jesus) was worthy to open the book. Six of the seven seals are opened in chapter 6. Chapter seven is an interlude in which John hears of the sealing of the 114,000 (all) saints of God on earth, and sees the great multitude of the redeemed before the throne of God in heaven. In chapter eight we have the opening of the seventh seal, which consists of the sounding of seven trumpets, four of which are sounded in that eighth chapter. Now, in chapter nine, we have the sounding of the fifth and sixth trumpets which are a part of the opening of the seventh seal of the book.

### **The sounding of the fifth trumpet - verses 1-12.**

First of all, let me share with you this astute observation from brother Hailey: "The student of Revelation must be ever conscious that he shares with John signs and symbols of a vision which God showed to him. He has not been dealing with literal trumpets, hail, fire, a burning mountain, a sea of blood, etc., or now with real locusts, scorpions, or horsemen, but with symbols which convey ideas and reveal messages from God to man. Therefore, in the following vision of the woes we need not look for some specific time in history when terrible locust hoards invade a land, bringing a scourge upon it. Rather, we need to see spiritual forces at work in the world of unregenerated, wicked men - forces which are symbolized by these monsters of the infernal realm."

Ray Summers contributes this thought which pretty well says the same thing as Hailey's observation: "It must be understood that this is symbolical language. It must also be understood that this is pageantry, and the details are used to make the play more impressive. One is not to become so interested in the details of appearance that he misses the actor's 'lines.' Many attempts have been made to determine the exact meaning of each detail in this picture. Such efforts have been unprofitable."

Verses 1-3 - In these three verses John sees a star which had fallen from heaven unto the earth. (The KJV is in error in placing this in the present tense of John's *seeing* "a star fall from heaven" - but this is a relatively insignificant point.) The personified star was given the key to the bottomless pit or "pit of the abyss." Webster defines the word "abyss" as meaning, "Any deep immeasurable space, chasm, or void - the infernal regions - the place of punishment of the wicked - the deep-placed abode of the evil powers." The pit was opened and from it came smoke as from a great furnace. The sun and the air were darkened by the smoke, and out of the smoke came locusts given power as scorpions.

Let us first determine the identity of the star. Although this is a disputed point, the consensus view seems to be that the personified star is Satan. A "star" generally symbolizes a person of notable rank or position (such as a movie star or Army generals with stars

as their insignias). This particular star was fallen from heaven. Remember Jesus had said, "I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven" (Lk 10:18). Certainly this understanding of the star here in Rev 9:1 as being Satan blends with what we read in chapter 12:7ff concerning Satan. Brother Hailey writes, "This star appears as the antithesis to 'the bright, the morning star' of 22:16, and of Him who has the keys of death and Hades, 1:18. The terrible woe which this star turns loose upon the earth could be the work of none other than the devil, and this confirms the opinion that the star represents Satan" (page 225). Brother Rogers agrees that "the star" in this context is Satan (page 31). Brother Roberson says this fallen star is "the contrast and counterpart of Him who is the bright, the morning star." The latter, of course, is Christ, and, therefore, the former is Satan. The information given in the Scriptures cited above, plus the additional information concerning "fallen angels" in 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6 would all seem to suggest that Satan indeed was a fallen angel of notable rank who was discontent with his place in the heavenly arrangement of things.

Secondly, the bottomless pit or abyss appears to signify the abode of the fallen angels, the wicked and evil spirits; a fiery place of restraint and punishment. Luke 8:31 would suggest such a place because the demons extant during Christ's personal ministry "entreated him that he would not command them to depart into the abyss." It was into this very abyss that Satan himself was later cast for a period (Rev 20:1-3). However, as brother Hailey points out, "The abyss (here in Rev 9:1) is not to be confused with Gehenna (or eternal hell), which is to be the final abode of the devil, his angels, and the wicked of the earth who have served him (Mt 25:41; Rev 20:10,14,15). The abyss signifies the present abode of the devil and his demons." Brother Pack equates it with what the Greek language calls "Tartarus" (the word used in 2 Peter 2:4), the temporary place of restraint and punishment awaiting the final judgment day, and this coincides with Hailey's conclusion on the matter.

Since the key "was given" him, we must surmise that this is simply the symbolic way of telling us that God allows Satan and his demon helpers a certain degree of power beyond which they cannot go, for the carrying out of God's own Divine purposes in the overall scheme of things. You may remember the Bible informs us that God allowed, or gave the devil limited powers in trying His servant Job (Job 1 and 2). As Hendriksen succinctly comments, "God uses even the work of the devil as punishment and as a warning for the wicked; a warning in order that they may repent" (page 145).

Hendriksen remarks very perceptibly, "When we read that Satan opens the shaft of the abyss, the meaning is that he incites unto evil: he fills the world with demons and with their wicked influences and operations." Concerning the smoke coming forth from the abyss, he writes, "It is the smoke of deception and delusion, of sin and sorrow, of moral darkness and degradation that is constantly pouring up out of hell. So thick and murky is that smoke that it blots out the light of the sun and darkens the air. The power to bring this about is 'given' to the devil; that is, by God's permissive decree he is not prevented from carrying out his wicked designs in the hearts of the children of men, a wickedness for

which he - not God - is responsible. Let us bear in mind that this, too, is one of the trumpets."

Commenting on the smoke coming from the abyss, brother Hailey ably observes: "The light of truth which directs men's lives and guides them in the right way, giving peace to the soul, is darkened by the deceptions and delusions set loose by Satan. This darkness is the veil by which 'the god of this world hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ . . . should not dawn upon them' (2 Cor 4:3f). The 'god of this world' is Satan, 'the prince of the powers of the air,' who rules over 'this world' and perverts the spirit which works 'in the sons of disobedience,' Ephesians 2:2, who 'walk according to the course of this world' in an atmosphere completely polluted by the smoke out of the pit."

Brother Pack writes, "Out of this smoke come the locusts that torment. The plague of locusts was the eighth of the Egyptian plagues. Locusts were a particular scourge in that part of the world, invading cultivated areas and eating all vegetation. They bred in the desert, but traveled in huge hordes that looked like clouds on the horizon, and consumed every bit of available vegetation." Locusts were used of God to bring judgment upon people and to bring them to repentance from ancient times. Do you recall the eighth plague on the Egyptians? Read Exodus 10:1-20. Numerous other Old Testament references could be cited depicting locusts as a punitive manifestation from God. See Deuteronomy 28:38; 1 Kings 8:35-37; 2 Chronicles 7:13f, etc. The "great army" of retribution God brought upon His rebellious people in Joel 2:1-12 is understood by most scholars as an invasion of locusts and that context bears remarkable resemblance to verses 7-9 of Revelation 9.

Verses 4-6 - In these three verses we learn that the mission of the locusts was to hurt men, but only those men "which have not the seal of God in their foreheads." The locusts would not be allowed to kill them, but only to torment them with the torment of a scorpion's striking, and the duration of such torment was to be limited to five months. The torment would evidently be so bad that men would "seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them." It is important for us to note that God's people are to be exempt from this woe. The locusts were limited to hurting only those who do not have the seal of God in their foreheads. This, then, is a tormenting of evil people - of worldlings. In symbolic imagery the locusts power to hurt was to be in their tails, like scorpions. The sting of a scorpion is extremely painful but rarely fatal except in isolated incidents. Their power is only to torment. The final judgment of all humanity is in the hands of God, and He will judge all through that One whom He has appointed, even the Christ (Acts 17:31). So the woe of this fifth trumpet has to do with misery experienced by the wicked while they live on this earth. Let us note some observations from brothers Pack and Hailey.

First, from Pack: "The demonic locusts graphically picture the torment to the human spirit and human personality that evil brings. The smoke that rises to darken the sky and brings with the torments that make men cry out to die and desire death, yet find no death, graphically expresses the slavery that sin exerts over men. Repeatedly when men have followed their lusts, their greed and desire for glory, and have abandoned God and His way, they have experienced these same torments, like the torment of a scorpion. Death habitually flees from them. This is the agony of a conscience that is stricken and of a life that is suffering under the torment of evil. Yet even the torture occurs that men may be brought to see the true nature of evil and turn from it in repentance. The nature of evil is to destroy, so that men following evil come to the ir own destruction" (page 78).

And from Hailey: "'Torment' is from a noun (basanismos) which occurs only in Revelation: twice in this passage of the earth-dwellers, once of those that worship the beast (14:11), and three times of the great harlot (18:7,10,15). In each instance the word refers to mental and spiritual torment. The verb (basinizo) was used by the demon that urged Jesus not to torment him before his time (Mk 5:7; Lk 8:28), by Lot whose righteous soul was 'vexed' ('tormented,' marginal reading, ASV, 2 Pet 2:8), and in Revelation of these who were tormented five months, of those who received the mark of the beast (14:9f) and of Satan, the beast, and the false prophet who are 'tormented day and night for ever and ever' (20:10). In two additional instances the verb is used to refer to the two prophets who tormented the dwellers of earth by their message (11:10) and to the woman who was in pain (tormented) to be delivered of her child (12:2)."

Summers speaks of the inward rottenness and hellish spirit of evil men. Such internal decadence (viewing it from the standpoint of an entire nation such as was the case with the Roman Empire, or individually) robs men of peace, contentment, and happiness.

I think we can conclude, then, that this terrible plague of locusts which can sting like scorpions is symbolic of the evil repercussions emanating from the dark abyss of sin and degradation that come upon those who live their lives apart from God, and who invariably experience the anguish that only lost souls can know.

Verses 7-12 - In these verses John sees the appearance of these locusts and hears the sound coming forth from their movement, as a vast army of chariots rushing toward battle. He learns of the limitation in time imposed upon them (five months) and learns the name of their king. As to the time duration of their power to hurt (the five months) little is really known. Brother Pack sees it as indicating a limitation on the torment of this particular woe. While sin brings so much shame and hurt into a person's life during his earthly sojourn, it is not the final penalty due to sin. So the sounding of this fifth trumpet announcing this woe that brings pain, is but a preview of the eternal anguish that will permeate the hearing of the lost! How dreadful!

The description of the locusts in verses 7-10 evoked these vivid comments from the pen of Hendriksen: "We should take the picture as a whole. That aspect as horses prepared for battle, those crowns of pseudo-gold foreboding victory, those faces like human beings who are bent only on destruction, that hair as of furies, those teeth as of lions, those breastplates of iron portending invincibility, that sound of wings like the noise of countless prancing horses and jolting chariots on the field of battle, and last but not least, that exceedingly painful and burning - yet not fatal - scorpion sting, striking terror into the hearts of men and filling their souls with the worst conceivable dread and utter hopelessness, so that they seek death but cannot find it - can you conceive of a more frightful and horrible and true picture of the operation of the powers of darkness in the soul of the wicked during this present age? Here are the demons, robbing men of all light, that is, of all true righteousness and holiness, joy and peace, wisdom and understanding. And their king is the 'angel of the abyss,' whose name, in two languages - Hebrew and Greek - is Destroyer. The entire symbolic picture emphasizes this one idea: terror and destruction, for that is Satan's work!" (pages 146,147).

As previously suggested, there are some similarities in this description of the locusts with the context of Joel 2:1-11, although they differ also (as do the lions' teeth in Joel 1:6). The diligent student will at least want to read these references and compare. Hailey comments, "These locusts of John's vision are as horsemen prepared for war in the camp of the unregenerated as they represent sin's own destructive force. Sin inflicts pain and culminates in the self-destruction of those involved. The sinner is actually at war with himself."

Commenting on the crowns like gold, the faces of men, the hair of women, and the breastplates of iron Hailey writes: "These are not crowns of permanent victory or of genuine gold, but 'as it were crowns like unto gold.' The victory of wickedness is only an imitation of the genuine; it is never lasting or true. Their human faces indicate intelligence and show that these terrible inflictions were brought about by deluded and deceived mankind whose intelligent wills are in rebellion against God. Their spiritual faculties have been befogged by the clouds of spiritual falsehood, guile, and deceit turned loose on earth by the evil one. The hair 'as the hair of women' adds to the demonical appearance of the locusts. It is probably safer to consider this point as a detail of the general picture of terror and torment rather than to attempt a specific explanation. The thorny substance encrusting the locusts gives the appearance of military armor worn by horses in battle. But the breastplates worn by locusts in the vision were 'as it were breastplates of iron.' They sought to give the impression of invincibility, but this also was a deception."

As to the name of the king over the locusts, the Hebrew word is generally translated "Destruction" while the Greek word is generally rendered "Destroyer." Hailey observes, "Both names are appropriate for this one who rules over destruction. He was a murderer from the beginning, and the great liar and deceiver (Jn 8:44) who rules through deception

and falsehood. No more appropriate appellation could be given such a one than Destruction and Destroyer, for that is what he is in any language.”

As to the identity of this king I quote Hailey again: “Is this ‘angel’ Satan himself, who rules over and leads this hellish army of locusts? Or does this angel-king exist only in the vision as the essence of deception that leads the locust-scorpions as they torment? Is he a principal of Satan’s bad angels, or is there another meaning which lies hidden from our view? Scholars are divided on the subject . . . But it probably matters little whether we think of the angel as representing a spirit or Satan himself. Satan, symbolized as a great red dragon having seven diadems (crowns of royalty) on his seven heads (12:3), is thus portrayed as ruling over the realm which is at war with God and His purpose. As the embodiment and source of all that is evil and as the one who brings torment and destruction to wicked men and God’s beautiful world, Satan rules over the forces represented by the locusts.”

### **The Sounding Of The Sixth Trumpet - verses 13-21.**

Instead of taking this section of Revelation 9 verse by verse, let us look at these verses which comprise the sounding of the sixth trumpet as a whole. Read verses 1 -21. Four angels by the river Euphrates are loosed and they prepare for a period of time to kill a third part of mankind. Two-hundred million horsemen are gathered, with breastplates of fire and brimstone, with heads like lions, and fire, smoke, and brimstone coming out of their mouths! Their tails were as serpents with heads, with which they hurt men. And yet, in spite of such terror and the surviving population refuses to repent! Can you imagine?

With this brief summary of this ending section of Revelation 9, let me now share with you the observations made by some of these great commentators from whom we have been we’ve been studying.

First, from Hendriksen: “The sixth angel trumpets. And now the same powers of darkness carry on the work of destruction in the hearts of men, changing men into devils, as it were. For in times of war wicked men seem to become incarnate demons. The sixth trumpet describes war; not one particular war is indicated but all wars, past, present and future . . . you remember, of course, that war was also symbolized by the fourth seal. There it is mentioned as a trial tribulation which believers - along with the rest of the world - must endure. Here, in the vision of the trumpets, war is described as a punishment and a warning voice for unbelievers. Throughout this dispensation God again and again hears the prayers of his persecuted children, the prayers that have been incensed with the merits of Christ’s atonement and of his intercession. From the altar of incense we saw those prayers and that incense ascending heavenward, 8:3,4. Hence, the answer to these prayers is here, in 9:13, also represented as coming ‘from the horns of the golden altar.’ This river Euphrates represents Assyria, Babylon, that is, the wicked world. These four angels are not the same as those mentioned in 7:1. They are evil angels here. They relish

the idea of plunging mankind into war. Yet, they can do nothing unless God permits. And, let us never forget, in finally permitting them to be released God uses war as a voice of warning for the wicked, 9:20. Thus, war is included in God's decree. John now sees the armies on the field of battle. There are so many horsemen that he is unable to count them. He hears their number: two hundred millions! A symbolical number, of course, indicating a tremendous host. Moreover, horsemen and 'horses' have one purpose, namely, to destroy. It should be clear by this time that these are not ordinary horses. They clearly symbolize war tools of every description. They kill one-third of mankind."

And from the pen of Pack: "Following the demonic locusts, the sixth trumpet ushers in the most dreadful of all the woes, the great army of hellish horsemen. The voice from the horns of the golden altar where the incense was offered to God commands the sixth angel after his blast to turn loose the four angels that are bound at the river Euphrates. They go forth to kill men, and one-third of mankind is slain...[brother Pack then discusses two or three interpretations various ones have put on the woe of this 6th trumpet] . . . it seems better to take this as we have taken other trumpets as symbolic of that secular power that does its best to overcome and destroy God's power over men's lives. Fire and brimstone are often associated with the punishment of evil, and the hellish nature of these horses and riders is indicated by the fire and brimstone so associated with them as they kill. This is a warning made with the hope that man can see the self-defeating power of evil and turn to God in repentance. To men who will not respond to his word, God speaks through the evil they have brought upon themselves to learn from their tragic experience and turn to him. Yet how often man repeats the same old mistakes and fails to learn from his moral failures and tragic experiences. Men shut their eyes and close up their ears and refuse to heed the warnings . . . [Brother Pack then discusses the impenitence of most people stated in verses 20-21]. Their refusal to repent in spite of all the warnings given shows the hardened character of their sinful hearts. Yet these warnings show the mercy of God, and vindicate his justice in leaving men without excuse as they reject his revelation, spurn his salvation, and close up their lives to his warnings."

Now let me share with you some abbreviated explanations from brother Hailey's writings concerning some of the details of the vision. First, as to the altar in verse 13 - "The altar is the golden altar before the throne, upon which the saints' prayers were offered and from which the judgments were loosed." Secondly, as to the Euphrates river in verse 14. "The Euphrates river had played an important role in the history of ancient Israel [but] John's use of the Euphrates is not geographic but symbolic: God's forces of vengeance were held in restraint at their border until a time determined by Himself when, under His judgment, the flood would once again overflow the land." Thirdly, as to the "hour, and a day, and a month, and a year" in verse 1 - "These four angels had been prepared for a time fixed in the mind of God, for He determines when the appropriate moment has come for judgment according to His purpose: 'It is not for you to know times or seasons, which the Father hath set within his own authority' (Acts 1:7)."

Fourthly, as to the “breastplates of fire, and of hyacinth, and brimstone” in verse 12 - “In both the Old and New Testaments, brimstone signifies the wrath of God and is used always with a reference to judgment and punishment upon the wicked. Its use here is no exception.” “Brimstone” is from a word meaning “sulphur” which was pale yellow in color. “Hyacinth” was an ancient gem of blue color thus, indicating a bluish flame emanating from the burning sulphur.

Conclusion to our study of chapter nine.

Hailey summarizes thusly: “At the sounding of the first four trumpets God sent forth partial judgments which were to have warned the unregenerate inhabitants of earth . . . these symbols are all drawn from calamities in nature. The sounding of the fifth trumpet revealed the torment of men which accompanies the internal decay and rottenness of society without God; this torment does not kill, but it contributes to the final destruction of any community of men. The sounding of the sixth trumpet introduced the external forces which threaten and finally bring destruction to the ungodly world. Sin and rebellion against God bring terrible judgments, the consequence of darkened human wisdom and its folly. With each sounding of a trumpet or group of trumpets the judgments become progressively intense. At the sound of the first four trumpets a third of each realm is affected; with the fifth trumpet men are tormented but do not die; now, in this sixth judgment a third of mankind is killed. As the first woe fell upon mankind, clouds of smoke from the abyss contaminated the moral and spiritual atmosphere of earth, corrupting and debasing the minds of men. Out of this moral atmosphere came locusts to torment (but not kill) as decay and corruption set in upon mankind. In the second woe, at the sounding of the sixth trumpet, destruction comes from without as the armies of the earth, symbolically portrayed as one huge army, march across the pages of history. Though inspired by the very spirit of Satan and of hell, these armies are used by God to accomplish His purpose.”

In very similar words, and yet for emphasis sake, I now share with you the concluding words of Pack on chapter 9: “As the first four trumpets have brought God’s warning trumpet call in natural calamities of land, sea, fresh waters, and heavens, the fifth trumpet has brought the torment of demonic locusts that take peace and happiness away from man’s spirit. The sixth trumpet has presented God’s trumpet in the warfare and terrific devilish horsemen, killing and slaughtering men as if to say that these are man’s own God-defying efforts turned against him. What a startling, terrifying picture to a sinful, rebellious world!”

Finally I share with you the words of Hendriksen, who looks at all the trumpets of warning in chapters 8 and 9 with a real concern for the closing two verses of chapter 9, and comments: “The general meaning of these trumpets is clear. Throughout the entire period, extending from the first to the second coming, our exalted Lord Jesus Christ, who rules all things in accordance with the scroll of God’s decree, will again and again punish the persecutors of the church by inflicting upon them disasters in every sphere of life, both

physical and spiritual. The blood of the martyrs is precious in the sight of the Lord. The prayers of all the saints are heard. God sees their tears, their suffering. Yet, in spite of all these warning voices, mankind in general does not repent. Foolish and stubborn men continue to transgress both the first, verse 20, and the second table of the law, verse 21. The persecuting world becomes the impenitent world. It is impenitence that brings about not only the outpouring of the bowls of final wrath, chapters 15 and 16, but also the culmination of this wrath in the final judgment. Delay is now no longer possible.”



## CHAPTER TEN

As there was an interlude between the opening of the sixth seal (at the closing of chapter 16) and the opening of the seventh seal (beginning with chapter 8) - the interlude composing the charter, so also we have an interlude here.

In chapter 9 we have the sounding of the fifth and sixth trumpets (the seventh seal consisting of the sounding forth of seven trumpets), and we might well suspect the sounding of the seventh trumpet in chapter 10, but instead there is another "interlude" comprising all of chapter 10 through chapter 11 verse 14.

In between the sounding of the sixth and seventh trumpets, we have John receiving the following information, and some instruction:

Chapter 10:1-7 - The vision of the strong angel with the little book and the roaring of seven thunders.

Chapter 10:8-11 - John instructed to eat the little book which would be sweet in his mouth but bitter in his stomach.

Chapter 11:1,2 - John instructed to measure the temple of God with the reed given him.

Chapter 11:3-14 - The two witnesses (prophets) slain, and raised.

Then beginning with chapter 11 verse 15 we have a resumption of the opening of the seventh seal with the sounding forth of the seventh trumpet.

Remember that in 9:12 three woes are mentioned in conjunction with the sounding of the fifth, sixth and seventh trumpets. Chapter 10 serves as a transition from the second to third woe, as seen in 11:14. (Recall the three woes are first mentioned in 8:13 where the flying eagle said, "Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!")

With this in mind let us look into chapter 10 and consider the two sections thereof.

### Chapter 10:1-7

Verse 1 - John sees a mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud, with a rainbow upon his head, his face as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire. His size was evidently immense, as John sees him with one foot upon the earth and the other upon the sea (verse 2). The question arises as to the identity of this angel. Because of the similarity of the description of Christ in chapter 1, some have concluded that this angel is

Christ, but as Homer Hailey says, "Similarity does not prove identity, for as 'another strong angel' he is identified as an angel of the same rank or class as the 'strong angel' of 5:2 and 18:21." Ray Summers states, "There seems to be little support for (the) position that this is Christ himself; elsewhere angels have been the messengers, and the same seems to be true here." Brother Pack observes, "Christ is nowhere . . . in all the New Testament spoken of as an angel. Angels are created beings of a spiritual rank, while Christ as the son of God shares the full nature of the Godhead and is eternal. However, the description given concerning this angel indicates that he is closely associated with the presence of God and Christ, and therefore the announcement that he has to make is of tremendous significance."

The angel's appearance, as suggested by brother Pack in the above statement, is obviously to convey to our minds his coming from the immediate presence of Deity with a very important message! The word "cloud" appears twenty-five times in the New Testament and, in all but three instances, it has a relation somehow to Deity. Thus, this aspect of the angel's appearance would signify to us that he comes from God. Concerning the other aspects of his appearance, Hailey writes, "The appearance of the angel with the rainbow as a halo upon his head, his face as the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire indicates the angel's close relation to God and Christ and the importance of his mission." This is the main thing for us to glean from verse 1.

Verses 2,3 - With his right foot upon the sea and his left foot on the earth, and with a little book in his hand, the angel cries with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth, and seven thunders sound forth. All commentators seem to be in agreement that the angel's feet being placed, one on the sea and one on the earth, is to symbolize the world-wide scope of his message, and is for all. His cry, as the roaring of a lion, commands the attention of all. God's message was depicted as going forth as a "roar" on several occasions in the Old Testament. See Joel 3:16 and Amos 3:8 as examples. The roar of a lion is an "attention getter!" (See Jer 25:30 and Hos 11:10.) As to the "little book open" we will take a much closer look at what it is in commenting on verses 8-11. However, this little book should not be confused with the sealed book which was in the right hand of God in chapter 5.

Verses 4-7 - In these verses we have the following information: (1) As John was about to write what the seven thunders uttered, a voice from heaven forbade him; (2) the mighty angel then lifted up his hand to heaven and swore to the Almighty One that there would be delay no longer (or as The KJV says, "There should be time no longer"); (3) when the seventh angel should sound, then shall be finished the mystery of God which He had declared to His servants the prophets.

Brother Hailey writes, "There is something awesome and terrifying about lightning flashes and the rolling, rumbling thunder which follows. Thunder accompanied the plague of hail in Egypt (Ex 9:23 ) and the appearing of the Lord on Horeb, causing the people to

tremble (Ex 19:16;20:18).” By His great thunder Jehovah discomfited the Philistines (1 Sam 7:10), and with the arrows of His lightnings and His thunders from heaven He scattered the enemies of His servant David (2 Sam 22:14f). Job asks, “But the thunder of His power who can understand?” (Job 26:14); and David heard the seven voices expressing God’s awesome power in the thunder of the storm at sea as it came in upon the land (Psa 29). These majestic voices of thunder should help us understand that these seven thunders carried some foreboding of power and judgment.”

Brother Pack states: “What the seven thunders said is kept from us at the command of heaven, and there is no need to try to speculate about the nature of the seven thunders.” Concerning the instructions to John to seal up what the seven thunders uttered and to not write them down Pack writes, “No doubt this is an allusion to Dan 12:4, 9 where the prophet is commanded to keep his visions secret until the end. Daniel is commanded to seal up the words of his prophecy. Sometimes a revelation is given that is not possible to pass on to men. This apparently is what the apostle Paul conveys to us in 2 Corinthians 12:4 when he describes a man, probably himself, who heard words that it was not lawful for a man to utter. He did not reveal these words . . . at any rate what the seven thunders uttered was not passed on.” Hailey concludes his thoughts on this verse by saying, “The purpose of inserting this in the revelation is most likely to assure His saints that God has many unrevealed weapons in His arsenal of judgments to be used at His discretion; man cannot know all of God’s ways.”

Ray Summers comments on this context by writing, “There was to be no more warning. The angel who had been thus interrupted now lifted his hand and gave the last solemn verdict, ‘There shall be delay no longer.’ He continued to reveal the fact that the sounding of the seventh trumpet would usher in the finish of God’s mystery. The warning given by the six trumpets had been sufficient; men refused to repent; retribution will be visited without further delay. For that reason John was not allowed to write down the warnings issued by the seven thunders. There is to be no more warning, no more delay” (page 161).

Concerning the phrase rendered in the ASV, “There shall be delay no longer,” and in the KJV, “There should be time no longer,” brother Pack observes: “Two understandings of this passage are reflected in the translations given in English. The one from the ASV emphasizes the fact that there will be no more delay in carrying out and fulfilling God’s own promise to complete His purpose and to bring his kingdom to its consummation. The KJV, however, translates this part of the verse (to mean) that the time has come for the end. Whichever rendering is followed, there is not a great difference in the actual meaning, since such a declaration as this is followed by the giving of the book to the prophet and his command to continue prophesying. The whole scene is intended to affirm the fact that God will complete his purpose. The promise is that in the days of the voice of the seventh angel when he is about to sound, ‘the mystery of God’ will be finished. The word mystery in the New Testament is often used concerning the purpose of God to indicate that which has

been hidden or only partially revealed but is now to be made fully manifest. It does not carry with it the significance of the mysterious. The mystery here is connected with the good tidings that God has declared to his servants, the prophets . . . the term mystery is used because the world does not really know what God is working out through the ages for the redemption of mankind, and the world cannot know this purpose except by revelation that God supplies. Because God has declared his revelation to his prophets, and they have conveyed this to the church, the church can walk in the hope and light of the revelation of God's will. God is faithful and can be relied upon by Christians to carry out that which he has purposed and promised. This can be a great consolation to Christians, particularly in times of persecution and distress as these early Christians were undergoing."

It seems to me that the "fulfillment" of the mystery of God could certainly coincide with the consummation of the ages; so, however one may understand the latter part of verse 6 - whether it means no longer delay in the concluding of God's plan (the completion of the mystery) or the actual ending of time - I cannot see that either view could be too far wrong. Brother Hailey, however, makes a strong case for its meaning the finishing of the mystery respecting the church. Since he is such a great scholar, I at least want you to have the benefit of his thinking. "Is this verse (verse 6) speaking of the end of time and the point of entrance into eternity, or is it dealing with the end of delay for the fulfillment of the divine purpose respecting the church? . . . 'Then is finished the mystery of God.' This mystery was God's plan for human redemption, conceived in His mind, after the counsel of His will, and summed up in Christ (Eph 1:9-11; 3:8-11). It was revealed by the Holy Spirit (Eph 3:1-5; 1 Cor 2:6-1 ; 1 Pet 1:12), made know to the Gentiles (Col 1:26f; 2:2), and preached by the apostles to all men (Eph 6:19; Col 4:3; 1 Pet 1:12). This mystery was something that man could not know until it was revealed. In the gospel Christ was being preached, 'according to the revelation of the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal, but now is manifested, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, is made know unto all the nations unto obedience of faith' (Rom 16:25-26). This complete fulfilling of God's mystery and its revelation was about to be finished . . . hence, that purpose which the prophets looked forward to and the apostles preached was about to reach the completion of its fullness - it would not terminate, but be carried out in its entirety."

It seems to me the whole context is bringing the readers' minds to the conclusion of things. Certainly God's plan (that which is here referred to as "the mystery") must be fulfilled, but it seems to me the very fulfillment of it will bring us to the point of the judgment, the retribution of the wicked, and the beginning of the eternal realm. Hendriksen makes some worthwhile comments on all this: "The final judgment is about to come. The mystery of God - mystery not because it is something entirely unknown, but because it would have remained unknown if God had not revealed it - this mystery of God's decree with respect to the history of the world is about to reach its culmination in the final judgment. Then God's people will receive their final glorious inheritance, their full salvation as promised to his servants, the prophets. So, now the final judgment can come. We expect that the next

sentence will read: 'And the seventh angel sounded.' We expect the judgment day. Yet, it is not definitely introduced until 11:1 ff. Just as after the sixth seal the seventh does not immediately follow but is preceded by a very beautiful and comforting paragraph, chapter 7, in which the safety and final victory of the church is set forth, so here the description of the sixth trumpet is not immediately followed by that of the seventh. First, the suffering, power, task, and final victory of the church must be set forth so that believers may receive consolation when judgments are inflicted on the wicked. But is not this delay after all? The angel has sworn very solemnly that there would be no delay; yet, here we seem to have delay. We answer: the delay is apparent only. What we have in 10:8-11:13 does not intervene chronologically between the sixth and the seventh trumpets. It is simply a description of the present dispensation from a different aspect, namely, from the aspect of the suffering, power, task and final victory of the church, as already indicated."

Verses 8-11 - In these verses John is instructed to "take the little book which is open" in the hand of the angel, which he did. He was then told to eat it, which he did. In his mouth it was sweet as honey, but in his belly it was bitter. John was then told to "prophesy again" to many peoples, nations, languages and kings.

The "open book" is certainly in contrast with the "sealed book" of chapter 5. But as to what is contained in the open book is a source of much controversy. While scholars vary as to the exact meaning of the contents of the open little book (some think: [1] it is the material contained in chapter 11; [2] others think it is the material found in chapters 12-22; [3] others think it refers to the word of God in general, or specifically to the gospels; [4] others think it is a series of woes and judgments and woes to be pronounced upon the wicked) - they all seem to agree that it contains a continuation of a message revealed to John which was to be preached by him to many nations and peoples. Let me share with you just a few observations made by some of the writers we have been following in this study. From Ray Summers: "From a close study of the entire context, it appears that the content of the book has to do with matters of sorrow and woe - this is true in Ezekiel 2:8ff. When Ezekiel had swallowed the book, he was required to utter lamentations and woes upon ancient Israel. So with this book, whatever it contained it was a message which meant sorrow for John as he delivered it . . . woes upon men under God's judgment for having rejected him, woes upon Christians in the hands of their enemies, woes upon the church in conflict with the great world-power Rome, woes upon home and her great destruction. Perhaps it was a combination of all these things since he was to prophesy to many people and nations" (pages 161,162). Brother Pack points out that, "The idea of sweetness connected with God's word occurs often in the Scriptures" (as is seen in Psa 19:10; 119:103). But at the same time this little book would be bitter in John's stomach, and brother Pack observes, "There is a mixture of sweet and bitter in what he will have to say. God's promises and God's judgment make up the bittersweet." Brother Pack then goes on to say that it is his opinion that the "little book" contains everything we read in the book of Revelation after the sounding of the seventh trumpet. Hendriksen states: "The scroll is the word of God, His gospel in which the mystery of salvation is set forth. That

gospel in itself is glorious and sweet. But its proclamation is ever followed by bitter persecution. Just as the first rider, 6:2, namely the Christ, is ever followed by the second, namely slaughter. So, in the vision, John takes the little scroll out of the angel's hand and eats it. In his mouth it is indeed sweet as honey; but when he had eaten it, it made his belly bitter. The meaning is very clear: the apostle must not merely understand and digest the message of the gospel; he must experience both its sweetness and the suffering, the cross-bearing, which is every the portion of those who truthfully proclaim it. Was not John an exile on the isle of Patmos? Was he not writing to Christians in tribulation for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus? Cf. 1:9. But this very suffering for Christ's sake enables believers to persevere in the proclamation of the word. Hence, heavenly messengers assure the apostle that he must prophesy again concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings. Cf. chapter 17." (page 151). Brother Hailey comments: "This scene from John's vision is similar to Ezekiel's vision of an open roll of a book being handed to him with instruction to take it and eat it. He was to fill his belly and bowels with it, thus mastering its content thoroughly; his whole being was to be saturated with the message from God (Ezek 2:8-3:3). In his mouth it was as 'honey for sweetness,' but when he went on his mission carrying out the charge from God, he went 'in bitterness, in the heat' of his spirit (3:14). Jeremiah had a similar experience when he found Jehovah's words and ate them: they were unto him as joy and rejoicing, but the loneliness of his position which followed left his heart filled with the deepest grief (Jer 15:16f). So it would be with John. It was sweet to learn that God's cause would be victorious in His saints, but it was bitter to prophesy of their sufferings and of the destructive judgments which would befall the wicked world" (pages 247,248). Brother Hailey then states his convictions that probably the content of the little book is that which is contained in chapters 11-22, his views being essentially the same as brother Pack on this matter.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

In the process of opening the seventh seal of the book introduced to us in chapter there is a sounding forth of seven trumpets. This begins in chapter 8. Four of the trumpets sound in chapter 8. The fifth and sixth sound in chapter 9. But the seventh doesn't sound until chapter 11, verse 15. Between the closing of chapter 9 and 11:15 there is an interlude. By definition an interlude is "any change or happening in a course of events; an intervening or interruptive space, feature, or event; an insertion." This particular interlude (remember the first in chapter 7, between the opening of the sixth and seventh seals?) includes all of chapter 10 and verse 15 of chapter 11.

The portion of the interlude includes two things which John experienced: (1) seeing the mighty angel (verses 1-7) and (2) being told to eat the little book (verses 8-11.) Chapter 11, verses 1-14, conclude the interlude. These verses consists of two main things: (1) John being instructed to measure the temple (sanctuary) of God, and (2) facts pertaining to the two witnesses, slain, and raised again. In verses 15 through 19 we have the sounding of the seventh trumpet which completes the opening of the seven seals of the closed book of chapter 5.

In this lesson I will share with you what I believe chapter 11 is teaching us. It would take too long to go into all the ideas that have been advanced by way of attempts to explain this chapter. I will at least let you know what some of them are without going into detail concerning them. Basically I will try to give you what seems to me to be the best, most logical, and plausible explanation. Admittedly, chapter 11 is a very challenging chapter. It is not easy to be absolutely certain in our understanding of it. I, therefore, refrain from dogmatism, but simply share with you what is to me the most reasonable explanation.

Verses 1,2 - verses 1-13 must be examined in the light of the 10th chapter, especially the closing verses, concerning the little book John is told to eat that would be sweet in his mouth but bitter in his stomach. All of this tells us the wicked have been warned repeatedly, but there is coming a time when there will be no more delay; until then, the truth must be preached, and will be and, in turn, the "world" will oppose it bitterly and will think itself victorious in slaying God's messengers. But God will give life to those who are His own, "measured" and protected by His eternal purposes.

John is told to "Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein." While the references to the temple, the altar, the court, and the holy city, undoubtedly allude to Jerusalem, and the literal temple, altar, and court that were there, we must remember that we are dealing with symbols, and the significance and understanding of "the message" must be sought in what these represent. The question is, "What do verses 1 and 2 mean?" I believe the "temple of God" mentioned with the altar, and the worshipers within is representative of the faithful children of God, the true church, who love God and not the world. God knows His own (2 Tim 2:19) and as He "sealed" them (7:3,4)

He now “measures” them. When people “measure up” to God’s truth and His standard of conduct, they come under His Divine providence and care. If there is any significance to be attached to the “rod” itself, I would assume that it would revolve around what has just been said. The main thrust of verse 1, I believe, is God’s assurance of Divine protection and care is being conveyed to the faithful. The faithful are “measured;” they are “sealed.”

Verse 2 informs us that those outside the temple are not measured.” Homer Hailey gives as one possible understanding of the outer court, that it “. . . symbolizes the worldly or unfaithful of the church. This latter group would include those in the church who succumb to the doctrine of Balaam, Jezebel, and the Nicolaitans in courting the favor of the world. It would also include those who had left their first love, those who were lukewarm and indifferent, and the apostates who had left the Lord for paganism (chapters 2 & 3)” (pages 251,252). Brother Pack feels that those without the sanctuary simply means all those not in the church, faithful and true; which of course would include unfaithful Christians, but also the vast multitudes who never have accepted the gospel at all.

The “holy city” in verse 2 is symbolic of “spiritual Jerusalem.” While it is true that the literal city of Jerusalem was, and still is, referred to as the “holy city,” such a designation does not actually make it a “holy” city. That terminology is employed in view of its historical significance as the place God chose to put His name, of Christ being there, etc., etc. I do not believe John’s vision is of the actual city of Jerusalem (although Matthew twice refers to it as the “holy city” in Mt 4:5 and 27:53). Revelation 3:12 would indicate a “spiritual city;” a “city of God.” Note also 21:2,10; 22:19; Galatians 4:26 and especially Hebrews 12:22 where we read, “Ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.” The next verse makes it clear that “the church” is the subject. In the words of brother Hailey: “Therefore, we can conclude that the holy city is our spiritual Jerusalem. The vision indicates that although the faithful are numbered and measured, thus protected by the Lord, nevertheless the church shall be despised, and rejected of the Gentiles and trodden under foot forty-two months.” Continuing, he writes, “the holy city in John’s vision shall not be trampled under foot forever, but for a limited time only. The forty-two months indicates a broken period of time, a period of trial, persecution, and oppression. It represents the same period covered by the twelve hundred sixty days (11:3 and 12:6); the time, times, and a half a time (12:14); and the forty-two months (13:5). The period is also related to Daniel’s ‘time and times and half a time’ (Dan 7:25;12:7).”

Ray Summers, page 163, points out his view that the designated time simply symbolizes “an indefinite time of turmoil and difficulty” for God’s people, and for the people to whom John was writing ( the seven churches of Asia at the close of the first century) it was symbolic of the times of Roman persecution. Hendriksen sees it as “the period of affliction - the present gospel age.” Brother Pack points out that there has been great controversy over the precise significance of the time mentioned, but sees it himself as “a symbol purely of the inadequate efforts to overcome the people of God” (vol. 1, page 89). The “Gentiles” would refer to all those who are not God’s people, and who therefore are in

“the camp” of Satan. From among these, throughout all the Christian dispensation, will come forth periodic times of persecution and rage against the church.

Verses 3,4 - Here two witnesses are mentioned who are given power, and shall prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth. They are described as two olive trees, and two candlesticks, standing before the Lord of earth. The “two witnesses” have been variously interpreted: (1) Some have thought of them as Moses and Elijah; (2) Others as the law and the prophets; (3) Others as the Old and New Testaments; (4) Others, particularly those who take the historical approach in interpreting the book of Revelation, try to make them particular figures of history; (5) Others that they are the prophets and apostles.

Hendriksen, Summers, and Pack are pretty close in their views on the matter. Hendriksen thinks that the “two witnesses” are simply a picture “of the church as a powerful missionary organization.” Summers agrees, saying, “The witnesses represent the militant spirit of true Christians and their testimony.” Pack writes, “These two witnesses represent the church, full of God’s Spirit that gives light to the world.” Hailey gives another view and, as always, his views are very worthy of careful consideration: “But is the number of witnesses to be considered literally, or is it to be viewed collectively, representing the number needed to convince the world that Jesus is the Christ? If we assume that God uses the number literally, it seems clear that the Holy Spirit and the apostles are in view here. Jesus said of the Holy Spirit whom He would send from the Father, ‘He shall bear witness of me; and ye (the apostles) also shall bear witness of me’ (Jn 15:26f). The apostles had been specially selected as witnesses to the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus; thus, they were able to testify to His deity. They were also to be ‘clothed with power from on high’ (Lk 24:49), which they received when the Holy Spirit came upon them (Acts 1:8, 21f; 2:1-4). The Spirit would guide them into all truth (Jn 16:13f) and confirm the message by signs and wonders (Mk 16:19f; Heb 2:4). Peter appealed to these two witnesses for evidence to the exaltation of Christ (Acts 5:32); John appealed to the same two for testimony to the eternal life which is in Christ (1 Jn 1:1-3; 5:7). However, if ‘two witnesses’ is used figuratively to describe the total testimony to be borne during the troubled period, not only would the phrase refer to the apostles and the Holy Spirit who bore the original testimony as eye-witnesses, but also it would include the testimony of the saints. The witness of the saints would be their testimony to the Word of God which they received from the apostles by the Spirit and held to its power in their own lives. They could not bear testimony as eyewitnesses, but by their confession and death they testified to the confidence of their faith (see 6:9; 12:11,17; 19:10; 20:4).” Hailey, after other reasonable comments and Scriptural support, concludes by saying, “The two witnesses that prophesied included the apostles and prophets of the apostolic era, for by the Spirit they spoke the word of prophecy. This testimony would continue in the Word held and proclaimed by the saints (Eph 2:20; 3:5; 4: 11-12).”

As to the significance of the two olive trees and two candlesticks, this is obviously taken as a symbol from Zechariah 4:1ff where, in almost identical terminology, God

assures Zerubbabel success in the rebuilding of the house for God, “. . . not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts” (verse 6). Candlesticks give light and the olive tree supplied the oil for the fuel of the candlesticks. Thus, God’s witnesses would hold forth the light of truth, energized and strengthened by the power of God. Read Philippians 2:15,16 and Ephesians 3:16,20.

The 1,260 days is exactly the same as the forty-two months. In other words, for the same length of time the gospel is proclaimed, there will be the persecution. The work of preaching and teaching is a “day by day” task, and that is probably the reason the period is expressed in “days” here (Acts 2:42,46,47;5:42).

Verses 5-13 - In verses 5 and 6 the vision draws from the acts of various prophets - from Elijah and his power over drought and rain; from Moses who turned the water into blood, and who brought sundry plagues upon the Egyptians; and from Jeremiah through whom God said, “I will make my words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them” (Jer 5:14). As Hailey observes, “In the same way, His witnesses had this assurance that in the midst of all opposition their witnessing should not be stayed; for they would have power to prevail until the testimony should be finished.” Certain retribution shall await those who try to thwart the progress of the gospel. As Paul temporarily blinded Elymas (Acts 13:8-11) because of his hindering the gospel, so also shall God “kill” those who kill his servants. In verse 7 the “beast” that comes up out of the abyss is not to be confused with the King James Version’s rendering of the “living creatures” as “beasts” in chapters 4 and 5. This beast is from the abyss, from Satan’s domain, is evil and makes war against the witnesses, and kills them. This beast is mentioned considerably more in later chapters, especially 13 and 2:7. The “great city” of verse 8 is best described by brother Hailey on pages 257,258 of his commentary: “The ‘great city’ of verse 8 is the lofty city, the world-city, a waste city, for it is devoid of all spiritual life. It was doomed to fall, and in its fall men were frightened and gave glory to God (verse 13b). But was this conversion? There seems to have been no real repentance, only men’s recognition of their own downfall and Jehovah’s enduring power. John sees the world as a city of evil, as Hosea had seen Gilead, ‘a city of them that work iniquity; it is stained with blood’ (Hosea 6:8). John sees this great city as a spiritual Sodom in its moral depravity, as an Egypt holding all people in bondage to lust and sin, and as a Jerusalem that rejected truth and put to death the author of truth; it was in such an ungodly world that Jesus was crucified. Literal Jerusalem does not fit the picture, nor does literal Rome, except as each might represent the world of its day. It was in the street, a broad way or main avenue of the city of this world, that their bodies were left.”

Verse 9 tells us that the martyred bodies of the saints are not even buried by the antagonists of truth because the gospel had “tormented” them. They rejoice over the dead Christians whom they have slain (verse 10). But, the time is short . . . just three and a half days, indicating to the Christians who lived back in the days of the Roman Empire, as well as others through the subsequent centuries that persecution, though bitter, will not last long,

thus giving courage and comfort in enduring. The merrymaking of the heathen was a reality in the arenas of the Roman empire as well as at any other time of persecution when evil forces fancy themselves as prevailing upon the death of the righteous. The very nature of the gospel message brings persecution. But never despair, O saints of God, for the merry-making of the evil will not last long! After a short while, God breathes life into the martyred witnesses, and fear came upon all who beheld as they stood on their feet (verse 11). As Christ was raised and gloriously crowned following His death at the hands of the wicked, so also with those who are faithful to Him. The “dead in Christ shall rise” to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess 4:16,17 - verse 12). Earthquakes were terrors of nature with which the people in Asia were familiar, so the symbolism herein employed is graphic. And God used “earthquakes” as a symbol of His judgment and wrath. For example, the prophet Isaiah, in painting a picture of the forthcoming judgment, said, “The foundations of the earth tremble. The earth is utterly broken, the earth is rent asunder, the earth is shaken violently. The earth will stagger like a drunken man” (Isa 24:18f). The “city” in verse 13 is the same as the “great city” of verse 8. It is here depicted as experiencing partial judgment - only a tenth part of the city is felled and only 7,000 are slain. Those remaining are frightened enough to give glory to God, but probably only momentarily as no real repentance is indicated. Much like today when evil people may be momentarily “shaken” by some calamity or happening, but soon return right back to their unrighteous ways.

Summarization of verses 1-13 - brother Hailey does an excellent job of summarizing and I want to share it with you: “The sanctuary with its worshipers is under the protection of God; Satan cannot touch these. However, the holy city, the personnel of the church, would be trodden under foot by her enemies for a troubled period of tyrannical opposition. In spite of the tribulation during that time, God’s witnesses would continue to bear testimony as they passed through trials, oppressions, and death. Ultimately, they would be victorious. The time of witnessing falls into three periods. The first is the apostolic age, during which the witnesses could not be destroyed (verses 3-6 ). When the apostolic testimony was complete, the church definitely established, and when truth had been preached and written, witnessing entered a second period. It was during this period that beast out of the abyss attempted to destroy the witnesses, causing them to endure great trials, in which they were killed (verses 7-10).

“The third period is one of victory for the faith and its martyrs, symbolized by their resurrection and ascension to heaven (verses 11-13). Since that time the witnessing has been carried on by those who hold fast the blood of the Lamb, the word of their testimony to the faith, and who love not their lives unto death (12:11). In the trial of this victory the corruption of the world-city and old paganism begin to break up as men come to recognize the power of God and truth. There is no wholesale conversion of the world, but there is a weakening of paganism’s former control over men.”

Verse 14 - Remember three woes were announced by the cry of the eagle (8:1). The three woes correspond with the sounding forth of the trumpets of the fifth, sixth and

seventh angels; the first woe 9:1-12; the second woe beginning with 9:13 and ending at 11:14. The third woe is the conclusion of the 11th chapter.

Verses 15-19 - I personally believe that what we have in these verses is a glimpse at the consummation of things for the purpose of affording comfort to these Christians who were then enduring, and who would yet endure much more trial and persecution. In verses 15-17 we have conveyed to our minds a scene of victory and praise for the Christ who has triumphed and reigns. God is worshiped as the Supreme Sovereign. The scene ends with the pronouncement of the judgment day (verse 18) and the abode of God being opened in heaven, wherein was seen the ark of the covenant with the signs of lightnings, thunders, earthquakes and hail, showing the power and might of God. But let us note these verses very briefly one at a time.

While the opening of the seventh seal began with silence (8:1), it is now being concluded with great voices in heaven announcing that Christ is Lord and King. The battle had been hard fought, but the victory won! As brother Hailey observes, "The usurper of power over God's creation was now cast down, and the power of rule is in God's hand where it rightfully belongs. The victory of Christ and His witnesses accomplished the defeat of the world and its powers." So verse 15 gives Christians the assurance of the ultimate victory of Christ!

Verses 16 and 17 depict a scene of worship to God. We are reminded of chapter 4 in this regard.

Verse 18 declares "the time of the judgment" is come. The world which, in its anger against God and in its antagonism toward truth, had raged against the witnesses of God's way, now must face His wrath. Here is a scene of vindication for the righteous and of retribution for the wicked.

On verse 19 brother Hailey comments, "As this section began with the door opened in heaven to reveal the throne that rules the universe (4:1), so now it ends with the temple in heaven opened that all might behold the ark of God's covenant which rested there. In the tabernacle and in Solomon's temple the Holy of Holies contained the ark of the covenant, wherein were the tables of the covenant that God had made with His people. The glory of His presence dwelt above the ark, between or above the cherubim (Ex 25:22; 2 Kgs 19:15). The presence of God and the ark of His covenant assured His people that He would remember and keep His covenant with them. But the veil had been rent, and the way into the holy of holies laid open for us by the Lord Jesus (Heb 10:20). The door into His holy temple was now open that the ark of God's covenant might be seen. God was giving assurance to His people that whatever might come, He would keep His covenant with them, for it is ever before Him."

## CHAPTER TWELVE

We need to remember the book of Revelation is a book depicting conflict: between right and wrong; between good and evil; between truth and error; between the church and its persecutors; between Christ and Satan!

In chapters 1 through 11 Christians are given vivid, symbolic pictures of the struggles they would experience on this earth. They are made to realize that being a Christian is not going to be easy; there will be deprivations and sufferings. The persecutions will be severe and bitter. But ultimately there will be victory for them, and they will triumph over the forces of evil. And their persecutors will face dreadful retribution!

Chapters 12 through 22 comprise the second division of the book. They afford us deeper insight into the conflict that is so apparent to us on this earth. They reveal to us that the reason for the earth-conflict between right and wrong, is the essential conflict between the Righteous God of heaven and earth and the evil Satan! The devil and all his allied forces are fighting desperately against God and His Christ and the forces of good. That is the real struggle!

The earth is the battleground as far as we are concerned, and Christians are the “soldiers of Christ!” It is a “life and death” war in which we are engaged! Satan is our avowed enemy, intent on destroying us, and bringing us to eternal ruination. But he cannot avail over us as long as we’re faithful to our Lord. Christ will triumph, and so will all those who are on His side!

Chapter 12 is the beginning of this second part of the book of Revelation. In it we are introduced to the dragon who is defined for us as being Satan, or the devil. We learn that he is out to destroy the Christ, but that he fails to accomplish this. Realizing his time is short, he vents his rage upon the “woman” which obviously refers to the people of God - those who have kept covenant with God. Satan makes war with God’s people!

To help make the chapter as plain as possible, we’ll follow this simple outline of chapter 12:

Verses 1-6 - “The Woman, The Dragon, And The Man-Child.”

Verses 7-9 - “War In Heaven.”

Verses 10-12 - “The Voice Of Triumph.”

Verses 13-17 - “The Dragon’s Rage Against The Woman.”

Verses 1-6 - These verses portray a woman with child, in the travail of giving birth to that child. In the same vision a great red dragon is seen, standing before the woman with the intent of devouring the child upon its birth. But God “caught up” the man child so that the purposes of the dragon were not realized, and the woman fled into the wilderness.

In the comments which follow we will address ourselves to an attempt to answer the obvious questions - who is the woman? The man-child? The dragon? Variant views are held in answer to these questions. I will share with you what some of these views are, giving you what is most logical to me. Some believe the woman to be the Jewish nation, or in particular the virgin Mary, and others believe her to be the church.

First of all, it could not refer to the Jewish nation as a whole because, as a whole, the Jewish nation rejected Christ (Jn 1:11). Secondly, to limit the woman to the virgin Mary would be much too narrow a view when keeping in mind the entire context and such verses as verse 17. Thirdly, it couldn't be the church exclusively. The church didn't bring forth Christ, but Christ the church. I believe the woman to be those who were faithful to God in Old Testament times and who helped in God's plan to bring the Savior into this world through the Jewish nation. But, in the broader sense of understanding the identity of the woman, we must also see that she includes the ones who have been faithful to God since the Christ has come, as is seen in verses 10,11 and 17. The church certainly should be included in our understanding of who the woman is, as seen clearly after the man-child is born and ascends. To summarize, I believe the woman to be: (1) Those faithful to God from the beginning, but especially those directly involved in the process of the coming of the Messiah; and (2) The continuing people of God since the coming of Christ which, of course, is the true church. Thus, the woman is God's faithful people in each dispensation, through whom His purposes have been fulfilled among humankind.

As to the description of the woman: “clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars,” there are two explanations I want to share with you. (1) Being clothed with the sun shows she is glorious and exalted, the moon under her feet indicating she exercises dominion, and a wreath of twelve stars depicting that she is victorious. While maligned on earth by those who view her with scorn yet, as far as “heaven” is concerned, she is indeed glorious. That is Hendriksen's view. But probably the more proper understanding is that of Hailey: (2) “She is thus arrayed with the total of divinely revealed light of the three dispensations - the Patriarchal, Mosaic and Christian. In the time from Adam to Moses, which is sometimes referred to as the starlit age, God was revealing Himself and His will ‘in divers manners’ (Heb 1:1). Through Moses and the prophets, the moonlit age, God was revealing the development of His will and purpose, but this was not clearly understood (Eph 3:4f). Now under Christ, through the apostles by the Holy Spirit, God revealed truth in its entirety. As the redeemed of the ages, the woman of John's vision is thus clothed with the totality of the revealed will and truth of God” (page 268).

In my judgment there can be no doubt as to the identity of the man-child. He is indeed the Christ. So much information could be given to substantiate this interpretation but I don't feel it is necessary. The consensus of Biblical expositors is that it is the Christ, and Christians are the "rest of her seed" of verse 17.

As to the dragon, he is clearly identified in verse as being Satan, the devil. Briefly, let us note the significance of his description: "a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth." Brother Pack thinks the horns indicate the "power of Satan, that the seven heads crowned with seven diadems symbolize his cleverness and sovereignty over men, and the stars he drags from heaven are his "angels" (vol. 2, page 4). Ray Summers says the color red symbolizes blood; the seven heads (evil) wisdom; the horns, power; and the diadems on his heads, royalty (pages 171,172.) Brother Hailey thinks the red emphasizes Satan's "murderous character," and his seven heads "infernal wisdom," and the ten horns "fullness of power within his realm of operation. The picture is one of complete diabolical power, wisdom, and cunning against which the church must fight for its survival." Hailey feels the diadems are symbolic of "royalty in the realm of evil" (page 270). Hendriksen suggests that the main thought is: "The dragon stands in front of the woman who is about to be delivered that when she is delivered he may devour her child; that is, Satan is constantly aiming at the destruction of the Christ! Thus viewed, the entire Old Testament becomes one story, the story of the conflict between the seed of the woman and the dragon, between Christ and Satan" (page 165). On the next few pages of his commentary Hendriksen sets forth data from the Old Testament that indicates the attempts Satan made through hundreds of years of history to thwart the coming of Christ into the world, therefore blocking God's plan for redeeming man from sin. Starting from Genesis 3:15 where God told Satan, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel," he points out how that the "serpent" of Genesis is the "dragon" of Revelation 12. The woman's "seed" of Genesis is the "man-child" of Revelation 12. Hendriksen then proceeds to show how the devil did every thing within his power to prevent God's purpose and plan. I would urge each student to obtain a copy of "More Than Conquerors" and begin reading on this matter at page 165. It is most interesting.

Concerning verse 6 the woman (now the church - the faithful of God after the birth of Christ, his subsequent death, burial, resurrection, and ascension) is depicted as fleeing into the wilderness for 1,260 days where there "they" should feed her. What does all this mean? Hailey comments: "The wilderness is the place of withdrawal where God's people are protected and disciplined. There 'they' - the child (verse 5) and God - 'nourish her' for twelve hundred sixty days, the same period during which the holy city was to be trodden under foot and the witnesses would testify in sackcloth (see 11:2,3 and 13:5). As Israel was nurtured in the wilderness with manna from God, so now the new spiritual Israel is nurtured by the true bread which came down from heaven (Jn 6:50f)." Brother Pack comments: "The woman, who had borne him as God's Messiah, now is provided a place

'prepared of God' where she may be fed for the 1,260 days, for she is still the object of the devil's wrath. This is the same as three and one-half years, or forty-two months, which is the length of the period of the great trial. During all this time she will be protected and cared for in the providence of God, nourished in her place in the wilderness . . . and this would continue until the end, the coming of the Lord again. This is the time of the 'great tribulation.' In this symbolic way the whole of the 'last days' or the Christian Age is embraced in this term" (page 5 of vol. 2).

Verses 7-9 - John sees "war in heaven" between Michael and his angels, and the dragon and his angels. The dragon is defeated and cast down to earth with his followers. While some interpret these verses to indicate there was an actual, literal war in heaven, the far more probable view is that the vision "symbolizes a spiritual warfare which had been going on from the beginning, but reaches its climax in Christ's victory over Satan" (Hailey, page 274). Thus, we probably shouldn't think of the war as being literal, but simply to symbolize some great spiritual truth. Brother Pack gives us much insight. "Through the triumphant rise of the Messiah to the throne of God, the dragon is cast out, so that no longer can he accuse the saints before God. No longer can his accusations be lodged against them because their sins are not cared for. In the sacrifice made by Christ on the cross for the sins of the world all grounds of accusation against the saints have been removed." Hailey points out that the word "devil" means "accuser, slanderer, one who maligns." He also points out that the name "Satan" means "an adversary, one who stands as an opponent or an antagonist, an enemy." The Bible certainly teaches that this accuser and enemy is the great deceiver of mankind, seducing them from God and binding them in the bondage of sin. But Christ died to atone for sin, making it possible for men to be set free from spiritual bondage. Thus, Christ has silenced the great accuser of the saints, taking from him the basis of such accusation.

Hendriksen states: "The battle in heaven and the hurling down of the dragon are not to be understood literally. Satan is 'hurled down from heaven' in this sense, namely, that he has lost his place as an accuser of the brethren. Whereas Christ was born and rendered satisfaction for sin, Satan has lost every semblance of justice for his accusations against believers. To be sure, he continues to accuse. That is his work even today. But no longer is he able to point to the unaccomplished work of the Savior. Christ's atonement has been fully accomplished; complete satisfaction for sin had been rendered when he ascended to heaven. Compare Romans 8:13 - 'Who shall bring any accusation against God's elect?'"

Ray Summers seems to think that the devil actually tried to invade the heavenly realm to destroy the Christ, having failed to do so on earth. Either that, or he thinks the imagery is to suggest a symbolic such war. Even if this should be so, it seems to me it still comes back to the view given by Pack, Hendriksen and Hailey.

Verses 10-12 - John hears a loud voice announcing salvation, the strength and the authority of Christ, and His kingdom. The accuser had been cast down. The redeemed

had overcome through the blood of Christ and because of their faithfulness even unto death. Therefore, the redeemed who dwell in heaven are to rejoice, but woe unto the earth dwellers because the devil knows his time is short. Pack comments, "With the coming and atonement provided by Christ, through the shedding of his blood, victory has been assured to those who are endeavoring to do good. Before Christ's atonement, the sins of God's people were forgiven only on the ground of that atonement that was to take place in the future, not on the basis of an atonement that had already taken place (see Rom 3:25; Heb 9:15). The problem of forgiveness was not settled, and could not be, until Christ himself came and provided for that victory. The salvation in Christ for all mankind is now revealed and the power of God over the evil one and all his forces demonstrated. The cross and the resurrection meant Satan's complete defeat. In verse 11 the victory of the martyrs is spoken of as past, in the prophetic meaning of certainty, although their final triumph is still future." Among other comments on verse 10, brother Hailey writes, "Christ's authority is complete and absolute; and the accuser and maligner of the brethren, who constantly accused them day and night, is cast down. Victory for weak and fallen men is now assured through God and Christ. This is the war seen by John in the vision; it is a conflict that had continued from Eden, which was won by the seed of the woman, as Satan's head was bruised beneath His heel." I personally believe that Satan's "short time" of verse 12 refers to the time period between his defeat in the completion of Christ's atoning sacrifice, and the judgment. Whatever evil work he is intent on doing, must be done before the judgment and the eternal separation of the righteous and evil. Satan will be cast into hell forever! (see Rev 20:10).

Verses 13 -17 - The vision which John saw continues. The dragon, realizing his failure to kill the man-child (the Christ), and to prevail against God, vents his wrath upon the church. But God provides eagle's wings for the church for her flight into the wilderness where she is nourished for a "time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent." The serpent then casts out a flood of water from its mouth to carry the woman away, but the earth helps the woman by swallowing up the flood. The dragon, greatly angered, makes war with the woman and with her seed who keep God's will and the testimony of Jesus. Jesus warned His disciples that persecutions would come, but that the reward for faithfulness would be great. (Note such passages as Matthew 5:10-12 and 10:16-39.) By the time of the apostles, persecution was indeed a reality: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial among you, which cometh upon you to prove you, as though a strange thing happened unto you" (1 Pet 4:12ff). Satan has always raged against God's people! (See Heb 11:32ff). He continues to do so: "Yea, and all that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim 3:12).

As to the significance of the church being given two wings of an eagle, we must go back in our minds to the deliverance of Israel from Egypt. God said to them, "I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself" (Ex 19:4; Deut 32:11). Years later, in anticipation of their deliverance from the power of their captor, the prophet said, "They that wait for Jehovah shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles" (Isa 40:31).

Concerning the time God nourishes her “a time, and times, and half a time” Pack observes, “In the light of Daniel 7:25 and former references in this book, (it) equals 1,260 days or 42 months, the time of the great tribulation - the whole period until He comes again.” This seems to be the most reasonable understanding of the time mentioned.

Commenting on verse 1 brother Hailey states: “The idea of floods threatening to engulf God’s people was not new; it is found repeatedly in the prophets and Psalms . . . (he then cites Isaiah 8:5-8, Isaiah 43:2 and other Scriptures as examples). Now the serpent tried to sweep the woman away by the river that issued out of his mouth; delusions in the form of lies, false impressions of invincible power, false teachings, false philosophies, false charges, and malicious reports intended to destroy the church . . . (and) . . . the seductive temptations of lust.” Pack states that Satan wished to engulf the church “in a flood of evil that would drown her.” But the earth absorbed the waters - the earth here, signifying the unregenerate earthlings, helping the woman, by gulping down the flood waters of evil from Satan. Hailey makes a great observation: “In doing this the earth established a clear distinction between the world, satiated with its false religions and philosophical teachings, on the one hand, and the church, clothed with truth and righteousness, on the other. From the viewpoint of Satan and the world, the earth’s help was incidental and unintentional; but from the viewpoint of the church, it was providential. As long as the world absorbs the river of Satan’s lies, and the church drinks from the fountain of divine truth, the separation between the two will remain clear and distinct. But when the woman begins to compromise with Satan and his lies, becoming submerged in his river of falsehood, tragedy follows.” Well spoken, I would say! The dragon, now furious and frustrated in his attempts to destroy the man-child and in his failure to sweep away the woman in the flood of lies and enticements, now turns against the woman’s seed to “make war.” I would take this to mean, that having failed to destroy Christ and the early church, Satan continues his war with Christians down through the centuries. Hendriksen sums up this section rather well it seems to me with these words: “Satan, having failed to defeat the Christ, continues his attack upon the church. He directs his fury against the church . . . but the Lord protects His people; He bears them on eagles’ wings. In the desert of affliction - this earthly sojourn - He has prepared a place for them and nourishes them with the manna of His word. Here, the church resides away from ‘the face of the serpent,’ that is, away from Satan’s most direct and deadly attack. The devil cannot destroy her. To be sure, the evil one tries to engulf the church in a stream of lies, delusions, but the true church is not fooled. This failure of his attempt to engulf the church makes the devil very angry. He is determined to direct his attack against ‘the rest of the woman’s seed,’ . . . against individual believers.”

Concluding thoughts.

As far as this outline is concerned, I scarcely touched the hem of the garment compared to what could have been said. But my purpose is not to be exhaustive. If so, it would necessitate a volume of great magnitude to really cover the subject matter of

Revelation. I do hope this brief study material is enough to stimulate your mental faculties to a greater, more in-depth study of this great book than perhaps you've ever done before.



## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Satan, having failed in his attempt to destroy the man-child born of “the woman” (12:1-5) then focuses his attention and vents his rage upon her (12:13-17). In chapter 13 Satan enlists the aid of two sinister monsters: (1) the beast out of the sea, and (2) the beast out of the earth. These two beasts, in collusion with Satan, are clearly depicted as being the great enemies of the church. These two chapters - chapter 12 and 13 - are the key to our understanding of the second section (chapters 12-22). They give us keen insight into the basic conflict between God and the devil, and reveal to Christians the form of our opposition which has been aligned with Satan.

Verses 1-10 - The first beast - the one out of the sea. John sees a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns. Upon the horns are crowns, and upon the heads “the name of blasphemy.” The body of the beast was like a leopard, his feet were like those of a bear, and his mouth like that of a lion. One of the seven heads had been wounded severely, but the wound had healed. The dragon (the devil - chapter 12) gave the beast power and authority. The “world” went after the beast and worshiped the dragon which gave the beast power, and worshiped the beast also. From the mouth of the beast comes great blasphemies, and for forty-two months it was given the beast to make war against the saints of God. All the world worships the beast except for those whose names are in the book of life.

Christians are then urged “to hear” and be comforted in knowing that the beast which leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity, and he that killeth with the sword must be killed by the sword. But the question is, “What does all this mean?” Who is the beast? What is the significance of the seven heads and ten horns? What is the significance in the beast being described as part leopard, part bear, and part lion? Why would the world worship this beast, and why would Christians not? These and other questions challenge our minds for an explanation.

Let us first give an explanation as to the identity of the beast. In order to understand who this beast is it is needful that we familiarize ourselves with Daniel 7. In that chapter (written sometime around 585 to 550 B.C. ) the prophet Daniel had visions wherein he saw four beasts come out of the sea: the first like a lion, the second like a bear, the third like a leopard, and the fourth with great iron teeth and having ten horns. In verse 17 of that chapter, and in verse 23, we learn that these four beasts were representative of four kings (or kingdoms). The consensus view of practically all reputable Bible scholars is that these four beasts (kingdoms) correspond with those represented by king Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the great image as recorded in Daniel 2.

|                            |                                   |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| The first kingdom being -  | the Babylonian empire,            |
| The second kingdom being - | the Medo-Persian empire,          |
| The third kingdom being -  | the Macedonian or Grecian empire, |

The fourth being -

the Roman empire.

Since the book of Daniel is largely apocalyptic (that which is prophetic, and revealing, disclosing God's purposes, etc., especially in such contexts as chapter 2 and chapter 7) scholars see a very close connection between what is revealed there and what we read in Revelation 13. The similarity is indeed striking. The image and the beasts in Daniel unquestionably pertain to earthly kingdoms. And, in like manner, the most logical understanding of the beast in Revelation 13:1-10 is that it symbolizes ". . . all the anti-God opposition by force that can ever be brought against the people of God, but to John and the saints to whom he wrote it definitely personified the empire (i.e., Roman) of their day." (Hailey, page 285.)

The sea in Daniel's vision seems clearly to symbolize "human societies or nations with their stormy upheavals, out of which the empires of earth arise" (Hailey, page 283). The beast coming out of the sea, then, in Revelation 13, is most likely representative of anti-God governments and forces which shall be in opposition to things sacred and Divine, and will bitterly persecute the saints of God. Certainly in the day when John received this Revelation (approximately 96 A.D.) the beast was the Roman empire! But the reason the book of Revelation is such an exciting, living book, is that in another time or place, the beast might well be some other ungodly, anti-God kingdom or nation. The beast John saw was like a leopard - fierce and swift in pouncing upon its prey; with feet like a bear, the claws of which were ready to rip and rend; and with a mouth like a lion, with frightening roaring and savage teeth able to devour! The beast had ten horns, even as the fourth beast in Daniel's vision (Dan 7:19-21), which is thought by most to be symbolic of great power. The ten horns had crowns and, since the world is depicted as worshipping the beast, I personally believe this means that people are inclined to "deify power." The seven heads would indicate complete infernal wisdom. Notice the similarity between the dragon of chapter 12 and the beast of chapter 13:1ff. Hailey comments, "The similarity of the two indicates that this beast is thoroughly satanic - he possesses the characteristics and qualities of the devil." This is surely borne out the picture of blasphemy being the name upon his heads, indicating "a totally irreverent attitude toward God and all that is sacred" (Hailey, page 284).

History records how Domitian, the Roman emperor in John's day, assumed the titles of deity and demanded to be addressed as "Supreme Lord and God" (Summers, page 175). Images of the Caesars were made so that emperor worship would be facilitated even in remote areas of the empire, and that would be very apparent as people were to publicly bow down to these images.

As to verse 3, that one of the heads of the beast was wounded as unto death, and then the wound was healed, most commentators seem to think this probably refers to the death of Nero, the Roman emperor, in about 68 A.D. Christians were given a relatively brief respite from the persecution he began, hence the "healing" of the wound, but it was

resumed again under Domitian. The Christians to whom John wrote the Revelation would certainly be knowledgeable of Nero's demise some thirty years earlier and the effects of his death. They were equally aware of the revival of persecution under Domitian, so the information in verse 3 would probably have been quite readily understood by them. But an alternate view is that this may well refer back to chapter 12:5, and what is involved there - namely, that Christ was resurrected, and that He ascended back to the Father where He was given power and dominion; this indeed was a stunning blow to the beast, but after awhile, it regrouped, or "healed" its wound and resumed its opposition to God and His purposes. I'm not really sure which would be the most likely view, or if perhaps there is yet another.

Notice, the work of the beast was to last forty-two months. This same length of time has already been mentioned four previous times: The holy city should be trod under foot for forty-two months (11:2). The witnesses should prophesy 1,260 days (11:3). The woman should spend 1,260 days in the wilderness (12:6). She would be nourished for a time, and times, and a half of times (12:14). Please observe how that the duration of these four parallel periods of time is exactly the same as that of the beast's authority and blasphemies. Brother Hailey points out, "This is related to the explanation given concerning Daniel's dream when he was told that the little horn who spoke great things made war with the saints, and prevailed against them ... and they (i.e., the saints) shall be given into his hand until a time, and times, and half a time" (Dan 7:21,25). We're talking of one period of time. Forty-two months is the same as 1,260 days, which is the same as three and a half years (a time - one year; times - two years; a half a time - a half year). All of those figures being symbolic of a limited duration of time. Some commentators understand it to depict the duration of the Roman pagan persecutions, while others understand it to depict the entire Christian dispensation. I personally subscribe to the latter view, though obviously it would include the former. Thus, throughout the gospel age, in whatever form the beast may appear, whether in the form of the Romans empire or some other anti-God, blasphemous government and force, the time of suffering incurred by Christians will be relatively brief!

Verses 8-10 indicate that true Christians will not worship the beast, regardless of what they must endure and that, ultimately, God's just retribution shall come upon the wicked. Christians find great consolation in knowing this!

Verses 11-18 - The second beast - the one that comes up out of the earth. This beast is described as having two horns like a lamb but it speaks like a dragon. This beast exercises power, forcing people to worship the first beast. This beast does great wonders, miracles, and signs, deceiving them that dwell on the earth, urging them to make an image of the beast and causing the image to speak. If anyone would not worship the image of the beast, this second beast would cause them to be killed. This second beast caused all who did worship the image of the first beast to have a mark in their right hand and on their foreheads, and that anyone without the mark could not buy or sell. The number of the beast is 666. This particular beast is later (16:13; 19:20; 20:10) referred to as "the

false prophet.” We feel safe in concluding that as the first beast was representative of anti-God secular governments and forces, so this second beast is symbolic of anti-truth, false religions. Though it had an appearance of a lamb yet its voice was as the dragon! This beast from the earth (remember the earth swallowing up the flood from the dragon’s mouth!? - 12:15,16) had imbibed all the lies and deceits Satan had concocted. You may recall that Jesus warned, “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves” (Mt 7:15). And again, “Many false prophets shall arise, and shall lead many astray” (Mt 24:11). And the apostle Paul wrote of “false apostles, deceitful workers, fashioning themselves into apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for even Satan fashioneth himself into an angel of light. It is no great thing therefore if his ministers also fashion themselves as ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works” (2 Cor 11:13-15).

Within the context of John’s day and time, the second beast had the form of emperor worship. “Communes” or “Concilia” (an official body which had charge of the state religion and had as its duty to force all to do homage to the image of the emperor) were set up in the Roman provinces. Anyone who refused to worship Caesar was either forbidden to sell or buy, transact business of any kind, hold a job in the trade guilds, or was just out right put to death. Emperor worship certainly was the manifestation of the beast out of the earth in the closing part of the first century A.D. and for the next two hundred years or so. Today that same beast is manifested among human kind in every false religion, and by every false teacher there is. It can be a perverted form of Christianity such as Catholicism or some form of Protestant Denominationalism, or a pagan religion such as Hinduism, Shintoism, Buddhism, etc. The second beast is symbolic of false religion and fallacious philosophy, whenever, wherever, and however it is manifested. Such has always been accompanied by lying wonders, signs, and deceitful miracles - such as the magicians of Pharaoh, men like Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8:9), in the apostate church (2 Thess 2:8,9), or in so-called “faith healers” like Oral Roberts and others of similar ilk and stamp. This second beast is an expert at deceiving the multitudes. Consider Mohammedanism, Mormonism, the Jehovah’s Witnesses sect, and the Roman Catholic system!

Verse 18 is of special interest. The number of the beast is the number of man - 666. I am certain within my own mind that the myriad attempts to use the process which was called by the Jews “Gematria” is just as erroneous as it can be! Gematria is the use of the letters of a word: by means of their combined numerical value, hidden meanings or names are derived in order to try to ascertain who “the man” is in verse 18. (Variable spellings, transliterating from one language into another, etc., could afford “cannon fodder” for almost any crazy idea a person would want to come up with on this matter.) While it is true that the ancients did indeed assign the letters of their alphabets certain numbers (such as the Roman system: V=5, X=10, C=100, I=1, etc.) it is also true that these were not always consistent, and could be quite arbitrary. To illustrate, in 1941 an “interpreter” of Revelation was so anxious to make Hitler the “beast,” that he came up with this game of

“Gematria.” He assigned the letter A the value of 100; B=101, C=102, D=103, etc., and thus, this result:

$$\begin{array}{rcl}
 & H & = 107 \\
 & I & = 108 \\
 & T & = 119 \\
 & L & = 111 \\
 & E & = 104 \\
 & R & = \underline{117} \\
 \text{therefore, HITLER} & & = 666
 \end{array}$$

(Ray Summers relates this in his book, page 176). Obviously, to the thinking student of Revelation, Hitler *is not* who John had in mind in 13:18 even though Hitler and others like him through the history of the Christian dispensation might be comprehensively included in our understanding of the sea-beast. Yet to try to “force” the 666 to mean Hitler is absurd! Equally fallacious would be the attempt to do the same thing with any other name whether it be Nero, or the Pope, or whoever. It is my conviction that 666 is the number of man, *period!* Not a particular man, but man in general, however he vaunts himself against God. The number 7 is the Bible number of perfection, and only God is perfect. Man always falls short of God. While 7 symbolizes the perfect, 6 symbolizes the imperfect. The number 6 to the Judeo-Christian mind was a symbol of dread, doom and failure. Tripling the number - 666 - only multiplied that feeling, representing the completeness of doom and failure. And that is the way man, pitted against God, is - doomed to failure! Thus, brother Hailey observed, “It is now concluded that the number of the beast, 666, stands for the complete and total failure of all human systems and efforts antagonistic to God and His Christ - all are doomed to ultimate and complete defeat and failure. This explanation is in harmony with the theme and purpose of Revelation” (page 299). Hendriksen comments, “Let not the believer despair. Let him remember that the number of the beast is the number of man. Now, man was created on the sixth day. Six, moreover, is not seven and never reaches seven. It ever fails to attain to perfection; that is, it never becomes seven. Six means missing the mark, failure. Seven means perfection, victory. Rejoice O church of God! The victory is on thy side. The number of the beast is 666, that is, failure upon failure upon failures. It is the number of MAN, for the beast glories in MAN, hence, must fail!” (page 182).

Richard Rogers, on page 41 of his booklet, had an interesting thought . . . the further man tries to go it without God, the further away from God he gets, as is illustrated:

$$\begin{array}{rcl}
 7 & 77 & 777 \\
 -6 & -66 & -666 \\
 \hline
 1 & 11 & 111
 \end{array}$$



## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Chapter 14 can be divided into three sections: (1) Verses 1-5, (2) Verses 6-13 and (3) Verses 14-20. The first section is a picture of the Lamb and the 144,000 on Mt. Zion. The second section pertains to the messages spoken by three angels giving admonition, warning, and comfort. This section ends with a pronouncement from a voice from heaven concerning the blessed "dead in Christ." The third section revolves around the time of harvest, and the wrath of God upon the wicked.

Verses 1-5 - These verses deal with what John saw and heard. What he saw was the Lamb and the 144,000 standing on Mt. Zion. He heard a voice from heaven which sounded like many waters and great thunder and harpers harping with their harps. A new song is sung before the throne. The 144,000 redeemed are described as "without blemish" before the throne of God. As brother Pack observes, "It is logical to see in this picture the final triumph of the redeemed" (part 2, page 14). Concerning the 144,000 Hendriksen comments, "This is the sealed multitude of chapter 7. There these saints were still living on earth, surrounded by enemies. Here (14:1-5) they are enjoying the blessedness of heaven after the final judgment. Although the dragon has tried his utmost to make them unfaithful to their Lord, and although he has employed the two beasts to assist him, not a single one of the one hundred forty-four thousand is missing 'when the roll is called up yonder'" (page 183).

Generally, I agree with brother Hailey's understanding of Revelation, but on this section I do not share his view. He thinks this scene is not a heavenly scene, but one still on earth - the faithful (the 144,000) around the Lamb on Mt. Zion, the latter being symbolic of a refuge and stronghold for God's people. After giving much material from the Old Testament showing how Zion was understood by God's people under the old law, brother Hailey then states: "From the relationship of Zion to God in the Old Testament and the prophecies of the Messiah and Zion found there, and from the application of Old Testament prophecies quoted in the New Testament as being fulfilled in Jesus, we conclude that John is not describing a final scene in heaven, but the Zion of the Messiah to which the saints of this dispensation have come. John's use of the definite article, the Mount Zion, further confirms this view. The scene symbolizes security, permanence, and a victorious spirit of rejoicing enjoyed by the church on earth at any time, because the Lamb is in their midst." While I have tremendous respect for the scholarship of brother Hailey, and can see his point on the matter, still it seems to me that the scene is a heavenly scene. Brother Roberson, pages 104-107, pretty well takes the same view as brother Hailey. But brother Pack, Hendriksen, Rogers, and Hinds think it is indeed a scene of heaven.

Further considerations - in chapter 7:1-8 the 144,000 are depicted as all of God's faithful ones still on earth, while the great multitude is seen as having come out of the great tribulation and in heaven, verses 9-17. While the people of God live on this earth certainly they are going to stand with Christ on the Mt. Zion described in Hebrews 12:22- 25, but

ultimately will be with Him in glory. The Mt. Zion on earth (symbolic of the church) will extend into the eternal realm of bliss, just as the “eternal kingdom of heaven” is a continuation, so to speak, of the kingdom of heaven (the church) which is now in existence on earth. Regardless of one’s view on the details of this section in chapter 14:1-5, we can all surely agree that it depicts triumph and victory for God’s faithful ones!

Verses 4 and 5 present these as being a pure people, undefiled, without blemish, upright, and truthful. This certainly corresponds with the way the Lord wants His church to be. Please read such Scriptures as Ephesians 5:27, James 1:27, Philippians 2:15,16 and 1 Peter 2:9-12 plus many others that could be cited. We as Christians must “overcome the world!” Read again the closing part of each of the letters to the seven churches of Asia in chapters 2 and 3.

In summation on verses 1-5, I think we could say that whether the scene refers to the church on earth or the final scene of the redeemed in heaven, that it most assuredly depicts the Divine presence, spiritual security, permanence, a victorious spirit, and rejoicing for God’s people in song before Him!

Verses 6-13 - John sees an angel flying in the midst of heaven with the everlasting gospel to be preached unto every creature. The angel speaks with a loud voice saying, “Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come; and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.” From this we see the need and sense the urgency of proclaiming the good news to all the world. Remember, the visions given John in Revelation are not necessarily in sequence of actual happening. That is obvious. Verses 1-5 give us a view of the ultimate triumph of God’s people. But here in verses 6,7 we have a scene depicting the need to preach the message of salvation and to call people’s attention to the majesty of the Great God of this universe! In our minds, the latter should have preceded the first, but we must remember the book of Revelation is comprised of a series of visions which reemphasize over and over again the same basic things - warnings to the wicked of impending judgement and God’s wrath, and calls to repentance; encouragement to the suffering saints of God and assurances that right will triumph and that God’s people will be 100% victorious. The overall message is what is important - not the sequence in which the visions are given. How desperately urgent it is now for people to realize that God is, and that He made heaven and earth. All men everywhere need to recognize that, and reverence Him and give Him the glory!

In verse 8 a second angel announces that Babylon is fallen and describes Babylon as that great city which has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath (more properly, “the passion”) of her fornication. On this last phrase of verse 8, the Arndt-Gingrich Greek Lexicon states that the meaning of the Greek word *thumos* which is rendered by the English word “wrath” in the KJV and ASV can also mean “passion.” This certainly makes for another possible rendering of the phrase, and I believe more properly so. Thus, the RSV words it, “. . . she who made all nations drink the wine of her impure passion.” The

NASV renders it, “. . . she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality.” The NIV reads, “. . . which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries.” I personally believe that any of the last three is preferable over the KJV or ASV, and I think that will be rather clear as we delve into the meaning of “Babylon - that great city.”

First, let us observe that Babylon's fall is announced in Revelation, here, before it has actually occurred, as described more in detail in chapters 17 and 18. This is what is referred to as “prolepsis” which means “stating something as having happened before it actually has.” It is the pronouncement of, or the dating of, an event before its actual time. For example, Jeremiah announced the fall of literal Babylon long before it actually fell (Jer 51:8). This method of expression is rather common in prophetic writings. But the main question in verse 8 revolves around “Babylon - the great city.” Exactly what does this refer to? I think unquestionably our minds must go back to ancient Babylon that carried the people of God into actual captivity. The prophet Jeremiah said of that Babylon: “Babylon hath been a golden cup in the Lord's hand, that made all the earth drunken; the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore, the nations are mad” (Jer 51:7). Thus, as the literal kingdom of Babylon, the great Babylonian Empire of the 6th and 5th centuries B.C., had a corrupting influence among the nations of that time and held God's people in bondage, we must view the symbolic Babylon of Revelation 14, 17 and 18 with actual Babylon in mind. In John's day, toward the end of the first century A.D., Babylon would undoubtedly have symbolized in the minds of the Christians who lived then, the Roman Empire. Rome was everything this symbol depicted. Its wickedness and gross immoralities are historical facts. The description in Revelation 17 graphically portrays Rome! But, as I have tried so hard to point out in this study, Revelation is a living book, and it has application for Christians throughout the Christian dispensation. If Rome was the exclusive fulfillment of Babylon then it would no longer have any real application for us, because the Roman Empire has long since ceased to be. While we are right in applying it to the Roman Empire back in the day John wrote the book, its application today would be to whatever forces that be that are having a corrupting, seducing influence upon people and taking them from God! Thus, brother Pack states: “Babylon the great symbolizes far more than the city of ancient Rome with its wicked idolatry and corrupting emperor worship. It symbolizes all of the influences and powers of a God-rejecting world under its various forms down through the ages.” Hendriksen says, “Babylon is the world as center of seduction.” Hailey states, “The logical conclusion is the phrase looks to the passionate lusts of the world represented by Rome in the first four centuries A.D., and by others as time goes on.”

Verses 9-11 certainly spell doom for those who engulf themselves in serving Satan! While the ancients often diluted their wine by mixing it with spices and water (as stated in the I.S.B.E., Vol. V., page 3087) yet the “wine of God's wrath” will be unmixed (undiluted)! It will not be mixed with mercy, for the day of mercy and longsuffering will be passed! His wrath will be vented in its full fury! Commenting on verse 11, Hailey observes, “As the day

of the righteous is a glorious, eternal day, the night of the wicked is a dreadful, eternal night; the two abide side by side, continuing simultaneously. What a terrible price to pay for rejecting the Christ and bowing to Caesar as Lord!"

Commenting on verses 12,13, brother Hailey says, "The patience (steadfastness) of the saints was in accepting death or captivity for their faith (see 13:10). Steadfastness is developed by meeting faithfully the trials which come because of one's relationship to Christ and the gospel (Jas 1:2-4; Rom 5:3). The message is: In the light of ultimate ends, be steadfast." On verse 1 in particular Hailey states: "The three former messages were delivered by angels; the voice now heard is of unrevealed heavenly origin. In the message of the first angel the earth was called upon to heed the gospel and the warning of judgment. In the second, the fall of Babylon was decreed as if already accomplished; it would be folly, therefore, to trust in the world-city. The third angel set forth the consequence befalling those who would prolong their life on earth by worshiping the beast and his image. This life might be extended for a few years, but a second death awaited it in the divine judgment. There is next revealed by the voice from heaven the destiny of those who refuse to burn incense demanded by the empire; their earthly life may be terminated by force, but the real life continues in glory beyond."

Verses 14-20 - verse 14 introduces for us a new scene, and yet closely related to the preceding verses. In my considered evaluation of these verses I can come to no other conclusion but that this is indeed a vision of the final judgment in its twofold aspect - (1) the ingathering of the good fruit; i.e., the receiving to glory of the faithful of God; and (2) the trampling of the wicked in the winepress of God's wrath! It seems apparent to me that verses 14-16 depict the gleanings of the firstfruits, the harvest of God's own unto Himself. As John the Baptist said of Jesus, ". . . he will gather his wheat into the garner" (Mt 3:12).

Brother Pack observes, "There are two sides to judgment. The harvest of grain occurs in Jesus' teachings as a symbol of the final judgment (Mk 4:29; Mt 13:39; cf. Mt 24:30,31). Both the harvest and the gathering of the grapes in connection with judgment are referred to in the prophecy of Joel, "Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down: for the press is full, the vats overflow (RSV); for their wickedness is great" (Joel 3:13).

On verses 17-20 Pack comments: "In the light of Isaiah 63:2-4, the winepress symbolizes the wrath of God, and the treading of the winepress stains the feet and the garments of the treaders with the red juices of the grapes like blood, thus becoming a figure for the utter trampling down of the enemies and the judgment of God against those that are rebellious to his will. We are reminded here in anticipation of the scene in chapter 19:11-16 that it is the Son of God who there treads the winepress of the wrath of God. This brief mention is simply a short summary of what is more fully described in 19:11-21 and 20:7-10." Hailey comments, "The winepress of Jehovah's wrath must eventually be experienced by those that leave God out of their lives and thinking. All fruit of man's

rebellion and sin against Him must be trodden under foot. The vine of earth and its fruit stand in contrast to the true vine and its fruit, which is borne to the glory of God (Jn 15:1-8)."

On verse 20 in particular Hendriksen gives his idea: "The vine of the earth symbolizes the entire multitude of evil men; its grapes are the individual unbelievers. Just as grapes are trodden, pressed, crushed, so the wicked are going to be destroyed, punished everlastingly. The grapes are cast into the great winepress of the wrath of God and crushed. In the picture which John sees a lake of blood results. It is so deep that horses can swim in it. It spreads in all directions to the extent of sixteen hundred stadia. Remember that four is the number of the universe, of the earth. This is the judgment of the earth, of the wicked. Ten is the number of completeness. Hence, sixteen hundred, which is the product of four times ten times ten, would seem to indicate that this is the thoroughly complete judgment of the earth, of the wicked. And the winepress of God's wrath was trodden down outside of the Holy City!" Hailey comments: "The picture indicates the gory completeness of God's judgment upon the wicked, as the horsemen wade through the sea of blood that reaches to the bridles."



## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Actually chapters 15 and 16 go together. Chapter 15 introduces the bowls of wrath and chapter 16 tells of the pouring out of those bowls. For the sake of our lesson sheet outlines, we will take them a chapter at a time.

I think that it is good for our study of the book of Revelation that we keep going back by way of review, summarizing and comparing. For example, the first 14 chapters of the book teach us that throughout the Christian dispensation a pattern recurs time and again: (1) The church, proclaiming the gospel message, with all its faults and imperfections notwithstanding, is still the light of the world because of the ever-abiding presence of Christ (chapters 1-3). (2) God reigns supreme and Christ, the Lamb, is worthy - always! (chapters 4,5). (3) But wherever on earth the gospel is proclaimed, there is going to be opposition and persecution. God's people are going to be subjected to many trials and afflictions, but will ultimately triumph (chapters 6,7). (4) Time and again God warns the wicked and partial judgments come upon them, portending the final wrath to come! Unfortunately, the world of evil fails to repent! (chapters 8-11). (5) While the deeper conflict is between Christ and Satan, it manifests itself on earth as evil forces out of Godless society, and false religions that wage war against the church. But all the works of men, pitted against God, are doomed to failure! (chapters 12,13). (6) Chapter 14 is a general outline of the first 13 chapters.

There is a very definite similarity between the sounding of the seven trumpets in chapters 8-11 and the pouring out of the bowls of wrath in chapters 15 and 16. Many commentators think, as did Augustine (a renowned theologian and Christian apologist who lived from 354 to 430 A.D.) that the seals, the trumpets, and the bowls are parallel, covering the entire span of the Christian dispensation. Some, while in general agreement in seeing the similarities, think that there is a progression of sorts; for example, trumpets basically warn, but bowls are poured out. Through the centuries of the Christian era God warns repeatedly. But it seems that there is at least a degree of progression, as bowls being poured out would indicate more than warnings! That we might continually glean more and more insight into the book of Revelation, it might be well for us to note some of the similarities between the seven trumpets and the seven bowls of wrath, as noted by Hendriksen in "More Than Conquerors" and as detailed by Pack in his commentary, part 2, pages 21,22:

### The Trumpets

1. Hail and fire, mingled with blood, and a third part of all trees and green grass was burned up (8:7).

### The Bowls

1. The pouring resulted in a noisome (troublesome, injurious) and grievous sore upon the evil (16:2).

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 2. A third part of the sea becomes blood and a third part of sea life, and ships, are destroyed (8:8,9). | 2. The sea becomes blood as a dead man and every living thing in the sea dies (16:3).    |
| 3. A third part of the fresh waters become wormwood, and many die (8:10,11).                             | 3. The fresh waters become blood, and God's judgments are righteous (16:4-7).            |
| 4. A third part of the sun, moon, and stars were darkened (8:12).  | 4. The sun scorches with fire, and men blaspheme (16:8,9).                               |
| 5. The demonic locusts torment for a time (9:1-11).  | 5. Darkness brings gnawing pain, but still they blaspheme (16:10,11).                    |
| 6. The hellish horsemen from the Euphrates kill a third part of men (9:13-21).                           | 6. Euphrates is dried up and demons gather the kings of the earth for battle (16:12-16). |
| 7. The time of judgment (11:15-19).  | 7. The time of judgment (16:17-21).  |

Brother Pack borrows from an author named R. H. Charles ("International Critical Commentary") to make the following observations: "The first four seals and the sixth seal affect all men, while only the faithful are the victims under the fifth seal. The sixth seal presents signs of the end. The first four trumpets affect men, but the faithful are protected from the last three trumpets. However, in the bowls, the final judgment is brought upon the unbelieving world. The very order in which the materials come in this book show us that we are not dealing with a continuous historical pattern, nor with chronological principles. The description of the harvest of the righteous and the vintage of the wicked in chapter 14 breaks off abruptly at the beginning of the 15th chapter. This should make the student very suspicious of any system of interpretation that treats the book as a chronological pattern for all future history."

John's vision, comprising chapter 15, can be divided into two parts: verses 1-4, and verses 5-8. Though the total of chapter 15 deals primarily with the seven angels preparing to pour forth the seven bowls of God's wrath, there is inserted a picture of victorious people of God singing the song of Moses and the Lamb. With all the above thoughts in mind, let us proceed with a brief analysis of this short chapter:

Verses 1-4 - The chapter begins with John seeing "another sign in heaven." This is the third time John has seen a sign in heaven, the other two being found in 12:1,3. The first of the three introduces Christ, thus hope and salvation; the second introduced Satan, thus sin and trouble; the third introduces the wrath of God to be poured out upon the wicked . . . upon Satan and those who've given themselves to following him. The phraseology of verse

1 would indicate this is a final or last outpouring of God's wrath, suggesting the filled or finished judgment of God. In verses 2-4 John sees those who had gained victory over the beast, his image, his mark, and the number of his name, standing on (or by) a sea of glass mingled with fire, having harps of God. The sea mentioned here is probably the same as the one mentioned in the throne scene of 4:6. Refer back to the outline sheet on chapter 4, where there we gave as the best probable explanation of the "sea" - that it was symbolic of the transcendence of God, separating the creature from Creator.

The fire upon the sea in 15:2 refers either to the wrath of God that is about to be poured out upon the wicked world, or it could possibly symbolize the fiery trials through which the redeemed had passed to gain the victory they were now to experience. Brother Hailey is of the opinion that the fire represents the trials through which the redeemed have come to gain access before the Creator and gives several Biblical references to consider: Zechariah 13:9; Malachi 3:2ff.; 1 Corinthians 3:12-15 and 1 Peter 1:7. In addition, one might consider 1 Peter 4:12-17, Matthew 5:10-12 and James 1:2-4, 12. As to their having harps, see the comments made on 5:8. These are singing the song of Moses, and the song of the Lamb. The song is obviously a song of victory and praise, as was song by Moses and the Israelites upon crossing the Red Sea (Ex 15:1-19). Moses was the deliverer of God's people then, but Christ is now! Thus, the song is "of Moses . . . and of the Lamb!" The gist of the song is recorded for us in verses 3 and 4 and is a combination of praises from the Psalms, prophets, and Moses. Each phrase is deserving of our reflection.

Verses 5-8 - brother Pack observes, "The expression 'tabernacle of the testimony' is a common Old Testament expression for the ancient tabernacle. It was called this because it contained the ark of the covenant, inside of which the tables of the testimony of the ten commandments were kept. The seven angels coming out of the temple are dressed in pure white linen, like the dress of the priests in the ancient tabernacle." Hailey affirms that the temple John saw was "the Holy of Holies in heaven, which was symbolized by the inner sanctuary of the tabernacle . . . 'The tabernacle [tent] of the testimony' erected by Moses (Num 1:50; 9:11; 10:11; 17:7; and 18:2) was so called because within the Holy of Holies rested the ark of the covenant containing the tables of the law, called 'the testimony,' which God gave Israel (Ex 25:21). Previously John had seen the sanctuary opened to reveal the ark of the covenant, the seat of God's righteous laws (11:19); now it was opened that the angels of judgment against those who rejected Him and His law might come forth." There is variance in reading between the KJV and the ASV on whether to render the word "linen" or "stone" in verse 6, regarding the attire of the seven angels. But this is one case where probably the KJV is preferable over the ASV. The NASV and the NIV both render it "linen." The controversy between the choice is rather technical and not really that consequential. So, while it is interesting to read from the commentators about it, I see nothing much to be gained by relating it, but did want to give you this brief explanation in case of your noticing the variance. The main thing is that these were angels of "high rank" given an assignment of executing Divine wrath. For an explanation of "one of the four

living creatures” please see the outline on chapter 4:8. The living creature gave unto the seven angels seven golden “vials” (KJV) full of the wrath of God. Hailey writes, “The Greek word for bowl (phiale), that is, a broad shallow vessel or deep saucer, occurs only in Revelation (twelve times), and is to be distinguished from the cup (14:10), which is exclusively a drinking vessel. The bowl is similar to some of the vessels used in Old Testament sacrifices and ritual.”

On verse 8 brother Pack observes, “The figure of God’s glory filling the sanctuary with smoke comes from the Old Testament” (see Isa 6:4; Ezek 10:4; Ex 40:35, 2 Chron 7:2,3, etc.). Hailey suggests the possibility of multiple explanation for the smoke: “ The smoke filling the temple could be exclusively symbolic of God’s glory, or it could also carry with the idea of God’s anger in judgment toward the wicked, or it may also include His favorable protective presence (Isa 4:5) over His saints. It could possibly signify all three, though most probably the glory of God. No one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels be fulfilled.” Hailey quotes the distinguished commentator, Swete, who said, “The Divine judgments are impenetrable until they are past; when the last plague has fulfilled its course, the smoke will vanish, and the Vision of God be seen.” Hailey then comments, “No intercessions can change the determinate counsel of God; but when it is fulfilled, we can then see clearly that which is now obscured.”

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

In our lesson sheet on chapter 15, we pointed out that chapters 15 and 16 really go together since they concern the bowls of wrath. Chapter 15 includes a picture of triumph for God's people, whereas chapter 16 deals exclusively with the outpouring of Divine wrath. This prompted brother Hailey to observe, "Before the contents of the bowls were poured out upon the earth, John was permitted to see the victorious saints standing upon the sea of glass and to hear them singing the song of triumph. This would assure the saints to whom John was writing of their own victory. With this assurance and consolation for the saints on earth, the time had now come for the judgments to fall. God's judgment upon the wicked of earth was set forth in the closing verses of chapter 14, where it was symbolized as a vintage - so why is judgment pictured again here? There seems to be little doubt that before us is a repetition of that judgment in which God reveals its intensity. The present vision also reveals the finality of judgment upon the forces of evil and God's complete use of all His weapons in the administration of justice."

As to whether chapter 16 depicts the final judgment of God, or judgments that might occur at intervals throughout history, there is some difference of opinion. Hailey seems to think the scene of final judgment is not introduced until chapter 20. I personally feel that the final judgment is depicted not just once in Revelation, but several times - in 6:12-17; 14:17-20 and all of chapter 16, as well as in remaining portions of the book to which our study has not yet come. But whether we view these as pictures of literal renderings of judgment that might occur throughout the Christian dispensation on the forces evil, or visions of the final judgment which shall be at the end of time, one thing is sure; these sections of the book depict judgment, the outpouring of divine wrath upon the wicked - and we can understand that, whenever and wherever such occurs. From the sounding of the seven trumpets we learn that throughout the age God warns of impending wrath by bringing partial judgments, but it all points to one final day of retribution!

Ray Summers, page 186, comments by way of introduction to chapter 16, "There are many similarities between these (i.e., the bowls of wrath) and the trumpet plagues. Like the trumpets, they represent woes upon nature and upon man; and like trumpets, a part of their symbolism is parallel with the Egyptian plagues. But there are marked differences between the bowls and the trumpets. The trumpet judgments were calls to repentance; the bowl judgments are visitations of punishment when hope of repentance is passed. The trumpet judgments were partial, touching only a third part of their objects; the bowl judgments are final, touching the whole of the object. The trumpet judgments did not reach man until the sounding of the fifth trumpet; the bowl judgments fall upon man from the very first. The general effect of God's final retributive wrath alone appears to be important." (In our lesson sheet on chapter 15 I gave you a brief comparison of the similarities between the seven trumpets of warning and the seven bowls of wrath.)

In chapter 16 I will continue to point out interesting things about such a comparison as well as to direct you to a recall of the plagues God brought upon the Egyptians in the long ago. Note the comments of Hendriksen: "In studying these bowls be sure to observe their striking resemblance to some of the plagues of Egypt. These plagues recorded in Exodus 7-10 foreshadow all the manifestations of God's wrath upon the wicked. Whoever refuses to be warned by the trumpets of judgment - Revelation 8-11 - is 'destroyed' by the bowls of wrath." (Pages 193,194.)

As to a precise understanding of what each specific bowl might mean, Hailey comments, "It is very difficult to assign definite meaning to the specific bowls. One cannot afford to be dogmatic; he can present only what he interprets to be the message from God." Hailey then quotes from three other very respected commentators, Pieters, Lenski, and Milligan, who all make humble admissions of "not having all the answers," as is seen in the following statement made by Milligan. "No attempt to determine the special meaning of the objects thus visited by the wrath of God - the land, the sea, the rivers and fountains of the waters, and the sun - has yet been, or is ever perhaps likely to be, successful; and the general effect alone appears to be important." In these brief notes I am not going to try to go into depth on all that has been written about these bowls of wrath. To do so would go far beyond the scope of these notes. I will simply try to give you the gist of the chapter as best I can in a concise way, urging you to consider primarily the overall thrust of what is taught – the outpouring of divine wrath upon the wicked!

Verses 1,2 - The first bowl. Most commentators think the "great voice out of the temple" is that of God. That is probably correct since He alone knows when the final day of retribution is coming (Mk 13:32). This first bowl does not correspond with the sounding of the first trumpet, which was hail and fire, mingled with blood, and affected a third part of all the trees and green grass. It does however, bear striking similarity to the sixth plague God brought upon the Egyptians, which was boils (Ex 9:8-11). Brother Pack comments, "The sixth Egyptian plague affected both men and beasts; here the bowl affects those who have the mark of the beast. While in the trumpets the judgment was limited, here it is all embracing."

As to the meaning of "noisome and grievous sores" let us note the widely accepted reference works of Thayer, and Arndt and Gingrich. Thayer defines "noisome" as "troublesome, injurious, pernicious, destructive, baneful." It is bad and/or distressing, whether to mind or body. Arndt and Gingrich define the Greek word rendered "grievous" as indicating that which is "painful, virulent, serious." The same authors say the word translated "sore" means an "abscess or ulcer, a foul and angry sore."

Notice from verse 1 that the seven bowls of wrath are poured out "into the earth" which means on the world of unregenerate men. Keep in mind that all through the book of Revelation reference is made to earth-dwellers and worldlings (in some form of terminology or another) to distinguish between them (the people who live apart from God and who

are living for the world and not God) and the redeemed, heaven-bound people of God. In verse 2 the first bowl of wrath is poured out only on those who had the mark of the beast – those who are clearly identified as belonging to Satan. They have shunned that which is right and true and have submitted to false religions and/or given themselves to the pursuit of the things of this world. By what has been uppermost in their minds and hearts (worldly goals and aims) and by what they have done, they have identified themselves with and have the mark of the beast. (Review chapter 13, especially verses 15-17, and 14:9-12.)

Verse 3 - The second bowl. This bowl is very similar to the second trumpet (8:8,9) as it pertains to the sea. The second trumpet, however, only affected a third part of sea life, whereas with the second bowl it appears that everything in the sea dies. Remember, the trumpets warned, and only partial judgment was rendered through them. But the bowls are the final outpouring of God's wrath. They are not given to warn, but to punish. With this bowl, the sea becomes blood like that of a dead man. A repugnant, dreadful scene! Can you imagine the entire sea being blood? Putrefying! Sickening! And that is the way the final judgment is going to be for the non-redeemed! Do you see why our task of reaching folks now with the gospel is urgent? (Remember our comments about the sea of chapter 13:1ff?)

Verses 4-7 - The third bowl. This bowl is poured out upon the rivers and fountains of waters, and these became blood. As the third trumpet (8:10,11) affected the fresh waters, in like manner so does the third bowl. It bears a remarkable resemblance to the first Egyptian plague (Ex 7:14-25). The waters involved in the third bowl are obviously symbolic of those who persecuted the church (notice verse 6) and caused "rivers of blood" to be shed. The word "they" refers to the persecutors of God's people. "Saints" refers to martyred Christians, and "prophets" to the preachers and teachers. The persecutors are deserving of this righteous outpouring of Divine wrath from the eternal God!

Verses 8,9 - The fourth bowl. As the fourth trumpet (8:12) effected the sun, moon and stars so that there was darkness, the fourth bowl was poured out upon the sun. The result is not darkness, but scorching heat. Men, evidently recognizing God as the source of this tormenting, searing, punishing, heat, blaspheme God! They obstinately refuse to repent or give God the glory! Likewise, this reaction is repeated in verses 11 and 21. Notice that these first four bowls of wrath are cast in symbols pertaining to the natural world - the earth, sea, rivers, and sun. In this respect they certainly correspond with the sounding of the first four of the seven trumpets (8:7-12).

Verses 10,11 - The fifth bowl. This bowl is poured out upon the "very throne" of the beast. "... his kingdom was darkened; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they repented not of their works." For a discussion of the beasts review chapter 13, especially verses 17,18. "The beast" represents the totality of man's wisdom, strength, power, cunning, and rebellion pitted against God. The throne of the beast symbolizes the very heart of the issue

of man's (instigated by Satan) struggle against God. "They" would refer to all those who were deceived by Satan; those who joined in with multitudes of others in rebellion against God; those who had given themselves over to the kingdom of darkness!

The reader can well imagine the throne of the beast to be symbolic of whatever form of "man-power" is aligned against God at a given time in history - such as in the day in which the Revelation was given to John and then sent to the seven churches of Asia. There can be no doubt that to them the Roman Empire, and specifically the Emperor on his throne in Rome, would be that which was depicted in the symbolism of verses 10,11. To my mind, and much more comprehensively viewed, the outpouring of this fifth bowl of wrath is upon all those who on earth have willingly given themselves over to the kingdom of darkness, who have given allegiance to the devil, who have rejected the Christ, and ignored God and His warnings. In specific form, this could certainly picture the Roman Empire for at least the first 3 centuries A.D., and it could certainly picture the Roman Catholic Church from the time of its complete formation in the latter part of the fifth century until present. I personally view it more comprehensively to include specifics, but more generally.

Verses 12-16 - The sixth bowl. The sixth trumpet (9:13-21) and the sixth bowl both have to do with the river Euphrates, though differently. In the sixth trumpet, enormous numbers of hellish horsemen are sent from the Euphrates to kill a third part of men. In these verses the sixth bowl is poured out upon the river Euphrates and its waters dried up so that kings from the east might be able to cross over. This indeed is the hardest section of chapter 16. Any number of questions arise in our minds - what is the significance of the river Euphrates? Who are the kings of the east? The dragon, the beast, and the false prophet? The three frogs?

(1) The Euphrates river is formed by two sources from the Armenian mountains, approximately 500 miles north-northeast of Jerusalem, and following a course mostly south and southeastward for 1,780 miles into the Persian Gulf. It cut right through the heart of Assyria and Babylonia. The river Euphrates was to form the eastern boundary of the land God promised to Abraham (Gen 15:18; Deut 1:7; Josh 1:4). This was partially fulfilled in Reuben's possession of the inheritance, 1 Chronicles 5:9 and more completely so during Solomon's time, 1 Kings 4:21. Later, it was at the river Euphrates where Pharaoh was defeated by the armies of Babylon, opening the way for those armies to push westward (Jer 46:1-10). So, the literal river Euphrates is of ancient geographical and historical significance. But, as brother Hailey states, "This Euphrates (i.e., in Rev 16:12) here is not a physical or geographical location; it symbolizes a barrier or deterrent to invasion, which is now removed." Thus, preparing the way for the final scene of conflict - the battle of Armageddon. In other words, God allows or permits the gathering together of the forces of evil for this one last, great confrontation which will be understood better as we continue to define those things mentioned in verses 12,13.

(2) The kings of the east - "These kings . . . are the forces gathered together as enemies of God's cause, mustered by the unclean spirits, 'to the war of the great day of God, the Almighty' (verse 14)" (Hailey, page 333). They are not literal kings, as some suppose, but representative of all the evil forces that war against God.

(3) The dragon, of course, is Satan himself . . . 12:9.

(4) The beast is symbolic of all the anti-God opposition which is forcefully brought against the people of God (anti-God governments and powers, and forces). Review all the comments made on chapter 13, verses 1-10.

(5) The false prophet signifies false religion in whatever form. In the days of the Roman Empire it was Emperor worship, but in subsequent centuries it has taken, and still does, many and variable forms. See comments on chapter 13, verses 11-18.

(6) The three frogs, or unclean spirits. I will share with you what some of the commentators from whom we've been studying have to say. "The three frogs perhaps symbolize some form of evil propaganda since they came from the mouths of the three (i.e., the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet). They are the offspring of the devil, of godless government, and of false religion. They are the real enemies of Christ. True religion has no worse enemies, and Satan no better allies, than false propaganda" (Summers, page 189). Hendriksen on page 197 states, "These spirits or demons are compared to frogs in order to indicate their abominable, loathsome, repulsive character. They represent satanic, hellish ideas, plans, projects, methods, enterprises, hell-born, and introduced by hell into the sphere of thought and action. Thus, when the kings of earth gather to battle against believers, this battle or persecution is inspired by hell itself." Brother Pack says, "These frogs coming out of the mouth of the three great representatives of evil in the book of Revelation simply show the kind of evil influences that will go forth in teaching and action. This group of frogs reminds one of the Egyptian plague of frogs, yet they are more terrible. By their working of signs that deceive, and by their lying teaching, they are able to deceive men, for they are spoken of here as 'the spirits of the devil.' They go forth to gather the rulers of the whole God-defying world to battle on the great day of God."

Brother Hailey in his comments on verse 1 reminds us of the great river of lies that came forth from the mouth of the dragon which was swallowed by the earth (12:15,16). He also reminds us of the blasphemies that came out of the mouth of the beast in 12:5,6. In like manner, the evil propaganda that came out of the mouth of the false prophet in 13:14ff. He writes, "Frogs are thought of as unclean, loathsome, a nuisance and an aggravation; their croaking probably symbolizes confusion . . . according to the law such creatures were to be held in abomination (Lev 11:9ff)." So what we see in verses 12-14 is the mustering

together of all the forces of evil, apparently to do battle with God and the forces of right. This is referred to as “the battle of that great day of God Almighty.” I concur with brother Pack in his conclusion that this must refer to the final day of judgment, citing 2 Peter 3:12 as part of his reason. On this point I do not agree with brother Hailey who states that he believes this to be something less than the actual final day of judgment. Also, I certainly disagree with brother Rogers and Ray Summers who see in all this the literal coming of the Parthians to destroy the Roman Empire. I believe it is referring to the final day, the day of judgment, the day when Christ comes again, or why else would the contents of verse 1 be inserted between the “great day of God” of verse 14 and “Armageddon” of verse 16?

Verse 1 contains the third of the seven beatitudes found in the book of Revelation, the others being found in 10; 14:13; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7 and 22:14. Indeed, happy (blessed) is the individual who is vigilant and watchful for the coming of the Lord, and who is careful not to soil his spiritual garments with the stains of sin. For comparative study consider Ephesians 5:27, James 1:27b and Revelation 3:4,5. Brother Pack states, “Christians are to be watchful and ready, clothed in the garments of righteousness . . . the one who watches and keeps his garments is one who will be blessed, for he will have no shame.” Hendriksen comments, “When the world, under the leadership of Satan, anti-Christian government, anti-Christian religion - the dragon, the beast, the false prophet - is gathered against the church for the final battle, and the need is greatest; when God’s children, oppressed on every side, cry for help; then suddenly, dramatically, Christ will appear to deliver his people. That final tribulation and that appearance of Christ on clouds of glory to deliver his people, that is Har-Magedon.”

Which brings us to verse 16 and the mention of Armageddon (KJV) or Har-Magedon (ASV). Concerning this place brother Pack states, “Most commentators relate it in some way to Megiddo, which was a famous fortress in the land of Palestine guarding the mountain pass from the plain of Jezreel to the coastal plain. It was here that Barak and Deborah overthrew Sisera and his forces (Jud 5:19-21), and Pharaoh Necho defeated and slew Josiah (2 Chron 35:20-24). Therefore, it has been interpreted as the mountain of Megiddo.” Many other notable battles were fought there, or very near there . . . many, many in the plains of Jezreel (also known as the valley of Esdraelon), such as Gideon’s victory over the Midianites (Jud 5:19-21), and Saul’s and Jonathan’s deaths at the eastern extremity of the plain (1 Sam 31:1-6). King Ahaziah, in league with king Joram of Israel, died there, slain at the command of Jehu (2 Kgs 9:27). It has often been cited that more human blood has been shed on the plains of Jezreel near Megiddo than at any other one place on earth!

“Armageddon,” as Hendriksen states, “is the symbol of every battle in which, when the need is greatest and believers are oppressed, the Lord suddenly reveals his power in the interest of his distressed people and defeats the enemy.” Commenting on the place of Megiddo and the plain of Jezreel, and the battle of Armageddon, Summers says, “The place was burned into the minds of the Jewish people, and the mourning for Josiah in the

valley of Megiddo was long afterward quoted as a typical example of national grief. Thus Megiddo fitly symbolized the worldwide distress of righteousness and evil engaged in deadly combat. This is not an actual sword and spear battle . . . if one expects this to be a literal, material battle, he must expect the army to be headed by a committee of three frogs. Both figures are symbolical; neither is literal. There is no reason for making one literal and the other symbolical. The Armageddon in the book of Revelation has no location on the maps of the world; it is logical, not spatial. The battle is not one in which material, physical armaments will decide the issue; the battle is between righteousness and evil, and righteousness is the certain victor!"

In our study of the chapters to follow we will have more to say about the battle of Armageddon and the theories of men that surround it, including the premillennial theory concerning it. For now, the following comment by Hailey is worth remembering: "To look for a physical military battle between human armies to be fought in northern Palestine at some future date is completely without scriptural support and foreign to the spirit and purpose of Revelation."

Verses 17-21 - The seventh bowl. With the pouring out of the seventh bowl, "there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, saying, 'It is done.'" The work of Divine retribution and wrath of God is completed. There are lightnings, thunders, and a mighty earthquake. The world-city is divided asunder, and the cities fall, and Babylon. The islands and mountains disappear, and a great hail, with stones weighing over 100 pounds each, falls. Still men blaspheme. For comparison, look again at 6:12-17; 11:19 and 14:9-11, 17-20. Verses 17-21 of chapter 16 contain a very vivid description of the terrors of the final judgment. So much more could be said, but perhaps this will suffice.



## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

As I have repeatedly pointed out, the book of Revelation graphically symbolizes confrontation - conflict between Christ and His righteous ones and the devil and his cohorts. The “war” lasts throughout the dispensation, ultimately resulting in the total overthrow and eternal ruination of the forces of evil, and the eternal victory and triumph of the righteous!

Thus far in our study five enemies of Christ and His church have been introduced to us: (1) the dragon, (2) the beast out of the sea, (3) the beast out of the earth, (4) the harlot Babylon, and (5) those who have the mark of the beast. We have learned that the very best interpretation and understanding of each of these is as follows: (1) The dragon refers to Satan himself, the arch-enemy of Christ and those who are His. (2) The beast out of the sea symbolizes all the anti-God opposition by force that has ever been, or ever will be brought against the people of God; generally depicting empires and kingdoms whose trust is in man’s wisdom and in the power and might of men and armies, wielding its power against God’s way and His people. (3) The beast out of the earth is symbolic of false religion, whether it be that of idolatry and paganism as was the emperor worship of the Roman Empire, or the perverted and distorted forms of Christianity known as Roman Catholicism and Protestant denominationalism; any “religion” that is contrary to and opposed to the one true Way of Christ. (4) The harlot Babylon is representative of the “world-city,” that which is lustful, enticing, and seductive - all that appeals to the flesh, and would draw people away from God. (5) Those who have the mark of the beast characterizes all who have been deceived by the devil, caught up in the “this world” syndrome, and who thus have given themselves over in mind and action to evil and against what is right, pure, and true.

I remind you of the enemies of Christ and His own for two reasons: (1) We need to know who our avowed and certain enemies are and to realize that their singular intent is to destroy us in eternal ruination, and we need to be able to recognize them in whatever form or disguise in which they may appear before us; and (2) We need to keep constantly before our minds that all five of these enemies are themselves going to be destroyed of God - chapters 17, 18, 19, and 20 show plainly the triumph of Christ and the righteous over all these enemies, and the final perdition of each.

Chapter 17 pertains to the great harlot, Babylon. While the overall picture of the chapter is not too difficult to grasp, a number of things found in the chapter are challenging to say the least. To my mind it is perhaps the hardest chapter to fully understand thus far. But, as in all our previous lessons, we will try to arrive at the most logical, plausible understanding of it possible.

Verses 1-7 - One of the seven angels invites John to view the judgment (the Greek word rendered “judgment” in English is *krima* which means “judicial verdict of condemna-

tion”) of the great harlot (or whore) that was sitting on many waters. In verse 15 the “many waters” are identified as “peoples, multitudes, nations, and languages.” The harlot herself is identified as “that great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth” (verse 18). Obviously, one of the most pressing questions of the chapter is this - “Who, or what is the great harlot?” And a second question, “Why is she called Babylon?” First of all, the great harlot is not to be confused with the radiant woman of chapter 12. There “the woman” is representative of God’s people, the church, led into the wilderness of God’s protective providence and care. But in this context, John sees a woman arrayed in purple and scarlet colors, wearing gold and precious stones, with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and of whom the inhabitants of the earth are drunk with the wine of her fornication, she herself being drunken with the blood of martyred saints. In her hand is a golden cup full of abominations and the filth of her immorality. Upon her forehead is a name written, “Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth.” She was seated on a scarlet colored beast, “full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.” When John saw all this, he wondered with great wonderment. As we have already pointed out, the harlot is identified as that “great city” (verse 18) and the city is Babylon. But what is the significance of “Babylon?” How are we to understand this? The ancient city of Babylon was indeed the seat of a wicked empire, enamored by wealth and prosperity and given to fleshly pleasures (see such Scriptures as Isa 47). Also, from the period of the exile on, Babylon carried the idea of cruelty and bondage to the minds of God’s people. But by the time John received the Revelation in 96 A.D. the city of Babylon, destroyed by Alexander the Great in 330 B.C., was practically non-existent. It was last mentioned on a Babylonian clay tablet dated 10 B.C. Nothing but ruins remain today. The harlot of Revelation 17, called Babylon, is not then to be understood as the literal city of Babylon - obviously, Babylon is used symbolically. What does it symbolize?

While a number of reputable scholars and commentators think the “harlot Babylon” is the apostate church (they think in terms of the radiant woman of Revelation 12 entering the wilderness belonging to God, but becoming corrupted and an adulteress as seen in chapter 17) but this view, to my mind, just does not fit the total picture. I concur with brother Hailey, brother Pack, and William Hendriksen, that Babylon is symbolic of “the great world-city of lust and seduction.” As Hendriksen states, “It symbolizes the concentration of the luxury, vice, and glamour of this world. It is the world viewed as the embodiment of ‘the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the vainglory of life’” (1 Jn 2:16). The harlot represents all the anti-Christian seduction that is in the world - that which would allure, attract, and entice people from God.

Commenting on the harlot’s being drunken with the blood of Christian martyrs, Hailey observes, “It had been lust for power, honor, prestige, wealth, and pleasure, together with hate, ill-will, self-will and malice - all seated in the flesh - that had led to the slaughter of God’s people. All of these qualities are symbolized in the harlot.” He pointed out further that more than just martyrs were her victims . . . that many were slain at her feet by succumbing to her temptations, and quotes from Proverbs 7:25f concerning a harlot,

“Let not thy heart decline to her ways; go not astray in her paths. For she hath cast down many wounded; yea, all her slain are a mighty host.”

Summarizing, I believe the harlot is symbolic of all that is in the world that allures, tempts, entices, and seduces people from God and brings them into bondage to Satan. The cup she holds in her hand may be eye-catching but it contains abominations . . . whatever is used by the world to turn people away from God . . . whether it be illicit sex, materialism, fame, power, or even otherwise legitimate things which come to capture and possess an individual such as job, sports, or whatever else you can think of. “Worldliness” is the harlot! This is the greatest power the devil has over people, and that is the reason the harlot is pictured as “sitting on” (i.e., controlling) “people, multitudes, and nations” (verse 15). The harlot was seen by John sitting upon a scarlet colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, with seven heads and ten horns. We will now discuss this beast.

Verses 8-17 - First of all, notice the striking similarity between the beast here in chapter 17, the dragon of 12:3 and the beast of 13:1. Each is described as having seven heads and ten horns. Remember, the dragon is Satan, and the beast out of the sea (13:1) depicts anti-Christian governments and powers. Thus the beast of Revelation 17 upon which the harlot is sitting is a Satan filled and controlled government. That much we know. And that, to the Christians of the last part of the first and early second century who first received and read Revelation, the beast was Rome and the Roman Empire there can be no doubt! But for us to fully understand what all John recorded in verses 8-13 is a challenge . . . we can only try. Obviously, John himself was filled with wonder at what he saw. The angel evidently perceived he didn't fully understand (read verses 7,8) so sets about to given him more information. But the information which the angel gave and which John records is not easy to understand.

At the outset of considering these verses, brother Hailey makes an interesting observation: “The woman and the beast are indivisible, for lust rides upon, controls, and governs any ravenous, persecuting, and self-seeking political beast. At the same time, the beast supports such a harlot” (page 349).

Note - While the Roman Empire was undoubtedly the beast upon which the harlot sat in the first, second, and third centuries A.D., let us remember that the beast in earlier times was manifested in the form of the Babylonian Empire, the Medo-Persian Empire, and the Grecian Empire. The beast manifests itself in whatever government or power there is that gives itself to Satan and the pursuit of worldly ends, and to the persecution of the Lord's people, whenever and wherever in history that such occurs. The book of Revelation has as much benefit for us now as it did for the Christians of 96 A.D.

Verse 8 tells us that the beast was, and is not, and is about to ascend out of the bottomless pit and go into perdition, and this shall cause worldlings (those whose names are not in the book of life) to wonder. The next verse then tells us that the seven heads are

seven mountains on which the woman sitteth. Verse 10 tells us that there are seven kings, five of which are fallen, one is, and the other is not yet come, but when he does come he will continue a "little while" or "short space." Verse 11 - "And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth and of the seventh, and goeth into perdition."

The ten horns are then depicted as ten kings (verse 12) which had not yet received kingdoms, but receive power for one hour with the beast, having one mind, and they give their power and strength to the beast, and all of them together make war against the Lamb (verses 13,14).

Verses 8-13 are extremely difficult. Most commentators tie it in with the Roman Empire in one way or another. Rome, the city, is famous for being built on seven hills (or mountains). All conclude that this section pertains to Rome and the Roman Empire. Commentators write at length concerning historical kingdoms preceding the Roman Empire, and including it, and speculate on one yet to come in order to get all the numbers of the verses to "work out." Others (and there are more of these) approach it from looking closely at the Roman emperors but on this, brother Pack observes, "Any endeavor to make the heads correspond to the Roman emperors runs into difficulty. It would seem that the number seven is symbolic of the Roman rulers as a whole, and by extension, of all world powers opposed to God."

After considering the various viewpoints of a number of very well-known scholars who have written commentaries on Revelation, brother Hailey then gives his view, and though it is a rather lengthy quotation, I think it is very good and makes good sense to my mind: "Probably the best solution to the problem (i.e., understanding verses 8-13) is to adhere to the symbolic character of the book. Repeatedly John has used seven as the symbol for completeness or perfection, and ten for the fullness of power. The seven churches in chapter 1 . . . represented the church in its fullness. The same could be said of the seven spirits, the seven lamps, and so forth. When the book was read to the churches (i.e., in the late first century and early second century) the members would have thought of Rome as they were told of the harlot, and of the empire when they heard of the beast on whom the harlot sat; in this their understanding would be correct. But the symbolism extends beyond this. The beast represented the total of forceful anti-Christian or anti-theistic opposition, and the harlot represented that which is lustful, enticing, and seductive - all that appeals to the flesh. The seven kings, therefore, were a symbolic number, representing all kings or kingdoms, past, present, and future that would oppose the kingdom of God. Each who would come would still be part of the seven. Although kingdoms arise out of the upheavals in the sea of society, their anti-God rulers originate in the abyss, the satanic realm. Each continues for a little while, then goes into perdition, which is the end of all who oppose God." As to the ten horns being ten kings who have no kingdom, they apparently are lesser kings than the Roman kings or some other "world-power" king, but they align themselves with the world opposition to the Lord's kingdom, with the beast, receiving power from him, and giving power to him.

On this Hendriksen comments: "The seven heads have a twofold symbolical significance. They indicate both the present embodiment of the beast and all of its embodiment throughout history. It was (the Roman Empire), in John's day, the center of anti-Christian persecution. But it was also the center of anti-Christian seduction, allure-ment, enticement: the woman, the harlot, sits on these seven hills!" Concerning the ten kings, Hendriksen thinks they represent "All the mighty ones of this earth in every realm: art, education, commerce, industry, government, in as far as they serve the central authority, are indicated. Self-aggrandizement in opposition to Christ is their goal. In order to reach this goal they are willing to give their power and strength to the beast. They reign 'in company' with the beast for just one hour. Every worldly ruler has his satellites. They generally last only 'one hour.' All these 'horn-kings' have one design, namely, to help the beast in its conflict with Christ and his church. That this is their unanimous purpose is clearly stated in verse 14" (pages 204,205).

The great war or battle of 17:14 seems to coincide with that of 16:14 and 19:19. It is the ultimate battle where the righteous, with their Christ as King, shall triumph, and the wicked be defeated. It is the battle of Armageddon.

Verse 16 indicates that at the immediate conclusion of the battle of verse 14, the wicked shall realize the mistake, the dreadful mistake, they have made in being friends of the world, in loving the harlot, and they shall turn upon her in pure hatred and devour her as cannibals and burn her with fire. But it will be too late then. They were the ones who made themselves friends of the world and enemies of God and at the final day will reap the consequences just as the Bible says: James 4:4 and Galatians 6:7,8.

How God uses men and nations is not fully known by us. Apparently, as in the case of Pharaoh in Moses' day, God hardens the hearts of those who first harden their hearts against Him. The Bible principle is - if we will draw nigh to God, He will draw nigh to us (Jas 4:8), but if we turn our backs on Him, He will give us up to that course of our choosing (Rom 1:28). Those who willfully aline themselves against God, He will use for His overall purposes. I believe such principles are clearly seen in what is said in verse 17. I do not believe that God "put it into their hearts" independent of their own wills even as I do not believe God hardened Pharaoh's heart independent of Pharaoh. The principle is this - whoever hardens his own heart against God, such a person's heart will indeed be hardened. Those whose wills *were inclined* to evil and against right and truth, God's purpose then was for them to give themselves over to the beast for the accomplishing of His Divine plan for things. The same principle is taught in 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12.



## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Chapter 18 deals with the fall of “Babylon” - the harlot. It is a chapter which spells doom for the world but rejoicing for God’s people! The chapter could be outlined:

Verses 1-8 - The fall of the harlot.

- (1) The announcement of her (Babylon) fall - verses 1,2.
- (2) A brief reason for her fall - verse 3.
- (3) God’s people told to come out of her - verses 4,5.
- (4) Babylon to receive just the just punishment due her - verse 6.
- (5) Her boasts of continuing cannot withstand God’s power - verses 7,8.

Verses 9-20 - Three lamentations over her.

- (1) The kings of the earth - verses 9,10.
- (2) The merchants - verses 11-17a.
- (3) The shipmasters, sailor, and those who trade by sea - verses 17b-19.
- (4) But Christians are to rejoice at her fall! - verse 20.

Verses 21-24 - The completeness of her fall, and why.

- (1) A mighty angel casts a millstone into the sea; so quickly shall be Babylon’s fall and her vanishing - verses 21-23a.
  - a. She shall “be found no more at all.”
  - b. No more music to be heard in her at all.
  - c. No more crafts to be found in Babylon.
  - d. No more sounds of millstone grinding; thus, no more food.
  - e. No more light; not even candlelight.
  - f. No more marrying; thus, no more loving relationships.

- (2) Because the nations were deceived by her, and she was filled with the blood of God's saints - verses 23b-24.

Now, let us examine the chapter in a bit more detail.

Verses 1-8 - An angel from heaven, with great authority, lighting the earth with his glory, is seen of John. The angel announces with a strong voice, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen. Babylon is described as having become a habitation (or dwelling place, home) of demons, and the prison (or haunt) for evil spirits and for unclean and hateful (detestable, repulsive) birds. Such a God-abandoned, crumbled, and desolate city, filled with evil and repulsive things, is in stark contrast with the city of God, the holy city of heaven, into which nothing unclean or abominable shall ever be allowed to enter (21:27). As we learned from our study of chapter 17 the most reasonable understanding of what Babylon symbolizes is "the world-city" - all that is in this world that entices, allures, tempts, and seduces people away from God. Ancient Babylon had become well known to God's people through the centuries as symbolizing not only captivity and bondage, but also that which was filthy and corruptible, immoral, and opposite to that which was good and right. Thus, God's prophets foretold Babylon's fall (note Isa 13:19-22; 14:3-23 and Jer 50:2, etc.) back then, as the angel here announces the fall of this Babylon, the harlot (1 Jn 2:15-17 and Jas 4:4).

The reason for Babylon's fall is given in verse 3 . . . the kings of the earth had committed fornication with her, the nations were drunk with the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the merchants of the earth had grown rich through the abundance of her delicacies. This language is simply pointing out the appeal of the world to the flesh (immorality), and man's being enamored with the material things of this temporal realm and, obviously, all this to the neglect of a proper relationship with God. Thus, the world, through lust for fleshly gratification and material things, seduces people from God. This is why Babylon (the harlot, the world of seduction) must fall.

As to the phrase "the wine of the wrath of her fornication" see the comments made on 14:8. As to the phrase in the KJV, "the abundance of her delicacies," it perhaps would be helpful to consider other renderings such as: the ASV - "by the power of her wantonness;" or the NASV - "by the wealth of her sensuality;" or by the NIV - "from her excessive luxuries."

In verse 4 God's people are told to, "Come forth, my people, out of her, that ye have no fellowship with her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." In connection with this, consider also Isaiah 48:20, Jeremiah 51:45, 2 Corinthians 6:17-7:1; 1 Peter 2:9, etc. Brother Hailey comments, "A complete separation of the Christian from the sins of the world and the corruption in the world by lust is absolutely essential if he is to escape the plagues to be poured out into the earth and upon the harlot city, Babylon" (page 360).

Pertaining to the statement of verse 5 that the sins of Babylon had reached heaven, and that God remembered them, Hailey observes, "In His longsuffering God allows man to continue in his own way until his sins have reached an intolerable point of saturation; then judgment falls . . . iniquity piles upon iniquity until it becomes a stench in the nostrils of God - it reaches unto heaven. When this point is reached, then 'the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath' (16:19) is given into the hand of the offender." For comparative studies, look at such Scriptures as Amos 2:1,4,6; 2 Chronicles 28:9, Jeremiah 51:9 and Ezra 9:6.

Concerning verse 6 the instruction to render punishment unto the harlot is most likely addressed to angelic beings assigned to that responsibility (see 14:17ff and 16:1ff). As to the extent of the harlot's punishment, Pack seems to think it would be "double" her wrongs, citing the NEB rendering of the verse, and commenting, "As she bedecked herself and lived wantonly, so she must bear double portion of torment and sorrow." However, Hendriksen comments about the idea of "double" in the verse and states, "This does not mean that she will receive twice as much punishment as she deserves; but that she will receive the exact amount of punishment which she has earned. The punishment is the 'double,' the counterpart, of the sin. The torment and mourning, verse 7, are the exact equivalent for her pride and arrogance. The scales balance exactly." Hailey obviously agrees with that view in his comments: "The idea expressed by the phrase indicates a balancing of the scales; on the one hand, punishment commensurate with guilt, and on the other, joy in proportion to the shame and dishonor commuted. The measure of Babylon's sin was the measure of her punishment."

The attitude of the harlot is seen in the statement attributed to her in the latter part of verse 7, and is language strikingly similar to that found in Isaiah 47:7-9. The harlot's pride and arrogance was pitted against the power of God. Remember Proverbs 16:18, 2 Samuel 22:28 and Proverbs 29:23. But God's power is unequalled! His wrath shall come upon her suddenly and mightily. The plagues referred to in verse 4 are enumerated here: death, mourning, famine, and burning with fire.

Verses 9-20 - All the "earth-bound, earth-dwellers" who looked to the harlot-city for their wealth and pleasure, now witness her demise with consternation and weeping. The mourners fall into three categories: (1) the kings who committed fornication with her; (2) the merchants whose interest and trust was obviously in the fine things of this life - whose god was gold, silver, precious jewels, etc.; (3) the shipmasters, the seamen, and those who traded by the sea. Let us note these one category at a time:

Probably the word "kings" is intended much more comprehensively to include not only the royalty of kingdoms, but others of power and influence, the socially elite, and those who are enamored by the glitter and frills of pleasure and fleshly gratification. "Fornication" would here represent all the immoralities which are part of the world. But when Babylon

falls and such people see her burning, they will surely want to be “far off” from the punishment (verses 9,10).

In verses 11-17a the merchants of the earth are depicted as weeping and mourning over fallen Babylon. This is symbolic of all those who are captivated by the things of this world . . . the gold, silver, precious stones, brass, marble, fine woods, fine cloths - the luxuries of this present existence - and who would even traffic in slaves, and the souls of men to satisfy their lusts! Each of these things has some significance, undoubtedly, but the important thing for us to see is, that with the fall of Babylon all of these fineries of life on earth are gone forever - note verse 14! All of earth’s great riches gone so quickly . . . note verse 17a! What earth-bound people trusted in so soon perishes!

In verses 17b-19 the symbol is shipmasters and sailors, and those who trade by the sea. Most commentators tie this symbol in, along with the two above, to the Roman Empire of John’s day, concluding that the city of Rome, and the Roman Empire, were the fulfillment of, or the meaning of Babylon. And certainly, I do not think anyone would argue that for the Christians of John’s day, they unquestionably saw within the symbols of Revelation a unique characterization of Rome and its vast empire. I find no argument with this historical setting and application understanding of the symbols in the immediate context, but I don’t think we should lose sight of the broader comprehension that Babylon symbolizes not only Rome of John’s day, but any world-city in any century . . . all that seduces from God. As Hendriksen writes: “It is the world, as center of seduction, in any age.” Therefore, we might think of the sea here in this context, as symbolizing the mass of society in general, busy with their buying and selling and other “this world” activities. All shall be amazed when this old world crumbles and falls! (Note Ezek 2b:1-28:19 concerning the fall of Tyre.) But God’s people are to rejoice! (verse 20). This is a “. . . rejoicing over the defeat of evil and the victory of righteousness . . . the earth-dwellers made merry over the death of the two witnesses (11:10), but the tables have been turned. The heavens and they that dwell in them had been called upon to rejoice at the casting down of Satan . . . and they now rejoice with the saints in their victory” (Hailey).

Verses 21-24 - To symbolize the rapidity, as well as the total and irrevocable defeat of Satan as seen in the fall of Babylon, an angel takes a great stone and cast it into the sea. Naturally, it immediately vanishes, depicting the instantaneous destruction of the world when God finally “brings down the curtain.” It is surely and certainly coming. Babylon is fallen! No doubt about it! Notice, it is with “violence” that Babylon falls! Her fall will be final and complete, and she shall be found no more at all! No more music to be heard in Babylon! (verse 22a). No more craftsmen at work! (verse 22b). No more sounds of millstones grinding, thus, no more provisions (verse 22c). No more light! (verse 23a). No more marrying, thus, no more relationships of love! (verse 23b). Why? Because the harlot had deceived the nations! She had filled herself with the blood of prophets and saints! Certainly, in John’s day, Rome and the Roman Empire is described to a “T” by all this. But so is it true in any century, time, or place, when people allow themselves to be seduced

from God by the allurements, enticements, and temptations of this world. That, therefore, is what Babylon represents. Babylon is that great harlot that seduces people from God - the worldly pleasures (the lusts of the flesh), and the worldly riches (the lusts of the eye ), and worldly pride (the vainglory of life). No wonder the warning of 1 John 2:15-17! Everyone needs to read that Scripture thoughtfully in view of the contents of Revelation 18.



## CHAPTER NINETEEN

Chapter 19 pertains to the defeat and judgment of the beast and the false prophet. As chapter 18, it too spells doom for the enemies of God and gives cause of rejoicing to God's people. The chapter can be outlined as follows:

Verses 1-6 - The hallelujahs of victory.

- (1) Hallelujah to God; all praise, honor and credit is due Him - verse 1.
- (2) God was just in bringing wrath upon the harlot - verses 2,3.
- (3) All in heaven worship God! - verses 4-6.

Verses 7-10 - The marriage supper of the Lamb and His bride.

- (1) The time for the marriage of the Lamb and His bride has come; she has made herself ready - verses 7,8.
- (2) Happy are they who are called to the marriage supper - verse 9.
- (3) God alone is to be worshiped - verse 10.

Verses 11-21 - The defeat of the two beasts.

- (1) The great warrior-King of heaven, with His mighty army is seen - verses 11-16.
- (2) The angel's symbolic call to the birds to the victory supper, to devour the flesh of the defeated enemy - verses 17,18.
- (3) The battle and decisive defeat of these evil enemies of God - verses 19-21.

Verses 1-6 - The word rendered "Alleluia" in the KJV, and "Hallelujah" in the modern speech translations, comes from a Hebrew word which means "praise ye Jehovah" or "praise God." This is the only context in the New Testament where the word is found. It was used quite frequently in the Psalms, especially in chapters 113, 115, 116 and 117.

In verse 1 John heard the voice of many people ascribing praise unto God. This should stand out in stark contrast to the weeping and wailing of the kings, merchants, and mariners of chapter 18 who saw the ruination of the harlot with such rapidity. These voices

in verse 1 give God full credit for having provided salvation, and offer Him all the glory and honor.

In verses 2 and 3 God's righteous judgment against the harlot is totally vindicated because she had corrupted the world of men with her fornication and had shed the blood of saints. Thus, her everlasting torment is commensurate to her gross sinfulness.

Verses 4-6 depict the heavenly hosts praising God. The twenty-four elders are symbolic of God's covenant people of both the Old Testament and New Testament dispensations. The four living creatures are cherubim, a high order of angels. (Note our study of these in chapter 4.)

Verses 7-10 - Verse 7 announces the marriage supper of the Lamb and His bride. This is cause for rejoicing. Not only has the harlot been judged, but things are now ready for the marriage supper. Through all her trials and tribulations the bride has made herself ready for this occasion. The bride of the Lamb is, of course, the church. It is interesting to note in Ephesians 5:27 the teaching of the Bible concerning the way Christ wants to receive His bride. He wants her (the church) to be without "spot or wrinkle or any such thing . . . holy and without blemish." This is very important for us to consider because each Christian is a part of the bride. No wonder the Bible teaches us that "pure religion and undefiled before God" includes keeping "oneself unspotted from the world" (Jas 1:27).

In verse 8, because she had made herself ready, she is granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, symbolic of purity and holiness, corresponding with the righteous acts (or proper living) of the faithful while sojourning on earth. The Bible taught, "Be you yourselves holy in all manner of living" (1 Pet 1:15). Christians who were really dedicated and faithful did just that. They were thus properly adorned to meet the bridegroom for the wedding feast. What a joyous occasion that will be! Think of it - the church, washed and made clean, justified and sanctified, adorned in fine linen, bright and white, meets the bridegroom (the Lamb of God who gave Himself for her!) for the great marriage feast in heaven! No wonder verse 9 refers to those called to that marriage feast as "blessed," the word primarily meaning happy. Those called to that great marriage supper will be the ones who heeded the gospel call while sojourning on earth, who put their trust in the Lamb, and who were faithful to Him as His betrothed. In this connection, it might be interesting for us to consider the marriage custom of the people of Israel from ancient times. There were three parts to the process of a couple becoming married: (1) There was, first, the betrothal. This was considered of the Jews a "binding commitment." Unlike our modern day "engagement" which can be broken off, and often is, the betrothed couple was looked upon as husband and wife, though the marriage was not yet consummated. This was precisely the situation with Joseph and Mary as is seen in Matthew 1:18. Mary was betrothed to Joseph, thus they were considered man and wife, but they had not yet "come together." The consummation of the marriage did not take place until later. In their case, it was after Jesus was born (Mt 1:24,25). (2) The second stage of the marriage process

was just an interval during which time the groom paid the dowry to the father of the bride, as alluded to in Genesis 34:12. (Sometimes the dowry was in the form of services rendered, as seen in the case of Jacob and Rachel in Gen 29:20). While the groom was preparing to pay the dowry, the bride was busy preparing herself for the wedding feast. (3) Lastly came the marriage procession to the marriage feast, and then the feast itself. The bridegroom, attired in his finest garments, with his friends and relatives accompanying him, singing merrily, proceeded to the home of the bride, escorting her to the place of the marriage supper. There, usually at the home of the groom's parents and with many guests, the marriage feast commenced. Dress and decorum was governed by accepted standards. See Matthew 22:1-12 as an example.

Now in like manner, the church is betrothed to Christ. See 2 Corinthians 11:2. The "dowry" has been paid - Christ bought the church with His own precious blood. The remainder of the interval or preparation period is now taking place, but someday, the call to the wedding feast (the marriage supper) will go out. Blessed are those who will be there on that great day!

In verse 10 John was so overwhelmed by all he was seeing and hearing that he fell down at the feet of whoever who was showing it to him, but was told, "See thou do it not. Worship God."

Verses 11-21 - In verses 11-16 the great warrior-King with His mighty heavenly army is revealed. The rider of the white horse of verse 11 can be none other than Christ. He is depicted as having four names: (1) Faithful and True; (2) The Word of God; (3) KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS; (4) and a name that no man knew, but only He Himself. Look back at the notes on chapter 6:2 and notice how the two harmonize. Hailey, in this connection, said of Christ, "He is the rider in both instances, though in the two visions He is seen under different circumstances and with different objectives. In the earlier vision the rider wore a victory crown symbolic of victory over Satan and death. Following that victory He went forth in the gospel 'conquering and to conquer' the souls of men, making them citizens of His kingdom. Now He is seen in a different role, as in righteousness He judges and makes war against all who would hinder His purpose and destroy His kingdom; He brings each enemy to defeat and destruction" (page 382).

As to His vesture (garment) dipped in blood (verse 13) it is most likely that this refers not to His own blood, but to the blood of His enemies. (Most commentators call attention to Isaiah 63:1-6 for consideration in connection with verse 3.) As to who the army is that rides with Him (verse 14) brother Pack observes: "Some would identify these as the saints, but there is no indication that the saints who rest from their labors (14:13) go out once more to fight after their rest. Instead this would appear to make up the holy army of angels" (page 43, vol. 2).

The great supper of God in verses 17,18 is not to be confused with the marriage supper of the Lamb. The latter is an occasion of great joy for the friends of God, those purchased by the blood of the Lamb, called by His gospel, and who have been faithful to Him. The supper of verses 17,18 is a picture of complete defeat for God's enemies. Certainly it is not to be understood literally, but figuratively. As Hailey comments, "The symbolism finds a parallel in Ezekiel's vision of God's destruction of Gog and Magog, the heathen forces of old, which were antagonistic to God, His people, and His purpose (Ezek 38,39). Ezekiel was to call 'birds of every sort' and 'every beast of the field' to Jehovah's sacrifice of the heathen. At his table these were to 'eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood' of horses, mighty men, and men of war (Ezek 39:17-20)." Hailey then goes ahead to point out other similarities. Verses 17 and 18 are a graphic picture of the utter defeat of the enemies of the Lord.

It seems to me that verses 19-21 is another look at the battle of Armageddon. I personally think of 16:12-16; 17:14; 19:17-21 and 20:7-10. While I am saving my main comments on that battle until studying chapter 20:7-10, may it suffice to say presently that I believe the battle of Armageddon is symbolic of the last great struggle or conflict between the forces of right and wrong. It is not going to be a literal battle as so many present day "interpreters of prophecy" preachers over radio and TV say it is. It is simply going to be the day of total triumph and victory for the Lord and His own over Satan and the forces of evil.

The beast of verses 19 and 20 unquestionably refers to the anti-God forces, powers, and governments which stand in opposition to the Lord's kingdom. In John's day the Roman Empire was a prime example. This is the beast out of the sea that we studied in 13:1ff. The false prophet is that beast out of the earth of 13:11ff, and is symbolic of false religions. In John's day this was manifested in emperor worship.

## CHAPTER TWENTY

Because of a doctrinal theory called “Premillennialism” chapter 20 of Revelation has commanded more attention than any other portion of this marvelous book. Brother Frank Pack in his introduction to chapter 20 calls it “. . . the most difficult portion of the Book of Revelation to understand” (vol. 2, page 45). In his concluding remarks in the same chapter he writes, “There is no interpretation of Revelation 20 that does not have its difficulties, and it is the reason why this scripture has been such a puzzling one. It is unfortunate that a passage set in such a symbolic framework, making use of figurative language, as Revelation 20 obviously does, should have been the subject of so much controversy. One reason for this is that some of the systems of interpretation based upon this passage involve a reading into the brief materials found here of a great number of things from other parts of the scripture, particularly the Old Testament prophets, to fill in the details. Dispensationalism does this very extensively, since almost all of the distinctive features of this system are lacking in Revelation 20.” What brother Pack is saying is that the theorists of the premillennial doctrine have taken a “framework outline” they see of their theory in Revelation 20:1-9, and they add a little “from here and there” where the “outline” is missing some very important parts. In so doing they make the whole fabrication sound reasonable to the average person. Few people seem to challenge whether or not the scriptures borrowed “from here and there” are being used properly or not. And, because the theory borders on the sensational and the melodramatic, it has gained widespread acceptance among many different Protestant groups.

I personally believe that a careful study uncovers the theory of Premillennialism as being most assuredly false. The study of chapter 20 will help each student of the Bible to better understand what the theory is and see that it is not true and, in seeing that, to be able to have a much more simplistic grasp of the chapter. First, let me quote from brother Homer Hailey. Premillennialism: “The general theory, with variations among different schools, is briefly this: Christ will come in the first phase of his return to earth (called ‘the rapture’), and at this time the righteous will be raised, the living saints will be changed and both will be caught up in the air to meet the Lord. Then will come the marriage feast of the Lamb, during which there will be a great tribulation on earth. After the wedding he and the bride, the church, will then complete a return to earth (called ‘the revelation’) where Christ will set up his kingdom, sit on David’s throne and reign from Jerusalem for a literal thousand years - the millennium. According to some, the Jews will be converted and return to Palestine, Old Testament worship will be restored (with modifications) and there will be on earth an idealistic life which will continue the definite period of one thousand years. At the end of this millennium Satan will be loosed for a short time and make a last furious effort to destroy the Lord’s people and work. This will be followed by the resurrection of the wicked dead (for the righteous dead will have been raised at the beginning of the thousand years). The judgment will occur and the eternal destinies of heaven or hell will be meted. The theory must read into the passage (verse 1-10) all that it claims to draw from it, for the following are not mentioned in the text: (1) the second coming of Christ, (2) a bodily

resurrection, (3) a reign of Christ on earth, (4) the total throne of David, (5) Jerusalem of Palestine, (6) conversion of the Jews, or (7) the church on earth. A theory that rests on a passage of Scripture in which not one of its peculiar tenets of doctrine is found cannot be true."

It is not within the scope of this study to devote further space by way of introduction to the study of chapter 20 to the theory of premillennialism. Several such books have been written on this subject. The best and most thorough with which I am acquainted is "Premillennialism, True Or False?" edited by Wendell Winkler. It is actually a compilation of lectures called "The Fort Worth Lectures" given each year at the Brown Trail church of Christ in Fort Worth (Bedford). The one referred to is the 1978 edition. With the above thoughts in mind let us now proceed with an exegesis of Revelation 20. The chapter is divided into two parts: verses 1-10 and verses 11-15.

Verse 1 - The identity of the angel is not certain. Some think that it is Christ Himself. Personally I don't think so as there is never an indication in Revelation of Christ being depicted in angelic form. A more plausible view is that this angel is indeed just that - probably of a very high order since he is depicted as coming from heaven and has such great power. The key (to the abyss) and the chain are obviously symbolic. "The key symbolizes power to bind; the chain symbolizes that by which Satan is bound." (Hailey).

Verses 2,3 - There is naturally much that could be said about Satan. He indeed is our great adversary, the deceiver of the world. He is aptly described as the "dragon" and as "that old serpent." But what does "the binding" of Satan mean? The Bible says the angel "bound him a thousand years." Is it a complete binding, or partial? In other words, is the devil being totally restrained or is it a matter of certain limitations and restrictions being placed upon him? "The Greek word, *edesen*, translated by the English word 'bound' is used a number of times in Scripture, not only for the literal binding of an animal or of a burden upon one's back, but also in a figurative sense, restricting a person's activities in certain ways while leaving him free in other regards" (Pack). As examples of how "bound" is used consider: (1) A woman is "bound by law to her husband" as long as he lives, but if he dies she is discharged from the law of the husband. Romans 7:2. Her being bound to her husband simply means that she is limited and restricted in certain ways, but not totally "tied up" and rendered immovable; (2) Paul was imprisoned when he wrote the book of 2 Timothy, so depicted himself as being in "bonds," but he wrote, "the word of God is not bound" (2:9). Simply meant, though his personal activities were restricted because of restraints laced upon him, yet the word of God was having free course and was not restricted; (3) Prior to these circumstances, Paul once said to the Ephesian elders, "And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there" (Acts 20:22). Thus was just his way of saying he felt compelled to go on up to Jerusalem regardless of the consequences. (4) The good Samaritan is said to have "bound up" the wounds of the robber's victim in Luke 10:34. That would be like our saying that he "bandaged him up." (5) In Matthew 23:4 Jesus indicted the Pharisee for binding

heavy burdens on others. Other examples could be given but these are simply to show that various connotations can be given the word "bound." The Premillennial theory insists on a complete, total binding of Satan in thus verse. Not only is there a question as to the extent of binding, alluded to above, but also the question of the 1,000 years - is this to be understood literally, as the Premillennialists claim, or is it symbolic? If it is symbolic, what period of time does it represent? There is no reason to understand it literally as the context is in the midst of a highly figurative setting - the entire book of Revelation is filled with symbols and symbolic meanings as we have clearly seen in our studies thus far. Why should we view chapter 20:1-10 any differently?

Putting the binding of Satan and the 1,000 years together, let me share some observations from noted scholars: - Frank Pack: "Satan is not completely bound, but the meaning of this binding is that he is limited in the sense that 'he should not deceive the nations' during the thousand years. The binding of Satan we understand to have taken place when Christ died on the cross and provided man's salvation and was raised from the dead for his justification. Before this, Satan could not only accuse the saints but also deceive the nation. Christ's death made the accusations against the saints impossible and also the deception of the nations impossible. This does not mean that Satan is not active. Despite the fact that Christ spoke of him as being bound, Peter describes him as going about like a roaring lion" (1 Pet 5:8). Homer Hailey: "The thousand years during which Satan is bound must be interpreted symbolically, as are other numbers in the book. This number is a complete number which stands for an undetermined but full period of time . . . The binding of Satan does not render him absolutely helpless or unable to operate; for he continues to be exceedingly active . . . but his activity is limited, as a dog chained to a wire between two trees . . . in this binding, Satan is divinely restrained from reestablishing control over nations."

R. C. H. Lenski: "The binding of Satan means that he shall not prevent this heralding of the gospel to all the nations. Once the nations were without this heralding, all were under the deception of Satan . . . so the 1,000 years are the complete New Testament era" (pages 575,576). In several pages of profound discussion, Mr. Lenski came to those conclusions quoted above. He gave a number of Scripture references indicating the "binding of Satan" was something which took place during the personal ministry of Christ, being finalized in His triumph over Satan by His conquering death, hades, and the grave in His death, burial, and resurrection. Thus, "binding" Satan (Lk 11:21,22; Col 2:15; Jn 16:11; 1 Jn 3:8; Heb 2:9-14, etc.) The Bible indicates there was a time when God permitted Satan to deceive the nations because they chose themselves to reject God. Notice Romans 1:18-28. Verse 28 says, "And even as they refused to have God in their knowledge, God gave them up unto a reprobate mind." In speaking of "the nations" Luke, in Acts 14:16, wrote that God " . . . in generations gone by allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways." But in the coming of Christ and His redemptive work Satan was, in the process, "bound"; and in view of the powerful truth of the gospel and its worldwide scope Satan can no more totally deceive the nations. In that sense he is restrained and limited.

After citing many of the above given Scriptures, Hendriksen also gives Matthew 12:29; Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13; Luke 10:17,18 and John 12:31,32 and states, "Observe, therefore, that in all these passages the binding and casting out or falling of Satan is in some way associated with the first coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. When we say the 'first coming' we have reference to all the events associated with it, from the incarnation to the coronation. We may say, therefore, that the binding of Satan, according to all these passages, begins with that first coming. Before the coming of Christ - His victory over the devil in the temptations, his ministry, his death, ascension, coronation - salvation had been largely limited to the Jews. God had suffered (i.e. "allowed") Satan to blind the eyes of the nations, so that these nations walked in their own ways. A great change was to take place. The truth of the gospel would gradually replace the lie of the devil. Satan is bound so that he can deceive the nations no more. Christ will draw 'all men' to himself. Elect from every nation will be saved . . . the devil is not bound in every sense . . . but there is one thing which - during this period - he cannot do. With respect to this one thing he is definitely and securely bound. He cannot destroy the church as a mighty missionary organization heralding the gospel to all the nations." As to Satan's being loosed for a little time, brother Pack observes: "Just why he must be loosed for 'a little time' is a mystery to all commentators." Roberson states, 'There is a necessity for it based upon some mystery of the divine will. It is idle to speculate upon the grounds of such necessity.'"

To summarize, somehow God has limited, or restricted, Satan's activities for a long duration of time; and for some reason God is going to give him more leeway for a short period of time following. Probably, the above information comes as close to getting at the heart of the matter as any comments a person might discover.

Verses 4-6 - These three verses probably present as much difficulty for us as any verses in Revelation. That is largely because so many theories revolve around them and, in order to arrive at the most sensible understanding, one must give attention to refuting the erroneous ones. I am going to make my comments as brief as is possible.

First, let us observe that this scene of the thrones and them that sat upon them (the reign of the saints with Christ) is evidently taking place wherever Christ is. Remember that Jesus ascended to the Father in heaven (Jn 20:17; Acts 1:11; Lk 24:51; Eph 1:20; Heb 1:3; 1 Pet 3:22). There is no indication in Revelation 20:4-6 that Jesus left heaven. John sees a scene of the souls of martyred Christians (and we could well assume the souls of other than martyred Christians who lived faithfully to Christ during their lifetimes) on thrones, reigning with Christ for the thousand years.

If our understanding of verses 2 and 3 is correct, and the thousand years is indeed representative of at least *most* of the Christian dispensation, then verses 4-6 would indicate that when faithful Christians died, or were martyred, they then experienced what the Bible calls "the first resurrection" by going into the presence of Christ and reigning with Him. But the "rest of the dead" (these being non-Christians and unfaithful Christians) "lived

not" (were separated from Christ) until the "thousand years were finished" (probably the consummation of the ages when Satan will be loosed for one last onslaught and Christ will come again to render the devil final defeat and claim eternal victory). Verse 6 certainly communicated a message to those persecuted saints of John's day – though they may experience all sorts of adversities, and even tortured deaths, yet "happy" they should be in anticipation of this "first resurrection." They need never fear the second death (the final and eternal separation of the unbelieving and disobedient from God in everlasting punishment).

Let me summarize by saying that the scene John sees is in heaven and not on the earth. The entire book of Revelation makes that abundantly clear. The throne is in heaven . . . Christ is in heaven . . . thus, the souls of these martyred saints and other faithful Christians who did not worship the beast are in heaven. Consider these verses throughout Revelation: 1:4; 3:21; 4:2,3,4,5,6,9,10; 5:6,7,11,13; 6:16; 7:9-11,15,17; 8:3; 12:5; 14:3,5; 16:17; 19:4,5; 20:4,11; 21:5; 22:1,3. Notice this first resurrection concerns souls only, because the second resurrection (the general bodily resurrection) involves bodies (Jn 5: 28,29; Rom 8:11,23; 1 Cor 15:35ff).

On the matter of the first resurrection, brother Pack states: "The first resurrection has to do with those who share in the glory of Christ after they have overcome as the faithful, tried, and true. The ones who have part in this are blessed and holy." Keep in mind that the Premillennial view is that the first resurrection is a raising of the righteous dead at the "secret" coming of the Lord, commencing the "rapture." Most of these interpret 1 Thess 4:13-17 to be this first resurrection of the righteous dead who will with the living saints at that time be "raptured" in the air while the great tribulation of seven years' time takes place on earth. Obviously, this cannot be true and is a forced, contrived interpretation.

Brother Roy H. Lanier, Sr., a great and distinguished gospel preacher and scholar, penned the following comments pertinent in this place of our outline: "These souls had been delivered from, raised up out of, that body which is mortal and corruptible into a state of life with the ever-living Christ. This is the first resurrection. Some among us think the first resurrection occurs in conversion, when we are made alive with Christ and raised up to sit with him in heavenly places (Eph 2:5,6). But the life in Christ here on earth is not the living with Christ of Revelation 20:4-6, so we believe it is not the first resurrection . . . we believe that the first resurrection occurs when the soul leaves the body to go to live and reign with Christ; and that the second resurrection . . . occurs when the body is raised from the grave, a glorified spiritual body fit to house the soul in eternity . . . Why is it said that they reign for a thousand years? Because this living and reigning with Christ is limited to this church age. But when their bodies are raised and they are clothed in their house which is from heaven, they will be in a different situation in which they will reign for ever and ever. (Rev 22:5)."

In all fairness it should be pointed out that differing views are held among our brethren as to the first resurrection. (1) A goodly number hold to the idea that it is being "raised to walk in newness of life" at baptism (Eph 2:5; Col 2:12,13; Rom 6:3-5 and 1 Jn 3:14). I can understand that idea but it just doesn't seem to really fit this picture; (2) There is another school of thought among our brethren that this is a symbolic picture of the resurrection of the cause of truth after it was seemingly defeated by the Roman persecutors. These brethren see this type of thing exemplified in the Old Testament in such passages as Ezekiel 37:1-14; Isaiah 26:13,14,19, etc. Some great men such as the late Eldred Stevens and brother Hailey have held, or do hold, this position. Brother Hailey sees it ". . . as the victory of the cause and principles to which he was faithful under the most trying circumstances, even unto death." (3) The third view is the one expressed by brother Lanier, Sr. and, if I understand his writings correctly, also by brother Rogers. Another very great scholar who holds this view is Lenski who states, "When the souls of martyrs and of saints pass to the thrones in heaven to live there in glory, this is the first resurrection. John does not speak of a second resurrection, but by saying the 'first' he certainly implies a second, and again he uses the word in the symbolical sense. As the first transfers the soul to its throne in heaven, so the second transfers the soul's body...." Brother Pack seems also to hold this view. All three views have considerable merit, but at this point in my study and learning process I hold to number three as the most logical.

Verses 7-10 - It is certainly not easy for us to understand the "loosing of Satan" at the end of the thousand years. If the thousand years is symbolic of the Christian age as most non-premillennialists think, then we must assume that it is right at the end of the Christian era, just before Christ comes again, that Satan is loosed. Brother Lanier observes, "Loosing Satan will be the opposite of binding him. Binding him was depriving him of the power and privilege of deceiving the nations; loosing him will be granting him the power and privilege of deceiving the nations again . . . he is bound at the beginning of the thousand years and he is loosed at the end of them."

"Any attempt to try to identify the location of Gog and Magog is doomed to failure. In the O.T., Magog was listed as . . . the land over which the prince, Gog, ruled . . . (Ezekiel 38:2,3)" Pack. Gog is mentioned in the famous Tell el-Amarna tablets (tablets discovered on the Upper Nile river of Egypt, in 1887-8. The tablets were letters written from Egyptian governors in Palestine to the kings of Egypt. The dates ascribed to them are 1380 to 1360 B.C. and express "the side of" the Canaanites during the period of Joshua-Judges) as a designation of "the nations from the north."

Hailey, after an extensive discussion, writes, "Therefore, we conclude that Gog of the land of Magog symbolized all the heathen enemies of God's people from the time of the prophets to the Roman Empire . . . all who sought to thwart His purpose and to destroy His king . . . far from a physical conflict, this battle will be a moral and spiritual one. Satan's Gog and Magog symbolize such forces and agencies as atheism, humanism, communism, materialism, astrology, and all manner of false and perverted religions. Gog and Magog

also represent such forces as anarchy (rebellion against all principles and standards of truth); corruption in government and business; immorality with its decay of home, lack of natural affection and devotion to children; sodomy, alcoholism; and total abandonment to a base and sordid life of the flesh. Satan will use the anti-God, immoral standards and practices he is using today, but probably to a more intense and flagrant degree. Gog and Magog do not gather around a conference table and offer themselves to the devil in a nefarious pact; but being deceived, they are drawn to him as were the kings of old.”

The outlandish theories which see Gog and Magog as representing Russia and China, etc. coming to a great literal battle in Palestine with all the Western countries is ridiculous. The battle of Armageddon is that final confrontation between the forces of evil and good that takes place when Christ comes again and casts Satan into hell.

## VERSES 11-15

Verses 11-1 - These verses present a scene of the judgment. The millennialists believe there are four judgments: (1) that of believers; (2) that of Israel; (3) that of the living nations at the time Christ comes to set up his millennial reign; (4) and the final one described here. They apply Matthew 25:31-46 to judgment #3. They apply Romans 14:10-12 and 2 Corinthians 5:10 to judgment #1 during the rapture. If I understand it correctly, they believe Israel (judgment #2) is undergoing its judgment on earth.

All of this theorizing is absurd! There is going to be one day of judgment! Matthew 25:31ff, Acts 17:31, Romans 14:10-12, 2 Corinthians 5:10, and Revelation 20:11-15 all refer to one and the same judgment.

The “books opened” will certainly include God’s book, the Bible, and the book of life which is named in verse 12. There will indeed be a Divine remembrance of men’s deeds, which some like to think of as sort of a “book of records.” As in most instances in Revelation, the latter is probably purely symbolic. God doesn’t need a literal book of records as His infinite mind records all. The book of life is mentioned a number of times in Scripture: Exodus 32:32f, Psalm 69:28, Isaiah 4:3, Malachi 3:16, Luke 10:20, Philippians 4:3, Revelation 4, Revelation 13:8, Revelation 17:8, and Revelation 21:27.

There has been some dispute over verse 13, as to whether the sea should be understood as literal, or symbolic. Brother Pack seems to take it literally, showing that land and sea will give up the bodies of the dead which reside there. Hailey understands it symbolically, indicating all the dead of the masses of society. Either way, we get the impression of a universal judgment.

Hailey suggests that the reason death and hades are mentioned as giving up the dead in them - “These two have been the captors of humanity from the beginning. Death claims the body when the spirit leaves it (Jas 2:26), whether the body be left to decay in the

sea or on the earth. Hades, 'the unseen,' claims the spirit (see Acts 2:27,31). In the resurrection, the spirit and body of both the wicked and righteous will be reunited (1 Cor 15:52ff, 1 Thess 4:13ff, and 1 Jn 3:1-3). The specific nature of the resurrected body of the wicked is discussed nowhere in Scripture; it is simply said that all shall be raised, the just and the unjust (Acts 24:15, Jn 5:28)."

The second death is the lake of fire - eternal punishment. Death, being the last enemy (1 Cor 15:26) is forever abolished and vanquished, and cast into the lake of fire. Since the righteous souls of the departed dead are with the Lord, the other souls in the Hadean world are those of the wicked and hades, too, shall be cast into the lake of fire.

So much more could be written on all these matters, but I have tried to present enough on each of these outlines to give you a good idea as to what is meant without being exhaustive. For exhaustive studies I refer you to commentaries by Homer Hailey, Frank Pack, William Hendriksen, R. C. H. Lenski, etc.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Chapter 21 can be divided into two parts: (1) Verses 1-8 which tell us of the new heaven and the new earth, informing us of the blissful state of the redeemed; and (2) Verses 9-27 which give us a description of the new, holy city Jerusalem . . . depicted as the bride, the Lamb's wife, or the glorified church . . . the redeemed in heavenly glory. This chapter is one of the most beautiful in all the Bible. It affords so much hope for the Christian presently living amidst sin, ugliness, cruelty, etc. It is a message, loud and clear, to trial and tribulation-beset saints of God that the Father has something tremendously wonderful in store for those who love Him! It is going to be so wonderful and beautiful in "glory land" that it defies description! Human imagination cannot begin to grasp what a fantastic abode awaits the faithful! This part of the revelation was designed to lift the spirits of the persecuted righteous ones of John's day, as well as Christians in any age who, through adherence to truth and right, incur the wrath of worldlings. Even today, centuries after John received the revelation, our hearts delight in thinking of that land of ageless day where there will be no tears, nor sorrow, nor pain, nor death. To God be the praise, the thanksgiving, and the glory!

Verse 1 - John sees a "new heaven and a new earth," as the first heaven and earth were passed away, and there was no more sea. With the coming of the righteous judgment of God, the "old order" (the heaven and earth as we now know it) will flee away and no place shall be found for them (20:11). This would certainly include the evils that are a part of the old order.

Brother Pack observes: "The Greek word translated 'new' (Greek - kainos) indicates something new in quality and kind, a new kind of heaven and earth." Lenski makes the following comments concerning the "new heaven and the new earth. "

To take the place of the earth and the heaven that "fled" (20:11) John now sees οὐρανὸν καινὸν καὶ γῆν καινὴν , "a new heaven and a new earth," καινός designating "new" with reference to the "old" (νέος would mean absolutely "new"). The explanation is added: "For the first heaven and the first earth went away." The heaven and the earth as we now see them in the universe, grand and wonderful, indeed, yet sadly disturbed by sin and evil, invaded by the dragon, the beast, the lamb-beast, the whore, full of the kings of the earth and the dwellers of the earth (all having but anti-Christian earth thoughts), "went away," disappeared; "for, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former shall not be remembered nor come into mind" (Isa 65:17). "For the new heavens and the new earth which I will make, shall remain before me" (Isa 66:22). "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth. wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pet 3:13).

The theory some religionists have - that the “old earth” will simply be renovated - crumbles in the light of 2 Peter 3:10 where the apostle Peter writes, “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up.” This terrestrial ball (earth) upon which we now live, and the heavens which we now see, shall be no more! “But according to his promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Pet 3:13).

Guy N. Woods, in his excellent commentary on “1 & 2 Peter, 1, 2, & 3 John, and Jude,” on page 189, draws some very logical conclusions from all the Scriptures that pertain to the passing of the old heaven and earth, and the creation of the new heaven and new earth. He writes - “It is sufficient for us to note that: (a) The new heaven and earth will follow the destruction of the present heavens and earth. (b) The earth that will then be is not this one. It is this earth which embodies the hopes and expectations of future kingdom advocates. (d) There is no hint of a reign of Christ on the earth which Peter describes. (e) Christ will have terminated his reign and delivered the kingdom to the Father before the events are accomplished which the apostle here details (1 Cor 15: 23ff.). (f) There is, therefore, no support whatsoever in this passage for the premillennial theory.

“From a careful consideration of the matters set forth in the foregoing passage, these facts seem to appear: (a) The present heavens and earth serve as a figure of the heavens and earth to follow. (b) The words “heavens and earth” are not intended to embrace all of God’s material universe, but only that portion where his people dwell. (c) In the antitype, this limitation must be understood, and the words “new heaven and earth” must then be regarded as a designation of where his people dwell, and not a detailed description of the future abode. (d) Heaven is the final abode of the people of God. (e) Therefore, the phrase “new heavens and earth” must be understood as a designation for heaven!”

Concerning the phrase “there was no more sea” it seems apparent that we must understand this symbolically . . . at least, that is the way most scholars seem to understand it. Brother Pack writes, “the sea symbolizes the power of evil, which is now no more.” Hendriksen observes, “At present the sea is the emblem of unrest and conflict. The roaring, raging, agitated, tempest-tossed waters, the waves ever engaged in combat with one another, symbolize the nations of the world in their conflict and unrest (Rev 13:1; 17:15). It is the sea out of which the beast arises. But in . . . the new heaven and earth all will be peace. Hence, the heaven and the earth and the seas as they now are shall vanish” (page 239). Commenting on the whole context of verses 1-8, Summers writes (with special attention being called to his view of what the “sea” symbolizes):

*The tabernacle* which is symbolical of perfect fellowship is the first symbol. Just as God’s place of abode with his people in the wilderness was the tabernacle, so the new heaven and the new earth will be his abode with them throughout eternity. He will have

perfect fellowship with them. There will be no more separation from them because in the new heaven and new earth “the sea is no more.” To John on Patmos the sea was the thing which separated him from the things dearest to him, the churches of Asia. In his vision of God in chapter 4, a transcendent sea kept the people away from God, but when all the destiny of man has been worked out, “the sea is no more”; man is in intimate fellowship with God. John heard a voice proclaiming “the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his people.” This voice came immediately after the Holy City, New Jerusalem, was seen coming down glorious and beautiful in appearance. So the New Jerusalem is a tabernacle where God dwells with his people. He wipes away their tears and erases forever crying, mourning pain and death. They have had their share of these things on earth. Now all things are new. As a guarantee that they can depend on this, God instructed John write that these things were true and dependable because he, the Alpha and Omega, is the power bringing it about.”

Brother Hailey writes, “According to the interpretation of ‘the sea’ assumed earlier, this phrase indicates the removal or passing of the body of society, the great sea in which the restless upheavals of men have cast up their mire as the nations rage against God” (see comments, 13:1; 20:13 and Isa 57:20).

Verse 2 - John next sees the “holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” Brother Pack states, “The idea of a heavenly Jerusalem that is itself the perfect counterpart to the imperfect earthly city of Jerusalem, the holy city, is found several times in scripture (Gal 4:25-26, Heb 12:22, etc.).” From brother Hailey’s pen we read, “The fact that it comes down out of heaven manifests its divine origin, for ‘all things are of God’ (2 Cor 5:18) that pertain to the spiritual and eternal. This is the city searched for by the patriarchs of old, ‘which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God’ (Heb 11:10), and for which we seek, an abiding city ‘which is to come’ (Heb 13:14).”

In speaking of the patriarchs seeking a better country and an abiding city, the Bible tells us that God “hath prepared” such a city (Heb 11:16).

Hendriksen writes, “This Jerusalem is called ‘new’ in contradistinction to the earthly, Palestinian Jerusalem. It is called ‘holy’ as being separate from sin, thoroughly consecrated to God. Now, this new and holy Jerusalem is very clearly the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, as is also plainly evident from the fact that it is here and elsewhere called the bride, the wife of the Lamb” (Eph 5:32, etc.).

From brother Pack again: “This city comes down from God, and John sees the city ‘prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.’ Not only in the teachings of Jesus, but also in chapter 19 of this book, the consummation of the Christian faith is described in terms of a wedding, with the church as the bride that is adorned for her bridegroom. This same imagery is found again in verse 9 and 22:17. One would not ordinarily think of a bride as a

city, and yet it is this beautiful bride that is now described as the New Jerusalem. This is in contrast to the city of evil, Babylon the Great, also described as a drunken harlot. The new Jerusalem represents the church of the Lord, the bride of Christ, the Lamb's wife (19:7,8)."

The next question arises. The church . . . *when*? The church on earth today or the church with God in heavenly bliss and glory? Hailey comments, "Though it is true that the faithful church is glorious in the Lord's eyes, and in this vision is seen blessings present throughout the history of God's people, yet after considering the evidence for both views, the latter seems to be the correct one." Further, in commenting on the passing of the old heaven and earth and the coming of the new, Hailey writes, "Peter and John were both writing of the final judgment and what should follow, rather than of the church today (on earth), purged and purified by suffering."

Verses 3-8 - The word "tabernacle" means a tent, lodging, or dwelling place. Verse 3 is telling us that God dwells with His people in the new Jerusalem. Certainly, in a very real sense, God dwells with and within His people today also (1 Cor 3:16; Eph 2:19-22; 2 Cor 6:17ff, etc.) but not in the full, complete, 'face to face' sense that will prevail in the heavenly abode. Brother Hailey writes, "The Old Covenant tabernacle, constructed according to the divine pattern and the dwelling place of God's glory among the people (Ex 40:16-34), pointed to the new, 'which the Lord pitched, not man' (Heb 8:2; 9:11), and where God dwells in the spirit (Eph 2:21,22). The development of God's presence among His people now reaches its zenith as He dwells or tabernacles with them in His heavenly fellowship . . . The old heaven and earth have passed away; and with their going went also everything that marred life on earth as God would have had it: the fruit of sin, death, and its consequences. The bliss of being with God is described by five negatives: no tears, no death, no mourning, no crying, and no pain; for 'the first things are passed away.' These are no more, because sin which caused them is no more; sin and death are swallowed up in victory."

In verse 5 God declares, "Behold, I make all things new." Brother Hailey writes, "The grandeur of the 'all things made new' will surely surpass and exceed anything that our imaginations can conceive . . . Nothing will be lacking in the complete fullness and realization of all spiritual desires of the glorified soul in heaven."

Excerpts from the pen of Hendriksen are worthwhile to consider: "The eternal fellowship between God and his people is set forth . . . it is God who . . . makes all things new . . . we can hardly imagine that the effects of sin can ever be removed. Yet, they are going to be taken away so that all things shall actually be made new."

Verses 7,8 - who will be in the city and who shall not. Only those who "overcome" will inherit these things! (See 2:7,11,17, 26; 3:5,12, 21.) Revelation 12:11 tells how Christians did overcome - and how we can, too! They overcame Satan "by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death."

Obviously, we can't overcome by ourselves. We need help! Christ has redeemed us from cruel bondage through His precious blood, and through the word of God we receive Divine instruction on how to conduct our lives. If we will be faithful to our Lord even to the point of sacrificing our lives for Him, then we shall indeed overcome! But outside the glorious city, and "in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone will be the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whore-mongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars . . ." Let's look at these closely since such far-reaching, eternal consequences are involved.

1. The fearful. Most scholars believe this refers to Christians who will not stand courageously for the faith in times of severe testing. Remember Paul said, "God gave us not a spirit of fearfulness, but of power and love and discipline. Be not ashamed therefore of the testimony of our Lord . . ." 2 Tim 1:7,8. The early Christians prayed to God for boldness that they might speak God's truth with boldness! (Acts 4:29-31). Jesus said, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life" (Rev 2:10). "Unto" includes the idea of "until" but goes far beyond that. It means even to the point of giving your life in martyrdom in order to be faithful to Christ!

2. The unbelieving. This would surely include those who reject God, Christ, and the truth, and also the apostate who through unbelief turns back into the world.

3. The abominable. Proverbs 6:16-19 says, "These six things doth the Lord hate; yea, seven are an abomination unto him; A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, an heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren." Also consider carefully Titus 1:16. The Bible often depicts idolatry and its practices, and all sorts of immoralities as being "abominations" in the sight of God. It is used approximately 150 times in the Bible. The word "abominable" means "that which is worthy of abhorrence, as a thing of evil omen; that which is detestable; loathesome." Therefore, to abominate means to hate, abhor, to detest. The abominable would be those who do things that are in God's sight loathesome and detestable.

4. The murderers - all of us understand what murder is . . . to willfully, unlawfully, kill another human. But few take note of what the apostle John said, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer . . ." (1 Jn 3:15).

5. The whoremongers. These deal with, or traffic with, the lewd and immoral; fornicators. The apostle Peter spoke of those "having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin . . ." (2 Pet 2:14).

6. The sorcerers. These are ones who practices the occult arts and are generally considered to be in league with the forces of evil. See Deuteronomy 18:9-13.

7. The idolaters - those who practice idolatry, condemned of God in the Ten Commandments (Ex 20:3-5), and throughout the Bible.

8. The liars. Truth should be vitally important to all of us. We should live lives in accordance with truth, and speak truth only. To do more than that - to tell a lie and try to bolster it with an oath is of the evil one (Mt 5:37). Swearing is wrong whether to bolster a lie or not, but liars are usually the ones who resort to swearing in order to try to give credibility to their lies.

Verses - 9-27 - In these verses we read a description of the heavenly city. It is true that this holy city depicts the church and, I believe, in its glorified state with God. The terms "the church redeemed and glorified," or "the saints in God's presence," or "the beauties of heaven" would signify one and the same scene. What we read of this magnificent abode of the eternally saved transcends our limited abilities to fathom or fully appreciate. To say the least, it will be marvelous beyond description; fantastically beyond our wildest dreams or imaginations! First, let me very briefly give you ten things specifically stated about the new Jerusalem in this context (two other facts are given in chapter 22:1-5):

1. The city is the bride, the wife of the Lamb (v. 9b).
2. The city is called the "holy Jerusalem." It is from God! (v. 10).
3. The city has a wall, great and high, of gleaming jasper (vvs. 12a,18). Most scholars believe that "jasper is the same as our diamond.
4. The wall of the city has twelve foundations (v. 14).
5. The city has twelve gates of pearl (vvs. 2-13, 21). They shall not be shut (v. 25).
6. The city is lighted by the glory of God and of the Lamb (vvs. 11,23).
7. The city has no temple because God and the Lamb are the temple (v. 22).
8. The street of the city is pure gold, as transparent glass (v. 21).
9. The saved of the nations shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into the city (vvs. 24,26).
10. Nothing defiling or sinful shall enter it! (v. 27).

Brother Pack observes: "In what better way could there be conveyed to us the fact that all of God's people in both the Old and New Testaments are here involved - the names

of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel and the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. This reminds us of the 24 elders with their thrones, which we have interpreted as representatives of both the Old Covenant and New Covenant people of God. The redeemed of all ages, God's true people, those who have kept his covenants, are the ones who make up this city."

Notice the dimensions of the city comprise a perfect cube, thus, "the city lieth four-square" (verse 16). The length, the breadth, and the height of it are equal. The figure given is 12,000 furlongs (or stadia). A furlong is believed to have been somewhat over 600 feet. It would take about 8 furlongs to make a mile; 12,000 furlongs would be about 1,500 miles. Commentators are divided as to whether this figure depicts the circumference or the distance of each side. If the circumference it would be a city about 375 miles square. If 12,000 furlongs is to be understood as the length of each cube, then the city would be 1,500 miles long, 1,500 across, and 1,500 miles high. The latter seems to be the thinking of most Biblical scholars. Either way, what we have depicted is an immense city! But, we must remember we are dealing with symbolism so it conveys to our minds a vast city, beautiful and magnificent beyond description! A significant point is that the city is a cube. The holy of holies (or most holy place) of the tabernacle and the temple were cubes, and that is where God met with His people. What we have described here is the perfect sanctuary, or dwelling place of God, where He is with His people continually . . . not representatively, not in part, but personally and completely!

Brother pack states, "Wherever the Lord is there is the true temple. There are his people, and there is the divine fellowship. Even in this world we recognize that the church is not a building nor a specific point on a corner of a street but it is rather the body of those who have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ. Under the figure of a city, we have the redeemed in heaven described."

So much more could be said about this fantastic city! Remember by way of contrast how the worldlings asked about their "earth city." "What city is like the great city?" (18:18). They saw it burned. Surely those who view this city of God will ask, "To what shall we compare this great city? It is as incomparable as the God from it comes" Hailey. Only this heavenly city shall endure in bliss forever!



## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

The first five verses of this closing chapter of Revelation are but a continuation of the description of the heavenly city begun in chapter 21. Beginning with verse 6 through verse 22 we have the following general content::

- (1) Verse 6 - Angelic attestation that the book is “faithful and true.”
- (2) Verse 7 - Jesus Himself speaks of His coming, and pronounces a blessing upon he who keeps the sayings of the book.
- (3) Verses 8,9 - John bears testimony to the fact that he did indeed see and hear the things recorded. He again makes the mistake of offering worship to the angel who revealed these things to him. Only God is to be worshiped.
- (4) Verses 10,11 - The contents of the “prophecy of this book” are not to be sealed any longer “for the time is at hand.” Verse 11 is perhaps the most challenging verse in the chapter and we will delve into it, somewhat, below.
- (5) Verses 12-14 - Again, we have the words of Christ, promising His return, affirming His eternal nature, and announcing that those who are obedient are blessed, and will be granted entrance into the heavenly city.
- (6) Verse 15 - These are probably the words of Jesus also, stating those who will most assuredly not be allowed entrance into the city.
- (7) Verses 16,17 - Jesus gives the last invitation . . . one final plea!
- (8) Verses 18,19 - Apparently these, too, are the words of Jesus warning against adding to or taking away from “the things which are written in this book.”
- (9) Verse 20 - Jesus concludes by saying, “Surely I come quickly.” John then states, “Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”
- (10) Verse 21 - John’s benediction.

With this general outline in mind, we will now expand somewhat on our comments on the chapter.

Verses 1,5 - The angel (21:9) shows John a “pure river of water of life” coming out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. The water of this river surely must be the same as that of which Christ spoke in John 4:14. “. . . whosoever drinketh 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 unto eternal life.” As there was a river in the garden of Eden (Gen 2:10) that watered the garden, so also in the heavenly city, the eternal paradise of God which He has prepared for His people, there is a life giving river. Notice, it comes from the throne of God. God is the source of life, and through His Son Jesus Christ, gives life to those who trusted and obeyed during the earthly pilgrimage. “Life is in the Son!” Read 1 John 5: 11,12. Thus, “This river is the essence of purity and life”(Hailey) emanating from God and the Lamb. Remember, the nature and quality of God (Greek, theos, meaning Deity) belongs to both the Father and the Son (also the Holy Spirit), as is taught in such Scriptures as John 1:1, Philippians 2:5-6, etc. What belongs to one belongs to the other (Jn 17:10) and what comes from one comes from the other. Thus, “the throne of God and of the Lamb.”

Verse 2 would seem to say that the river is in “the middle of the street” which, to our minds, would appear awkward. However, if we understand “street” to be used collectively, not referring to just one street, but to the streets coming from the twelve gates, then we gain a picture of the “river of water of life” flowing alongside these streets, or avenues. Hailey states, “Again, ‘the street is used collectively, representing all the avenues from the twelve gates which extend through the city. The picture is difficult to visualize but it seems that in the midst of the streets, viewed collectively as one, the river flows alongside with trees on its banks. The tree of life, singular, ‘on this side of the river and on that,’ indicates that ‘tree’ is used collectively, as is ‘street,’ to represent all the trees that lined the river. The vision pictures a beautiful park with golden streets, rivers of crystal pure water flow through it, and banks and avenues lined with trees for fruit and leaves for healing. Of course, the whole picture is symbolic” (page 422).

The fruit the tree (collectively, for trees) bears is not of different kinds, but produced every month, that is, perpetually. What we see is a continuing “crop” of fruit. The leaves of the tree are for healing - healing of all the heartaches, hurts, and sorrows of the tribulations the redeemed had experienced on earth.

What a wondrous paradise! God’s throne stands in the midst of this city which lies foursquare; its walls of gleaming diamonds stretch 1,500 miles each way on twelve foundations of precious stones. Its twelve gates are of pearl and streets of gold from each gate lead to the throne. Along side the streets flows the beautiful, crystal pure, river of water of life, quenching the thirst and giving eternal life to all who inhabit the city. Imagine - if you can - the most beautiful garden the mind can conceive in the heart of such surroundings! Trees supply an ever abundance of life-sustaining delights, with leaves that heal all wounds and heartaches of the past.

Perhaps something should be pointed out, showing some connection between the tree of life and the cross of our Lord since it was on the cross that our “life” was made possible. In the garden of Eden, sinful man was denied access to the tree of life, lest he

should eat of it and live forever in his sinful state (Gen3:22-24). As Hailey observed, "Man must now find his eternal life in a different tree, the one on which the Savior was hanged (Acts 5:30; 10:39; 13:29; Gal 3:13; 1 Pet 2:24)." In this heavenly city Jesus freely gives to all who overcame, "to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise (garden) of God" (Rev. 2:7).

Verse 3 tells us the "curse" has been removed. Brother Pack observes, "As man was driven from Eden he came forth with a curse upon him. The curse of sin that separated him from God, the curse of death that emphasized his mortality, the curse of labor that bore no fruit - this was the curse of Eden. This curse is completely removed. Whereas man's sin had separated him from God and no longer could he walk and talk with God, the curse removed through the redemption of Jesus Christ means that God's throne is in the midst of the city and with readiness his servants serve Him. They see Him in all His glory, face to face, the One 'whom no man has seen at any time' (Jn 1:18). His name is stamped upon their foreheads because they belong to Him. They know the blessedness of loving service . . . there is no end to their triumph, no end to their glory, no end to their joy, no end to their service."

I believe that we as Christians should think of heaven more than we do. We should preach about it more, sing about it more, and talk about it more. As the song writer penned, "We read of a place that's called heaven; it's made for the pure and the free. These truths in God's word He has given - how beautiful heaven must be! How beautiful heaven must be, sweet home of the happy and free; fair haven of rest for the weary - how beautiful heaven must be!" Brethren, we should thrill as we contemplate it and we should desire to go there with all our hearts! In the words of the apostle Paul: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us" (Rom 8:18).

Verse 6 - Apparently it is the angel that was showing John the magnificent city of heaven that speaks. The angel affirms that "these sayings are faithful and true." Christians of all ages can have complete confidence in all the precious promises of the book and in the fact that justice would be done concerning the persecutors of the saints. The same True God that directed the prophets, had sent him (the angel) to reveal these things to His people.

Verse 7 - There is a close parallel to this verse and 16:15 where we find a parenthetical saying of Jesus. Therefore, it is most likely that the words recorded in this verse are the words of Jesus. We would conclude that, if for no other reason, on the basis of many verses in the New Testament that teach us that Christ is coming again! See such passages as John 14:3; Acts 1:11; Titus 2:13; Philippians 3:20; Hebrews 9:28; 1 Thessalonians 4:15,16; 2 Thessalonians 1:7. The coming of Christ is "quickly" or "shortly." As we reckon time, this statement may be rather baffling to us. We don't think of 1,900 years as "shortly." But we must keep in mind, that to the Lord a thousand years is as one

day (2 Pet 3:8). So "time" is a relative thing . . . even if the world should continue for 5,000 additional years, yet it would be a very brief span in view of the eternal realm. In the second part of verse 7 we find the sixth beatitude given in the book of Revelation. There are seven in all: 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7 and 22:14. All of them together (in sort of a composite way) stress the importance of our (1) heeding what the Lord says, (2) cleansing our spiritual garments, washing them and making them white in the blood of the Lamb, (3) accepting the invitation to the marriage feast of the Lamb, (4) keeping His commandments, (5) dying in the Lord, and thus (6) being a part of the "first resurrection."

Verse 8,9 - As John had done previously (19:10), he again falls down to worship the angel which was showing him these things. As before he was rebuked for doing so. (For a similar occurrence see Acts 10:25,26 where Cornelius attempted to worship Peter.) The teaching is plain - worship God! We are not to worship any man, or any angel.

Verses 10,11 - Remember, most of the content of Revelation revolves around the opening of the book which was in the right hand of God (5:1) by the Lamb (5:5). By 22:10 all seven seals of the book had been opened. The angel is simply telling John to leave the book open. (As to the nature of the book see the comments made on the first few verses of chapter 5.) John is to leave the book open to be read, understood, and observed in lives lived in faith and obedience. "For the time is at hand . . ." The information in the book was pertinent to the needs of the people - the ones to whom John wrote in the closing part of the first century A.D. and the faithful in subsequent times, even until now . . . and until Christ comes again. Now is the time we need to know that the victory is in Jesus, and that the righteous are going to be rewarded with eternal bliss, while the vile and sinful will indeed be punished.

Verse 11 is, admittedly, quite puzzling. Perhaps the correct understanding of the verse hinges on the word "let." Notice these remarks of Hendriksen: "If we bear in mind that our English word 'let' may mean either one of two things, we shall have no difficulty to explain verse 11. First of all, there is a 'let' of positive exhortation; for example, 'Let the wicked forsake his way . . .' (Isa 55:7). Here the wicked is urged to forsake his evil way. This 'let' always comes first - but, suppose that in spite of all earnest pleadings, admonitions, invitations, and judgments, the wicked refuses to obey and to accept the water of life freely. What then? Then, there is another 'let.' It is not the 'let' of positive exhortation, but the 'let' of withdrawal. God says, as it were, 'Let him be.' . . . it is this second 'let' that is meant here in verse 11. For the wicked it is a terrible 'let.'" In the latter sense, as used by Hendriksen above, the word "let" would carry the connotation of "allow it to be" or "do not hinder" its being so. man is a free-moral agent and each one makes his choice to do right or wrong, to obey God or not. No force, or coercion, is to be exercised in the matter. Persuasion, yes! Admonition, yes! Pleading, yes! But not coercion! The time of retribution is coming quickly when it will be too late for changes! Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation!

Brother Pack states, “Most modern scholars look upon this as an ironical statement in the sense that if the unrighteous and the wicked will not be warned through the judgments and warnings that are given to them, they must bear the responsibility for their rejection. They will go to their reward. They will simply remain filthy still. The man who clings to wrongdoing is a man who remains in that despite all the warnings given, while the man who is righteous remains in his righteousness still and the man who is holy in his holiness.”

Each person is choosing daily a definite course of life. The one who pursues sinful things is going to end up in accord with that choice. The one who chooses to put God first in His life will most generally keep on doing so.

Going back to the word “let,” let’s direct our attention to Matthew 13:30 where Christ instructed His disciples concerning the tares. “Let both grow together until the harvest; and in time of harvest I will say to the reapers, ‘Gather up first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn.’” See how beautifully that coincides with Revelation 19-22? “Let” in Matthew 13:30 obviously means “allow it to be.” As in 22:11 . . . “allow it to be.” This has been their choice, and God gives men up to their choice. (Josh 24:15 and Rom 1:21a, 24, 28.)

On verse 11, Hailey comments: “Each individual chooses the class in which he is identified. One’s actions grown out of the basic character he develops or makes for himself. As he chooses his course he persists in traveling that path. He either practices sin, sinking deeper into his unrighteousness and moral defilement, or he seeks righteousness, rising higher and higher in holiness . . . there is no standing still . . . there is a point of no return (Heb 6:4-6).”

Verses 12-14 - Jesus is definitely coming and it will be soon, using the word in the same sense mentioned in verse 7. Christ is coming the second time to reward . . . not to entreat or invite . . . according to the works of each person. We shall indeed be judged and “rewarded” on the basis of what God’s book says, and what we have done in our lifetimes! (Read 2 Cor 5:10, Rom 14:12, 2 Thess 1:8,9, Rom 2:5-11,16 and Rev 20:12.) The “rewards” will be just and righteous . . . of that, we can be assured. Read Acts 17:31a.

Jesus affirms His eternal nature in verse 13. He has existed from times eternal. Read John 1:1ff, Philippians 2:5,6 and Colossians 1:14-17.

In verse 14 Jesus gives the seventh beatitude of the book of Revelation. The careful student will notice a variation among translations. The KJV reads “Blessed are they that do his commandments,” while the ASV, the NASV, the RSV and the NIV render it, “Bless ed are they that wash their robes.” Either reading finds parallel passages in Revelation but on this particular verse the manuscript evidence seems to favor the rendering given by the ASV and the more recent translations. Certainly, either rendering is

true . . . to keep God's commandments sincerely and earnestly is indeed the way that one has his "robes" washed in the blood of the Lamb, and either/or both are necessary to entering the holy city.

Verse 15 - Outside the city are "dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." "Dogs" is a term, according to brother Pack, that "elsewhere in the scriptures denotes that which is polluted, immoral, savage, and unclean. The dogs in the ancient cities were the animals that ate up the filth and the garbage about the city (1 Kgs 21:19). This term "dogs" in this context obviously refers to those who are immoral." That which is sinful, wrong, and evil, will not be allowed in the beautiful city of God!

Verses 16,17 - Jesus gives validity to what has been recorded in Revelation, averring that He was the One that sent the angel to make these things known. He is the root of David inasmuch as He was before David (see Isa 11:1 and Mt 22:41-46) and, yet, He was David's son (Mt 1:1ff; Acts 2:30,31 and Lk 1:26-33). Christ is also the "bright and morning star" which is simply symbolic language of the One who brings hope and salvation (see Mt 4:14-16 and 2 Pet 1:16-19).

Obviously, the invitation is to all . . . "whosoever will" let him come!

Verses 18,19 - In several places in the Bible the warning is given to man not to tamper with, add to, subtract from or pervert the message God has given. See Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:5,6; Galatians 1:6-9; 2 Peter 3:16b; etc. Though the warning here primarily refers to the book of Revelation, in my judgment, yet the principle is applicable to any portion of the Sacred Scriptures. God's word is to be "handled" aright (2 Tim 2:15), and respected profoundly, since it is indeed His will made known to us,

Verses 20,21 - Again, the Lord affirms His "quick" return! John, then, pens his own desires, "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus." In other words, John longed for the return of the Lord, as we should, also.

The great book of Revelation concludes, with these words, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all (or "with the saints"). Amen." So be it. Let it be so.

\*\*\*\*\*

My earnest and sincere prayer is that each one has enjoyed and profited by this study. Keep in mind the theme of the book - Victory in Jesus! Let the heathen rant and rave - the ultimate victory belongs to true Christians. We are more than conquerors through our Lord! God will render appropriate judgment in the final analysis. Let us leave that to Him. Ours is but to trust and obey now so that heaven will be our home. Won't it be

wonderful there? I pray that all of us who have studied this book together may be there  
together some sweet day!

Maxie B. Boren