
a *Grace Notes* publication

Revelation

Dr. Grant C. Richison

Revelation

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Foreword

These lessons in **Revelation** are compiled from the writings of Dr. Grant C. Richison, which were published on the Internet beginning in 1997 in the Campus Crusades (Canada) daily online devotional Today's Word.

Dr. Richison is a highly experienced pastor, lecturer, and Christian servant who is dedicated to a lifetime of studying and teaching God's Word. Almost immediately after his salvation he began to desire to teach the Word, and he set about a lifelong program of preparation and ministry.

Dr. Richison has a diploma from Detroit Bible Institute, a bachelor's degree in religious education from William Tyndale College (Detroit), a Masters in Theology from Dallas Theological Seminary, and a doctorate in ministries from Luther Rice Seminary in Jacksonville, Florida.

Dr. Richison has been pastor and senior pastor of Baptist churches from 1965 to 1992. His most recent pastorate was at Grant Memorial Baptist Church, Winnipeg, Manitoba, where, over a 20 year period, he had oversight of a ministry that expanded from about 350 to more than 2500 communicants. During the period of his pastorates, Dr. Richison was also a lecturer at Detroit Bible College and Winnipeg Theological Seminary.

From 1993 to 1995, Dr. Richison was Director of Leadership Ministries for Campus Crusade for Christ (Canada). He currently has a world-wide lecture ministry with Campus Crusade.

Dr. Richison is an experienced writer, and he provides materials for three areas on the Internet: Sermon on the Net; Today's Word, and Pastors' Power Points. He has considerable ability to communicate God's Word verse by verse in a relevant, clear, applicable and insightful manner and to communicate vision and establish a philosophy of ministry in the local assembly. .

Dr. Richison has served on the following boards and conferences:

- Lower Michigan Baptist General Conference (district of Baptist General Conference, board member)
 - Great Lakes Baptist Conference (district of Baptist General Conference, chairman)
 - Central Canada Baptist Conference (district of Baptist General Conference, chairman)
 - Child Evangelism Fellowship (Manitoba)
 - Evangelical Fellowship of Canada
 - International Ministries to Israel (Canada)
 - Chairman of Greater Manitoba Sunday School Convention
 - Chairman of Marney Patterson Evangelistic Crusade (city-wide in Winnipeg)
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- Chairman of Terry Winter Evangelistic Crusade (city-wide in Winnipeg)
 - Chairman of the "Why Campaign" (city-wide evangelistic trust in Winnipeg)
 - Chairman of the Board of Regents of Canadian Baptist Seminary (part of consortium of seminaries on Trinity Western University)
 - Baptist General Conference of Canada (board member)
 - Briarcrest Bible College and Seminary, Moose Jaw, Sask.
 - Electronic Bible Society, Dallas Texas
 - President's Cabinet, Campus Crusade for Christ, Canada

Grace Notes

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Verse-by-verse courses are available in more than 30 books of the Bible. Some of the courses include word studies (categorical doctrine) or historical articles (isagogics) that are relevant to the passages being discussed. Other courses offered are Bible character studies, comprehensive studies of the Christian Life and Basics of the Christian Life, an extensive series on the Person and Word of Jesus Christ, and a thorough study of the Attributes of God. You are invited to write to the address below, or write by e-mail, to inquire about Grace Notes materials.

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Introduction

Importance of Revelation

Revelation is the culmination of all books of the Bible. Revelation brings to conclusion the many prophecies of the Bible. Revelation puts in context the end-time events for God's purpose for creation.

Author

A. Justin Martyr directly affirms that John was the author.

B. Irenaeus (disciple of Polycarp, who in turn was a pupil of the apostle John) attributes the writing of Revelation to John.

"Not very long time since, but almost in our day towards the end of Domitian's reign." Domitian died in AD 96, John was then allowed to return to Ephesus.

C. Others: Clement, Origin, Tertullian, Hippolytus

D. John's name occurs as the author: 1:1,4,9; 22:8

E. Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, Eusebius, Apollonius, and Theophilus, the bishop of Antioch all accepted Revelation as inspired Scripture.

F. By the 3rd century, Revelation was widely quoted as Scripture.

Occasion of Writing

A. Direct command (1:10-23)

B. Condition of the churches

1. Fierce persecution at times (not a universal policy). One Christian already executed (2:13)

2. Serious problems within the churches: Ephesus (2:2) Smyrna (2:10) Pergamum (2:13) Thyatira (2:22) Philadelphia (3:10)

Date of Writing -- AD 96

Place of Writing -- Patmos, a penal colony (where John was exiled)

A small rocky island in the Aegean Sea, 48 km from Ephesus. 18-13 km long and 1.5 km wide.

Purposes

A. To give the final truth about Jesus Christ – the unveiling of His person, power and purpose (1:1)

B. To show the ultimate triumph of the Kingdom of Christ

C. To give a new perspective on history

D. To give incentive for holy living

E. To show that God will ultimately deal with the problem of evil

F. To give a preview of future events

Theme: The revelation of Jesus Christ (1:1; cf. 1:7; 3:11; 22:30)

Revelation is Christ centered

Key Words

"revelation" (unveiling) "lamb" (29 times)

Key Verse

"Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this" (1:19).

Addressees (1:11)

A. All churches situated in Proconsular Asia

B. Churches selected as representatives for churches today

C. Located in the western third of modern Turkey

D. John came to Ephesus in 67-70 (Ephesus, the capital of Proconsular Asia)

Reasons Revelation Must Be Clearly Understood

A. It is a "revelation" (apocalypse) which means an unveiling. (contrast an apocryphal book which is hidden)

B. Revelation is not a sealed book (22:10)

C. A blessing is promised to the people who read and to those who hear the words of this prophecy (1:3)

D. The last analysis of the book is simple (1:19)

Theology: -- Christological (1:1-3; cf. 5:47; 19:11, 16, 17; 21:9)

A. Person of Christ – chapter one

B. Glorious reign of Christ (complete victory over Satan)

Apocalyptic Character of the Book

- A. An apocalyptic book unfolds the future
- B. "apokalupsis"--removing of a veil; Revelation is written to be understood
- C. Symbolism of the book is found elsewhere – no less than 400 allusions to the Old Testament
- D. Daniel and Ezekiel are similar in style

Miscellaneous Matters

- A. Revelation is the cap stone of Scripture
- B. Revelation is the only prophetic book in the New Testament
- C. Revelation bears similar features to the book of Daniel
- D. Revelation is the only book with a promise of blessing to readers (1:3)
- E. Contains 22 chapters, 404 verses and 12,000 words
 - 1. 285 verses contain Old Testament language
 - 2. 70 references to angels
 - 3. No quotes from the Old Testament
- F. Seven beatitudes: 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7,14
- G. The chronological construction of the book gives the prophetic program (1:19)
- H. Over one half of the book describes the tribulation
- I. The number seven occurs frequently throughout the book
- J. A prophecy is a prevision of the future
- K. Revelation was written in order to be understood
- L. The symbolism of the book furnishes the key to the interpretation of the book
- M. Revelation is a book of consummation

Interpretations

A. ALLEGORICAL VIEW

- 1. Definition: the Book of Revelation is an extensive allegory interpreted non-literally
- 2. Symbolic picture of the struggle between good and evil

- 3. Originated in the Alexandrian school (Clement of Alexandria, Origen)
- 4. Goes far beyond natural symbolism
- 5. Influenced Augustine and Jerome
- 6. Problem: too subjective

B. PRETERIST VIEW

- 1. Definition: Latin for "past." Revelation has already been fulfilled in the early church (by the time of Constantine, AD 312)
- 2. A symbolic history of the first century
- 3. Problem: ignores specific predictions (1:3, 19; 22:18, 19); gives arbitrary meaning to symbols

C. HISTORICAL VIEW

- 1. Definition: the Book of Revelation is a symbolic picture of the history of the church between the first and second comings of Christ.
- 2. Held by many post-millennialists who believe that the world is getting better and this will usher in the Kingdom of Christ.
- 3. Problem: No two interpreters agree as to which passage refers to which event. They each find fulfillment of a given passage in their own generation.

D. FUTURISTIC VIEW

- 1. Limited to conservative scholars only
- 2. Allows for literal (normal) interpretation of prophecy while recognizing symbolism
- 3. Offers a relatively clear understanding of the principal events of future fulfillment
- 4. Structure of the book revolves around chronology: Chapters 1-3: Church Age Chapters 4-22: Future Events
- 5. Objection: Those opposed to this view say that Revelation would not comfort if it were largely future

Outline

INTRODUCTION,

- 1. Prologue (1:1-3) 2. Salutation (1:4-8)
- I. "THINGS YOU HAVE SEEN" (Chapter one)
 - The glorified Christ (1:9-20)
- II. "THINGS WHICH ARE" (Chapters two and three)

Seven messages to the churches (2:1-3:22)

III. "THINGS WHICH SHALL BE" (4:1-22:5)

A. The Church at the Heavenly Throne (4)

B. Seven-sealed Scroll of the Tribulation (5)

C. Tribulation (6:1-18:24)

D. The Marriage Supper of the Lamb (19:1-10)

E. Second Coming (19:11-21)

F. Millennium (20)

G. New Heaven and Earth (21:1-22:5)

CONCLUSION (22:6-21)

1. Epilogue (22:6-20) 2. Benediction (22:21)

Revelation 1:1

"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants – things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John..."

We come to the sixty-sixth book of the Bible, the climactic ending to God's program for time. Any prophecy begun in any other book finds its climax in this book. From Paradise Lost in the book of Genesis, we come to Paradise Found in the book of Revelation.

In the first three verses of Revelation, we find the prologue. The prologue frames the entire book. The third verse gives the structure of the total book. The key to understanding this book is in its structure.

The first chapter of Revelation is a general introduction to the entire book; it is a book about the inimitable, sovereign Son of God.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The word "revelation" means disclosure, uncovering, unveiling. The Greek word comes from two words: from and cover. A revelation takes off the covers. Much of what the Bible has hidden about Jesus Christ will now be revealed in the book of Revelation. Jesus is the cardinal subject of the Book of Revelation (22:6-21). The climax of the book comes in the Second Coming of Christ (chapter 19).

Since the Book of Revelation is unveiling, it is not intended to be an enigma, some puzzle hard to decipher. This is how most people like to represent the book. Revelation says of itself that it will clearly reveal Jesus Christ. Do you unintentionally negate the Book of Revelation in your mind because others have convinced you or you have convinced yourself that Revelation is a dark book too difficult to understand? Why not accept the challenge of understanding this great book of the Bible? It is the only book of the Bible that promises a blessing if you read it.

We have seen the unveiling of a statue. The statue is covered with a sheet. At the dedication, the sheet is dropped for all to see the statue. This is the picture of the last book of the Bible. Revelation will

unveil Jesus in a way other books of the Bible do not reveal Him.

Revelation presents a glorious reigning Christ. It tells of complete victory over Satan and sin. Jesus is the central theme of this book. Chapter one presents the glorified Christ. It is a message from and about Jesus. He is the overriding object of the book and of prophecy.

The title of the Book of Revelation is the key to its contents. Revelation is more than a communiqué about Him; it displays Him in His glory. Revelation uncovers the matchless Lord of Glory Himself. In His first coming, the deity of Christ only presented itself occasionally. In His Second Coming, we will see Him in all His glory. We will see Him in the full orb'd wonder of His Majesty. This book sets the stage for knowing Jesus better. His person will shine forth into your soul if you open yourself to the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit through this book.

Note that there is no "s" on the name of this book. Many people call "Revelation" the book of "Revelation[s]." This error fosters a misunderstanding of this book. Revelation is about the unveiling of Jesus Christ. Prophecy for prophecy sake is not the point of this book. The major argument of this book revolves around the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The gospels give a portrait of Jesus from four viewpoints. The epistles set forth logical analysis about His person and work. Revelation presents Him in His future glory. The New Testament is clearly Christocentric.

Principle

Jesus is the central object of prophecy.

Application

Jesus is the center stage of prophecy. He is the celebrity of all creation. The purpose of creation is to glorify God and His Son Jesus Christ. We hold His Majesty, King Jesus, as our ultimate Luminary. God is in the business of unveiling Jesus. This should be our business as well.

The Devil loves the propaganda that we cannot understand the Book of Revelation. "I will leave the understanding of that book to the theologians." That is like saying, "God wrote the Bible to communicate to me but He must have made a

mistake in estimating my capacity to understand it."

This book tells of the ultimate outcome of the Devil. He does not want us to know about his ultimate defeat (Revelation 12). If the Devil can discredit the last book of the Bible in our minds, he wins a victory. He wants us to discount it. That gives him an advantage in our lives.

If we think of the Book of Revelation like a fairy tale that does not truly exist, then we will not gain assurance of God's ultimate victory in time. We will allow ourselves to think of the pain of the present as an end in itself. We will never gain a perspective on God's purpose for time. We will never understand why He allows pain and suffering to come into our lives. Especially, since Revelation is all about Jesus, the Devil does not want us to understand it.

which God gave Him

The Father is the ultimate source of the book of Revelation, therefore, this information bears supreme authority.

God gives to the humanity of Jesus the Kingdom. Jesus gives back to God the Kingdom (1 Corinthians 15:24).

to show His servants

The word "show" means to show by making known - to bring to light, display, exhibit, point out. The humanity of Christ, though endowed with great sagacity, needed revelation to understand things of the future. The humanity of Christ is not the same as His deity. His humanity needed to depend entirely on the Father.

The final recipients of the book of Revelation are "His servants (slaves)." God did not give this book to those who speculate about prophecy but to those who have servant hearts. God wants us to take more than a curious attitude about future things. To the extent that we carry the servant heart, to that extent we will profit from this book. Revelation is a word from the Lord to slaves, from a Master to His slaves.

What good is revelation if it is not clear? The Book of Revelation is a showcase of the Lord Jesus. The Father puts Jesus on display here as nowhere else in the Bible. The last part of this chapter gives a full-length portrait of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The only people to whom God shows off His Son is His own. The Bible is a closed book to those without Christ. Each child of God has a built-in Bible teacher -- the Holy Spirit. Non-Christians do not have the Holy Spirit so they cannot understand the Bible much less the Book of Revelation.

"But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14).

Principle

God's people want to know Jesus better.

Application

There may have been times when you tried to read a book and did not understand it or find it interesting. You possibly read a chapter and put the book back on the shelf. Years later, you meet the author personally. Then you go back to the book and it takes on new significance for you. This is certainly true with the Bible. If we know the Lord personally, we want to know everything He communicates to us, even the Book of Revelation.

Now that we know the Lord personally, the Book of Revelation adds up. We love the Lord Jesus. We want to know everything we can about Him.

— things which must shortly take place

We get our English words "taxi" and "tachometer" from the Greek word for "shortly." A tachometer measures velocity. A taxi is supposed to get us somewhere quickly. That is not always the case, however!

"Shortly" means swiftness, speed, fleetness, velocity, speed, quickness, swiftness, haste. When the events of the Book of Revelation come, they will come quickly within a very brief period. The events will fall in rapid succession. When God puts end-time events into place, He will execute them rapidly.

This phrase carries the idea of certainty. There will be no condition or delay when God begins to take actions contained in this book.

"And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according

to his work" (Revelation 22:12). Jesus said that He will come suddenly.

The word "must" presents a logical necessity. Prophecy is the outworking of divine necessity. Prophecy is more than panorama of future things (it is that); it is the outworking of divine necessity. God's purpose is certain.

Principle

The events of the book of Revelation will come both surely and shortly.

Application

There are two kinds of prophecy in the Bible -- fulfilled and unfulfilled. Fulfilled prophecy gives us the assurance that God will certainly fulfill unfulfilled prophecy.

And He sent and signified it

An angel both brought the information of Revelation and put it in symbols. The word "signified" means to give a sign, report, communicate, point out, to give a signal to do a thing. In war, "signified" carried the idea of to give the signal of attack. John uses "signified" throughout his writings. He loves symbols.

When God gives the signal for all these events to take place, it will be clear to all. God will make known by a series of signs and symbols what will take place. However, this clarity will not carry bald literalism. We will see symbols of truth, not the actual, literal event. They will be "signs" of the actual and literal. Therefore, there will be some obscurity in this revelation (12:1,3; 15:1).

Note the order here. First the Father reveals the contents of the book of Revelation to Jesus, then Jesus gives it to an angel to give it to John who in turn gives it to the churches.

Symbols occur throughout the Bible as a vehicle for delivering God's thoughts to man. Revelation, however, uses symbols more than any other book of the New Testament. John probably uses symbols because of the peril of persecution looming over the Christian community.

We best understand the principle of interpretation of symbols where John explains symbols. It is pious prattle to say that God does not intend us to understand these symbols. Interpretation of Revelation depends also on a thorough

understanding of all the great prophecies of the Bible that converge in this book. We find an ultimate termination of God's purposes for creation here. This is the one book of the Bible that gives us a systematic plan for the future.

Revelation contains no less than 400 allusions to the Old Testament. We find no direct citation. Almost all of the imagery of Revelation relates to motifs that emerge from Old Testament prophetic books.

The flag of the country in which we live not only carries symbols and colors, but also the flag represents that for which our country stands. Our flag is a symbol of that for which we stand. We stand for freedom and democracy.

God wrote the Book of Revelation in "sign language." He wrote the Book of Ezekiel the same way. Algebra uses a system of signs. Sign language can make sense if you know what the signs mean. If we do not obey a stop sign, we might end in the casket. Signs are important even in our daily life. If you say, "I do not believe in signs," then you might end in the morgue. All of us use signs everyday. Why should we avoid understanding the sign language of the Book of Revelation?

Revelation is the only book of the New Testament that completely devotes its subject to prophecy.

by His angel to His servant John

The term "angel" occurs seventy times in the Book of Revelation. Therefore, it is obviously an essential idea in the book. In order to contrast God's transcendence, God uses angels to transmit His revelation. Angels intervene in the great events of Revelation. The word "angel" means messenger. Sometimes the messenger is simply a human being who conveys divine truth.

The interpretation is clearly set forth in 22:6-9. This "angel" is not a supernatural being but a "fellow slave" and "prophet." This may have been Daniel, to whose book John alludes throughout the book.

Note John here characterizes himself as a "servant." God does not have any drones in His family. All God's children are to be His servants. God uses any people who will put themselves into His hands.

Principle

Revelation is the most modern book ever written.

Application

Revelation presents God's glorious plan of the future. We know God's plan for complete victory over Satan. No wonder Satan does not want us to read Revelation! He wants to convey the idea that we cannot understand Revelation. "We do not want to divide over eschatology. This is not important doctrine." That is like saying that God wrote much of the Bible revolving around prophecy and we negate it by relegating it into obsolescence. God did not write the Book of Revelation to render it into oblivion!

Revelation 1:2

"Who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw"

This verse attests to the prophecy of this book. God put the content of this book in symbols to testify to the Word of God in general and to the testimony of Jesus Christ in particular.

John witnesses to three things in this verse.

who bore witness to the word of God

First, John witnesses to the Word of God (Jeremiah 15:16; Job 23:12; Matthew 4:4; 24:35; 1 Peter 1:23,25). Witness to the Word of God is primary and indispensable. That is foundational. We cannot know anything for sure without its foundation in the Word of God.

and to the testimony of Jesus Christ

Secondly, John witnesses to "the testimony of Jesus Christ." This is the testimony that Jesus bore when He was upon earth and who He is as presented in this book.

to all things that he saw

Thirdly, John witnesses to "all things that he saw." John repeats the phrase "all things that he saw" 54 times in the book. "I saw" occurs 37 times. The content of this book came by visions.

John's gospel is the gospel of the eye witness. This was not true of the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke). Most of the things we read in John we do not find in the synoptic gospels. The

same man who wrote the Gospel of John wrote the book of Revelation. No one saw as much as John. John was an eyewitness to truth. Nothing in Revelation is an invention of John.

Principle

The Book of Revelation demands our attention.

Application

Revelation demands our attention for it is the Word of God, the testimony of Jesus and a testimony to future things. This book carries great authority in God's values.

Nothing in the Book of Revelation is the brainchild of John. Everything came by revelation.

Revelation 1:3

"Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near"

Blessed

John concludes the prologue of Revelation with special blessings on all those who read and practice the principles of this book. This is the only book in the Bible that promises such a blessing. By repeating this promise in 22:7, he makes an emphatic point.

The word "blessed" does not mean happy as most people think it means. Jesus uses this same term in the beatitudes (Matthew 5; Luke 6). John uses this word seven times in Revelation (1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14). Twice, Paul uses "blessed" of God (1 Timothy 1:11; 6:15).

"Blessed" carries the idea of a state of being fortunate or privileged, the recipient of God's favor. Blessedness is the state that is neither made nor influenced by outside circumstances but is intrinsic within. This state comes from God, not man. Blessedness is not happiness because happiness depends on circumstances. These are people independent from the world and its allurements. They need nothing but God. They are not dependent upon outside circumstances. This quality belongs intrinsically to God. No one can make God blessed, so the people who are in the state of blessedness are souls satisfied from the source of God.

Why will we receive blessedness if we read this book? Because Revelation is about Jesus Christ and His ultimate fulfillment of God's purpose for creation.

is he who reads

There is a blessing both for the reader and for the hearers. John intends that the Book of Revelation have practical impact on the lives of those who read it.

The study of any portion of Scripture is beneficial to our souls (2 Timothy 3:16). However, some Scripture is more profitable than others.

Principle

God will confer a blessing on us if we read and apply to our lives the principles of this book.

Application

Satan will rob us of a special blessing if he can delude us into believing that we cannot understand Revelation. If we read Revelation, we will enter a state of independence from outside influence, a state of blessedness.

and those who hear the words of this prophecy,

God blesses those who "hear" prophecy. It is one thing to "read" prophecy but it is another thing to "hear" prophecy.

Revelation is not history; it is prophecy. Revelation is essentially prophecy. All of us take interest in the future. God is gracious to reveal to us something of the future.

John repeats this pronouncement of blessing at the end of the book as well.

"Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book" (Revelation 22:7).

No prophecy of the past has failed to come true. Scores of prophecies of the first coming of Christ came true in full detail. Not one of the thousands of prophecies of Scripture has ever failed to come true.

God not only blesses us if we read Revelation but He blesses us if we "hear" this prophecy.

Principle

God expects us to listen to prophecy, not render it into oblivion.

Application

We live in a day that minimizes prophecy. There are many reasons for the demotion of God's prophecy, but whatever the reason, they are the opposite of John's point.

There are those who obsess over prophecy. That is a different kind of distortion. However, do you have a heart for God's prophetic program? This passage is a command to "listen" to prophecy. Can you perceive that it will have great impact on your spirituality? Is there positive volition in your heart toward the message of Revelation?

and keep those things which are written in it;

The third area where God blesses us is "keeping" the principles, or applying the principles of the Book of Revelation to our lives. Not only are we to "read" and "hear" prophecy but God wants us to "keep" prophecy as well. The word "keep" means guard. We need to stand on guard lest we lose the principles of this book. If we do not guard them, we will lose them.

We are not only to read but we are also to hear. We are not only to hear but we are also to guard the word of this prophecy for our spiritual life.

Principle

God wants us to apply prophecy to our experience.

Application

God promises a blessing on reading and applying this book to our life to encourage us to give heed to the principles of this book. Why not avail yourselves of God's promise?

John wants us to more than simply read Revelation; he wants us to practice the principles of this book. This obviously requires that we get a good grasp on the principles this book reveals. Do you look at the Book of Revelation as an abstruse book or as a book that reveals Jesus Christ in a unique way?

for the time is near

The word for "time" here refers to, a unique time of the end. The motive for reading and applying Revelation to our lives is the proximity of the coming of Christ (22:6; cf. 10, 12, 20).

The idea of "near" here is not nearness of time but nearness of prophetic revelation. The prophecies of Revelation carry proximity to fulfillment. The prophecies of this book are imminent (Romans 13:12; James 5:8). There is nothing that needs to come to pass before God chooses to fulfill them.

"The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light" (Romans 13:12).

"You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand" (James 5:2).

"But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers" (1 Peter 4:7).

The idea is that of imminence. Imminence does not necessarily mean near in time. The word "near" means impending. No prophecy needs to be fulfilled before the Lord comes. He could come in the next few minutes or He might not come for another hundred years. This is the next event on God's prophetic program.

Jesus coming could happen today. No prophecy needs fulfillment before Jesus comes back. That is why the apostles looked for Jesus to return in their life times. They were disappointed but not mistaken.

Principle

Since Jesus could come any moment, we should be at the top of our spiritual health.

Application

When Jesus comes, we will not have time to prepare to meet Him. We cannot know the time of His coming. We will not have time to bury the hatchet with our enemy. He will rapture us in the state He finds us, even in our carnality. He gives no sign of the rapture. It will come like a thief in the night, unannounced, unheralded and momentarily. He will whisk us away to receive reward or loss of reward.

"For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body,

according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself" (Philippians 3:20-21).

If Jesus were to come today, all those with cancer and those paralyzed would have their bodies changed in a moment, from paralysis one moment to complete health the next.

Revelation 1:4

"John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne..."

The salutation runs from verse four through verse six. This salutation sounds just like a salutation in an epistle although Revelation is not an epistle.

John,

John wrote five books of the New Testament. Revelation is the only book he signed. He refers to himself as "the one who Jesus loved" in the gospel of John. He says nothing of himself in First John. He calls himself the "elder" in Second and Third John. In Revelation he refers to himself five times (1:1,4,9; 21:2; 22:8).

to the seven churches which are in Asia:

John designates those to whom he writes as "the seven churches in Asia." They are people in the Roman province of Asia Minor (western Turkey today). These are the churches of chapters two and three. He names these churches in 1:11. The seven churches were actual churches, not symbols of churches.

Paul came to Asia on his second missionary expedition (Acts 16:6). God shut the door for him to minister there at that time. The time was not right. However, four years later the time was right.

"And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 19:10).

Of all the places in the Roman world, Paul had his greatest victories in Asia Minor. The first time he tried to launch his gospel team there, God closed the door. The second time, God opened the door.

Paul stayed in Ephesus, the capital, longer than any other place of his ministry -- three years.

John wrote Revelation fifty years later. Paul was by then in heaven. John outlived all other apostles. Probably all seven churches were established by Paul during his three years of ministry there.

Since John wrote Revelation to the seven churches, this book is for Christians. No wonder most non-Christians cannot understand this book.

Principle

Ministry depends on God's timing.

Application

Sometimes we try to force open a door of ministry. We do not seem to have the discernment to wait for God's timing. We need to respect negative volition as well as positive volition.

"But I will tarry in Ephesus until Pentecost. For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries" (1 Corinthians 16:8-9).

"Now when I went to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ and found that the Lord had opened a door for me, I still had no peace of mind, because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I said good-bye to them and went on to Macedonia" (2 Corinthians 2:12-13).

"And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains" (Colossians 4:3).

"I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name" (Revelation 3:8).

Grace to you

Revelation has both a prescript (1:4-8) and a postscript (22:21). The prescript is the "hello" of the Book of Revelation.

This salutation is similar to some of Paul's salutations. Of the 27 books of the New Testament, 19 begin with the formula "grace and peace." Grace always precedes peace in this formula. If we receive grace, we will have peace. God's standard

approach to us is always first through grace. We will never know peace until God vanquishes us by His grace. There can be no peace without first getting a firm grasp of grace.

Grace means that God is the source for any need we might have. He is the source and provider of blessing. At the heart of the grace idea is that God does the doing. If He does the doing, He gets the glory. If we do the doing, we get the glory. That is why the Bible emphasizes grace. When we operate in grace, we always depend on who God is and what He does.

Principle

The Christian needs grace to operate in the Christian life.

Application

"Grace" is what God does on our behalf. We have no currency with God other than grace. We do not have anything by which we can impress God. God is only impressed with Jesus Christ. That is why He is the central figure of Revelation.

We never surpass our need for grace. God deals with us in grace all through our Christian lives until we get to heaven. We would never think of running our car without oil; neither should we think of living the Christian life without grace. That is how we maintain our spiritual stability.

God has cornered the market on grace. We cannot earn it. We do not deserve it. We cannot buy it by good works. When it comes to grace, we cannot go through a middleman to get it. We must go right to the manufacturer. Jesus provides everything we need to live the Christian life.

"But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen" (1 Peter 5:10-11).

"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

God gives grace; we do not earn it. He donates it to us when we humble ourselves before Him.

"Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you

be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for

'God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble'" (1 Peter 5:5).

God gives grace to the humble. He does not give it to the proud. He resists giving grace to the proud. God is either our antagonist or our protagonist when it comes to grace. He is either for us or against us.

God gives "more" grace to some people.

But He gives more grace. Therefore He says:

"God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6).

He gives us abundant grace for any situation we face. There is always a surplus of God's grace for those who humble themselves before Him. We never exhaust God's grace.

When it comes to difficult situations, all we need is God's grace.

"And He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Most of us do not know our need for the grace of God. We do not seek it, so we do not draw on God's sufficiency.

"And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work" (2 Colossians 12:8).

God wants us to "abound" in grace. Why then are we feeble in our acquisition of grace? Why are our souls bankrupt of the grace of God? We must admit that we cannot live the Christian life without God's provisions (John 15:5).

and peace

Every Christian has peace with God (Romans 5:1) but few have the peace of God (Philippians 4:6). Peace with God is the salvation Jesus provided on the cross. When we accept His work on the cross, we have eternal peace with God. We are no longer His enemies.

The peace of God comes when we settle down on the inside. Some people laugh on the outside but cry on the inside. This is just the opposite. We can have tears on the outside but peace on the inside.

"You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You" (Isaiah 26:3).

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7).

God is the God of peace.

"Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen" (Hebrews 13:20-21).

By the way, this is the only place in Scripture where grace and peace come from the entire Trinity. Usually grace and peace come from the Father and the Son.

Principle

God's peace insulates our hearts.

Application

God corners the market on both grace and peace. We find peace when we come to God for it.

God's peace comes during times of trouble. We can have internal tranquility in external turbulence. His peace insulates our hearts and minds. God's peace does not change our problems but it gives us tranquility in these problems. It enables us to face our problems with confidence.

from Him who is and who was and who is to come

The Book of Revelation comes from three sources all indicated by the word "from." The first source is "from Him who is and who was and who is to

come." Who is this? This is the One who was past, is present and will come. God has no derived existence. He is the self-existing One. He is of ineffable grandeur.

"The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!'" (Revelation 4:8).

That is God the Father.

"And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying: 'We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, The One who is and who was and who is to come, Because You have taken Your great power and reigned. The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, And the time of the dead, that they should be judged, And that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, And those who fear Your name, small and great, And should destroy those who destroy the earth'" (Revelation 11:16-18).

This again is God the Father.

John describes God the Father as the One who exists eternally in the past, present and future. This may allude to the whole Trinity and may be an allusion to Exodus 3:14 where Yahweh means "the one who is."

Revelation deals with the total eternal program of an eternal God. His name here carries the idea of immutability and absoluteness. He is the self-existing One. He cannot change.

"Who is to come" may refer to the coming incursion into time by an eternal God. He will right all wrongs. It may appear that God is ambivalent to injustices of this present time, but He has a program to correct the injustices of life.

and from the seven Spirits

The Book of Revelation is also from "the seven Spirits." Who is this expressed in figurative language? The "seven Spirits" refers to the Holy Spirit, the third member of the Trinity. The phrase "seven Spirits" is a symbolic reference to the Holy Spirit in His seven ministries of Isaiah 11:2.

It is impossible to ignore the number seven in the Book of Revelation. "Seven" here may refer to the plenitude of the Holy Spirit. The number seven is the number of perfection in Scripture (1:20; 3:1; 5:6; compare, Isaiah 11:1,2).

who are before His throne

God's sovereignty operates in sight of the fullness of the Spirit.

Principle

The Trinity is the source of grace and peace.

Application

God is a giving God. He is also a God who gives peace. We often think that the Christian life depends upon us. When we lose this focus, we lose the essence of Christianity.

We need the plenitude of the Holy Spirit's filling to execute the Christian way of life.

Revelation 1:5

"And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood..."

Verse five transports us to the third "from." Jesus is the third source of grace and peace.

and from Jesus Christ,

The third "from" indicates that Jesus is the also a source of grace and peace.

John named the Father and the Spirit using figurative language. He does not do the same with Jesus Christ. He names Him outright, for Jesus is the subject of this book. Three titles of Jesus follow that summon His death, resurrection and exaltation.

the faithful witness,

John makes three statements about the priceless person of Jesus and three about His awesome work.

His person:

1. "The faithful witness"
2. "The first begotten of the dead"
3. "The prince of the kings of the earth"

His work:

1. "Who loved us"
2. "Who washed us"
3. "Who made us"

The word "faithful" means trustworthy. We can trust Jesus' words and actions. He is reliable in conveying a true representation of God. We depend on Him in such a way that it inspires trust in God. We place our full confidence in His Word.

Jesus is trustworthy in His witness because He faithfully testified to all the counsels of God the Father (John 1:18). He is faithful to us in that He delivers the message without pulling any punches.

Principle

We can trust Jesus with our eternal future.

Application

Jesus never misrepresented anything. He never overstated or understated anything. That is why we trust Him. That is why you can put your life in His hands. Jesus will not fail you.

the firstborn from the dead,

Jesus is the first to rise from the dead permanently (1 Corinthians 15:20; Colossians 1:18). Other people were raised from the dead only to die again. This is not resurrection but resuscitation. Jesus brought Lazarus back from the dead but he died again. He was mortal. God raised Jesus from the dead to live forever. Jesus has immortality.

"Which He will manifest in His own time, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen" (1 Timothy 6:15-16).

Jesus is called "first born" five times and "only begotten" five times. "Only begotten" refers to the incarnation (His physical life on earth). Five passages in the New Testament portray Christ as first in priority. Colossians 1:15 presents Him as first before all creation and He is also the originator of creation.

"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by

Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him" (Colossians 1:15-16).

Jesus is first in position over creation.

Jesus is first in resurrection (Colossians 1:18; Revelation 1:5).

Jesus is first in rank over the church (Romans 8:29).

"For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Romans 8:29).

Under Judaism, the right of the firstborn son held status. "Firstborn" does not imply other children in the family. It conveys superiority of rank. He ranks superior to any in His class.

Principle

We should give Jesus first place in our lives.

Application

Jesus has the right to first place in our lives.

and the ruler over the kings of the earth.

Jesus is King Jesus, King of the world. All world rulers derive their authority from Jesus. The authority of Jesus limits their authority. The political leaders of the earth do not know this right now but they will in a future day.

"Which He will manifest in His own time, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords..." (1 Timothy 6:15).

Jesus is the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6).

"But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses" (Acts 3:14-15).

"Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5:31).

The Devil rules the world now (Ephesians 2:2). One day, in the Millennium, Jesus will be the King of Kings, King of the World.

Principle

Jesus will ultimately overcome the world's problems.

Application

The world's problems will not ultimately be resolved by democracy. God's plan is to resolve them by a Benevolent Dictator, King Jesus, King of the World.

The nature of man is so corrupt that there is no hope in man, even in the great democracies of the world. The ultimate answer is in a Person. At a personal level, that same Person is the answer for each individual. If we embrace Him as our Savior, we will know peace with God and the peace of God.

To Him who loved us

Jesus' motivation in doing what He did is love. Jesus needed to love us before He would free us from our sin. He needed to free us from our sin before He "made us" (v.6). The sequence is important. It would not be a good thing to have unforgiven kings and priests.

"Loved" is in the present tense. Jesus loves us now. Jesus loved his disciples unto the end. His love is persistent and insistent.

"Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end" (John 13:1).

Principle

Jesus loves us unconditionally.

Application

Jesus loves us to the end. His love is unconditional. There is never a point where He stops loving us. We cannot calculate this kind of love.

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. "By this all will know that you are My

disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34-35).

"To know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:19).

The love of Christ is not fathomable. We cannot explain it. It is inscrutable.

"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her" (Ephesians 5:25).

Revelation 1:5b-6 is a doxology. This doxology includes three things. First, that He loved us. Second, that He loosed us from our sins. And the third element is praise.

and washed us from our sins

The second work that Jesus did for us was to free us from our sin. The word "washed" in some manuscripts means to loose, dissolve. Jesus dissolved our sins in the sight of God.

Principle

We have complete and eternal forgiveness by the death of Christ for our sins.

Application

Has it dawned upon you that only God can forgive sins? The wonderful thing about the gospel is that God will forgive any person for any sin and for any amount of sins.

"Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5:31).

"To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:43).

"Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins;

and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:38-39).

"To open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me" (Acts 26:18).

We do not have to go through religious rites to receive forgiveness of sins. The religions of the world are sham substitutes. Religion is the counterfeit, apocryphal way men invent ways to get to heaven.

God does not ask us to suffer for sin. Jesus did all of the suffering necessary for our sin. To reject His suffering for sin is to insult His work on the cross. We think that we must somehow pay for our sins. No penance is necessary. Jesus did all the penance on the cross. This is why we love Him so.

"I write to you, little children, Because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake" (1 John 2:12).

No good works will rid you of sin because your work is inadequate to resolve the demands of a holy God. God is perfect, so His demands are perfection. We cannot have perfection in ourselves. We can only have it by Jesus completely washing away our sins.

in His own blood

Jesus did not free us from sin by His life. He freed us by His death, His substitutionary death on the cross for our sins.

Blood was the system of atonement in the Old Testament (Exodus 12:13; Leviticus 17:11). In the Old Testament God covers sin [atonement, to cover] but in the New Testament God wipes out sin completely by the blood of Christ.

"For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:28).

"Whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to

demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:25-26).

"Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him" (Romans 5:9).

"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (Ephesians 1:7).

"But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ" (Ephesians 2:13).

"For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross" (Colossians 1:19-20).

"Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:18-19).

"And they sang a new song, saying: 'You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth'" (Revelation 5:9-10).

"And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death" (Revelation 12:11).

Principle

Jesus gave His life so that we can have eternal life.

Application

In every case it is the blood of Christ that forgives us, not religion, good works or doing good for society.

There is no redemption without the shedding of blood. Jesus is the Lamb of God that takes away our sin.

"The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'" (John 1:29).

"And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22).

"How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Hebrews 9:14).

"Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh [his body]..." (Hebrews 10:19-20).

Jesus frees us from our sins by His blood. What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. God judged Jesus for our sins. No more judging of sin needs to be done. Jesus suffered all that was necessary in God's eyes. Jesus is the only person who can forgive sins. Jesus is the great emancipator.

"As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:12).

Jesus could not have removed our sins further from us.

"Indeed it was for my own peace That I had great bitterness; But You have lovingly delivered my soul from the pit of corruption, For You have cast all my sins behind Your back" (Isaiah 38:17).

Revelation 1:6

"And has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen"

We now conclude the first of many doxologies of the Book of Revelation.

and has made us kings and priests

A king has the right to rule. Christians have the right to rule under God. God gives Christians spiritual authority. We have rights before God because of Christ's death for our sins. We have the right to share those rights with others.

A priest is one who offers sacrifice and worship to God. The New Testament depict Christians as "a kingdom of priests" (Revelation 1:6) and "a holy priesthood" (1 Peter 2:5) and "royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2:9). Christians are to offer sacrifices (Romans 12:1; Philippians 2:17; 4:18; Hebrews 13:15, 16).

Only as we own Jesus' kingly authority can we fulfill our priestly functions. The more we enter into His authority, the more we can worship as priests. A priest's role is to mediate between man and God. Witnessing is a priestly function.

to His God and Father,

Jesus made us kings and priests to function toward God.

to Him be glory

We glorify Jesus because He made us kings and priests. The statements of this doxology are of such magnitude that John magnifies God with great glory.

and dominion

The idea of dominion is force, strength, might, and more especially manifested power. Jesus has the power to rule or control. This word especially occurs in doxologies (1 Peter 4:11; 5:11; Jude 25; Revelation 1:6; 5:13).

forever and ever.

We give Jesus "glory" and "dominion" "forever and ever" because He loves for us, forgives us and has "made" us kings and priests (1:5-6).

Finite people cannot think outside of time. We use terms such as "forever and ever" to refer to the eternal state, to something that transcends time. Time has a beginning point and an ending point. Eternity has neither; it has no succession of time.

Amen

The word "amen" means so be it. It is a term of faith. John affirms his faith in the glory of Christ.

His "amen" places a stamp of approval on this doxology.

Principle

All Christians are both kings and priests.

Application

Christians function as both kings and priests. As "kings" we have a right to rule. We have authority because of our position in Christ.

As priests, we have the right to represent others and ourselves to God. We also have the right to represent God to men. We do this when we share our faith.

Each believer represents Jesus Christ on earth. We are believer-priests. We operate as priests to God and toward each other. No one has special privileges of prayer before God. We all operate on equal ground in prayer. We all get God's ear as quickly as any other Christian.

The full display of our kingship and priesthood is yet to come. We will reign with Christ. By virtue of our position in Christ, we can exercise our priesthood continually.

Revelation 1:7

"Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen"

Verse five describes what Jesus is in Himself. The latter half of verse five shows what He is to the church. This verse shows what He is to Israel and the next verse shows what He is to eternity and all creation. This may be an outline of the book: What Jesus is to the church, to Israel and to eternity.

Behold,

Any time the New Testament uses the word "behold," an important statement follows. Evidently, the Holy Spirit thinks that this statement about the coming of Christ is important.

This is the second "behold." The first "behold" resulted in a doxology. "Behold" is a dramatic term and means "look at this" (1:18; 3:20; 22:12; 1 John 3:1).

"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14).

"The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'" (John 1:29).

I had a sudden and stark "behold" experience a few years ago. I was traveling from Winnipeg, Manitoba to Vancouver, British Columbia by airplane. My seatmate and I entered such an extended conversation that I did not listen to the flight attendant as we landed. I got off the plane and rented a car. As I drove away from the airport, a radio announcer reported Calgary, Alberta weather. I thought that it was strange that Vancouver would give Calgary weather in such detail. Then I had my "behold" experience; I was in the wrong city!! "Behold" is a word to wake us up. It tries to gain our attention. God wants to direct our attention toward the coming of Christ. This event is of unusual dimension in God's mind.

He is coming with clouds,

"He is coming" is present tense with a future meaning. John makes an emphatic statement by using this kind of grammar.

Jesus will come two times in the future. First, He will come in the "clouds." This is the rapture. Secondly, He will come right to the earth. This is the Second Coming. First, He will come "for" His saints (John 14:3, Philippians 3:20; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17; 1 Corinthians 15:23), then He will come "with" His saints (Zephaniah 14:5; Colossians 3:4; Jude 14; Revelation 19:11-14). We should view both of these events as one coming in two stages. This is the climax of all prophecy.

and every eye will see Him,

Jesus' coming will be public (Matthew 24:27). He will come in visible glory. At the Second Coming every person on earth will see Jesus.

even they who pierced Him.

"They who pierced Him" may refer to the nation Israel. Israel will finally see their Messiah come. Israel is in a state of apostasy today (Romans 11:7). What they deny today, they will accept in that

day. Jesus will restore the nation Israel to Himself at this time and establish His universal rule over earth as King Jesus, King of the World. It is amazing that the people of His birth reject Him today.

"And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn" (Zephaniah 12:10).

And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him.

The word "mourn" means to bewail as a token of grief. "All the tribes of the earth" will beat their breasts in grief for Jesus. Imagine all the nations of the earth wailing because of Jesus' death on the cross!

Even so, Amen

John adds a personal seal to his statement about the coming of Christ to establish His rule. He understood the impact that Jesus will make when He comes.

"Even so" is the Greek and "amen" is Hebrew for affirmation. John strongly affirms his belief in the Second Coming and its impact on the world.

Principle

The coming of Christ is the pivotal point of history.

Application

All history is moving toward a focal point. One day Jesus will break through the clouds and all creation will change. His coming will impact everything in the world. He will restore the world to its original intent.

Revelation 1:8

"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,' says the Lord, 'who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty'"

God now signs the Book of Revelation. No other book of the Bible has the imprimatur of God. This

is God's autograph. Jesus signs in as God Almighty.

I am the Alpha

The "Alpha" is the first letter of the Greek alphabet. The New Testament uses Alpha as the first in a series with the idea of significance or importance. Secular literature designated Alpha and Omega as the entire universe. This title could mean that Jesus holds dominion over the entire universe. He is the "A" and "Z" of everything.

Revelation uses Alpha and Omega of both the Father (21:6; cf. 22:13) and the Son (1:17; cf. 2:8).

Alpha then is a title of Christ (1:8,11; 21:6; 22:13). It is both a designation of God (1:8; 21:6) and of Christ (22:13) with the same parallel (first and last). This affirms the deity of Christ. What the Holy Spirit applies to the Father, He applies to the Son. These terms refer to the eternal God. It comprehends His dynamic activity in all creation.

"For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen" (Romans 11:36).

and the Omega,

Omega is the last letter of the Greek alphabet. God is the end of all things. God is both the beginning (Alpha) and the end of all things. God is both the source and the goal of all creation. Nothing transcends Him. He is absolute God. Omega figuratively means "last." God is both the beginning and the end of all things. God's glory is the goal of all creation.

The title Alpha and Omega refers to the all-comprehensiveness of Christ (Revelation 1:8,11; 21:6; 22:13). He is all-inclusive in His sphere of authority and status. Only John uses this name for God (1:8; 21:6). He also applies this term to Jesus (22:13; cf. 1:17; 2:8). Jesus calls Himself "Alpha and Omega" four times in the Book of Revelation.

the Beginning and the End, says the Lord,

The use of Alpha and Omega with the "first and last" defines its meaning. God is the beginning and the end of all things. "First and last" occurs in Isaiah 41:4; and 44:6.

This statement is similar to "Alpha and Omega." Jesus is the start and finish (1:17; 21:6).

"Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2).

Jesus originates and consummates our faith.

Principle

Jesus Christ is the goal of all creation.

Application

The purpose of creation is that we recognize God's glory in the world. That is the purpose of our individual lives. We should make God known to the world for what He is. His glory is majestic; we should make it majestic to those we know.

Revelation 1:9

"I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ"

I, John,

This is the first of three times John refers to himself as the human author of the Book of Revelation (cf. 21:2; 22:8).

both your brother and companion

John identifies himself as a "brother and companion" to the seven churches to whom he writes. "Companion" comes from two words: with and to partake. A companion is someone who partakes of the same thing as another.

John partakes in three things with his readers. He closely identifies himself with suffering Christians, with the kingdom and with the patience (tenacity) of Jesus Christ. John writes as a co-sufferer in these three areas with his readers.

First, John identifies himself as a "brother." A brother is a person who comes from the same womb. In this case, the womb is spiritual birth. He is talking to those who have been born spiritually in Christ. There is a unique suffering that comes to those who claim Christ as their Savior.

in the tribulation

Secondly, John identifies himself as a "companion" in three categories. First, he is a companion in "tribulation." "Tribulation" means to put under pressure. The Domitian reign (81-96 AD) put pressure on him. Domitian regarded Christianity as a threat to the Roman Empire. John says in effect, "I am a partner with you in your tribulation. Look at me, I am banished to this Isle of Patmos. I have it difficult, just like you."

and kingdom

The second area where John was a "companion" is in the area of the "kingdom." "I share the true kingdom with you. The kingdom of Rome cannot daunt us." The "kingdom" is God's plan for man beginning with salvation and ending in His glory. He had confidence that God had a plan for his suffering.

"He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love..." (Colossians 1:13).

and patience of Jesus Christ,

The third area where John was a "companion" was in "patience." Our English word "patience" is a weak idea compared to the Greek idea. The Greek idea carries the ideas of tenacity. God gives those who walk by faith a bulldog-like tenacity of soul.

"These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

John knew how to be tenacious in his soul when it came to suffering. "Patience" means endurance. Since sin reigns unchecked, the Christian is in a war. Our tenacity of soul comes from our relationship to and our confidence in Jesus.

"Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame,

and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:1-2).

Patience comes from faith in God's provision. Pressures cannot get to those who operate by faith.

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28).

God's Word was in John's soul before persecution came. He could cope with pressure by applying principles of God's Word to His experience.

Principle

Affliction, kingdom and patience are the best things to equip us to enter the kingdom.

Application

Jesus is King over the church. He knows what it is going through. He is too wise to make a mistake and too good to do wrong. We can place confidence in Him because He is faithful to us.

was on the island that is called Patmos

Patmos was a tiny (six kilometers wide and eight kilometers long) rocky island in the Aegean Sea about 80 to 100 km southwest of Ephesus (in modern Turkey). The Roman government banished John there for his witness for Christ. He was in exile for Christ.

for the word of God

The Roman government banished John to Patmos for two reasons: 1) "for the word of God" and 2) "for the testimony of Jesus Christ." John's suffering came from proclamation of his faith in the Word and his testimony of Jesus Christ.

The word "for" in the Greek means because of. It was because of the Word of God that he ended in exile. John came under persecution for taking a stand on the Word of God. He was faithful to the Word. He did not compromise it.

"Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God..." (2 Timothy 1:8).

and for the testimony of Jesus Christ

The word "for" again means because of. Rome banished Peter to Patmos because of his testimony for Christ.

Principle

Those who live by faith can endure being an outcast from society.

Application

The world asks for our allegiance. When we do not give it, they view us as outcasts. There is no neutrality when it comes to sharing our faith. It is a case of paying the price of an outcast to faithfully proclaim God's Word.

A person who shares his faith enters open warfare. There is no neutrality because of the mutually exclusive message of Christ.

Do you feel like you are an outcast because of your testimony for Christ? Join the apostle John, for he was an outcast as well. He was willing to suffer for Christ because Christ meant something to him. The issue boils down to our love and appreciation for Jesus Christ.

Revelation 1:10

"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet..."

I was in the Spirit

The word "was" means to come to be. John entered a state where the Holy Spirit could reveal Scripture to Him. He was in a state characterized by the Holy Spirit's control over him.

"In the Spirit" means that John was in an attitude of worship, not in a state of ecstasy. He was in a state of honoring God by thinking about Him, His majesty and power. This phrase may mean that he was filled with the Spirit. He may have been out of fellowship with the Lord and came into fellowship on this Sunday. We should never go to church without being filled with the Spirit. Otherwise, we will not benefit from the service.

"God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24).

John was in a condition where God could give him the visions of Revelation. As an apostle, he had the authority to write Scripture.

on the Lord's Day,

The only occurrence of the "Lord's Day" in the Bible is found here. The word "Lord's" means belonging to the Lord, as in the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:20).

The "Lord's Day" here is Sunday, not the Sabbath. Sabbath means seven and that is Saturday, the seventh day. The Jews worshipped on Saturday. That never changed. The Sabbath was a commemoration of creation.

Sunday is not a day of rest. Sunday is a day we set aside for the Lord Himself. Christians worship on Sunday and that has never changed. The work of salvation is different from the work of creation. As we do not bring lambs to slaughter in church, neither do we worship on Saturday. Saturday is passé to the New Testament Christian.

The day Jesus rose from the dead is referred to as the first day of the week (Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:2,9; Luke 24:1; John 20:1,19; Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1,2). The Lord's Supper was normally observed on the first day of the week. The only time the New Testament uses the term "Lord's" is for the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:20).

Some people make the Sabbath by this they mean Sunday a holy day. These same people support blue laws. This obscures the work of grace in Christ.

and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet

John heard a voice behind him like a blaring military trumpet. This is the voice of the Lord Jesus.

Principle

The Christian worships on Sunday because of the work of grace in Christ.

Application

The mature believer regards every day alike (Romans 14). There is no difference between Sunday and any other day (Colossians 3). Some people feel it is sin to go to a professional baseball

game on Sunday. Sunday is different in one sense only -- that is the day for assembly worship.

We need to be careful about how we handle the idea of Sunday. We should not make rules about what we do on Sunday. Some people love to make Sunday a miserable day. They drive young people away from the Lord by their legalism.

Some people legalistically worship on Sunday but act differently all week long. Sunday is not a day "to make it up to God." Sunday is just another day except for worship.

Revelation 1:11

"Saying, 'I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last,' and, 'What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea'"

saying, I am the Alpha and the Omega

This is the title of Jesus that we find in verse eight. Jesus transcends time because He exists from before time and after time. He began before time and created all things (John 1:1,3; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:10).

the First and the Last

At the beginning of the message of Revelation, Jesus states His credentials. He is Lord of time and history. He is Lord over the Roman Empire. Jesus knew all events of the Roman Empire before time began.

It is interesting that a message that begins with these great credentials, and thus bearing great weight, evangelical Christians ignore and some even denigrate.

and, What you see, write in a book:

Jesus tells John to write what he sees. Evidently, Jesus was the first person to use an overhead projector when He preached! Jesus wants John to get this down on paper (or parchment, if you prefer).

and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia

"Asia" is not the Asia of today but refers to an area of western Turkey. This is the Roman province of Asia. God gives John the responsibility to minister to the churches near his little rocky prison. All of the other apostles may now be dead.

Jesus gives John his orders to write the Book of Revelation and to send it to certain churches. to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.

John does not choose these churches for their importance. Troy and Miletus were more populous than Thyatira and Philadelphia.

John names these churches according to a geographical order. He begins with Ephesus on the coast and goes north on a half circle and ends in Laodicea in the east. These cities, connected by superb roads, had vigorous communication between them.

These churches are seven representative churches for all time. Jesus will discipline each church for a specific problem. Jesus will put out their light if they are not faithful to His purposes.

Principle

Jesus, as the Sovereign Son of God, knows everything we face from eternity.

Application

Although John suffered persecution from the Roman Empire, Jesus knew it before time began. This was no capricious event in history. The Sovereign Son of God placed John's situation in time for His own purposes. Jesus understands his situation thoroughly. John had no excuse to feel self-pity or go over to a corner to sulk.

Jesus is aware of our situation at all times. There never was a time when He was not perfectly aware of our situation. He always has a perfect solution for any problem we might have.

Revelation 1:12

"Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands..."

Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me.

John heard a voice behind him and turned to see who it was that spoke to him.

And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands

The first thing that John saw was "seven golden lampstands." Evidently, there were seven individual lampstands rather than one lampstand with seven lamps as the lampstand in the temple.

Verse 20 interprets the symbols of "lampstands" as churches. The lampstands may refer to the light of truth they cast both upon non-Christians and Christians. Churches are truth-oriented. Churches are not the light; they only carry the light. Thus, churches reflect the glory of God.

"Golden" may refer to the value these churches hold in the eyes of Jesus. They are precious to Him.

Principle

The purpose of the church is to glorify the Lord Jesus to the world.

Application

The picture is the Lord standing in the midst of churches judging them for their aberrance. Lamps are for the dark. If churches cast darkness, they lose their purpose.

Churches are not the light; they only carry the light (Matthew 5:14). Jesus is the light of the world. Darkness will continue until Jesus comes. We need to remember that the program of the church is not the light. If they teach the Word, they shine the light of God who is Jesus the Lord.

Revelation 1:13

"And in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band"

and in the midst of the seven lampstands

Jesus is personally present among the churches (1:20; 2:5).

"For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20).

Jesus cares about churches. He is in the midst of them (Matthew 18:20). He examines them to see if they are shining the light. Churches are supposed to be a testimony to the light. They are not the light, but they witness to the light. The Savior examines the light of the churches to see how bright it shines. If a church does not testify to the light, He will remove the church (2:5).

One like the Son of Man,

Daniel uses this expression in his prophecy (7:13) to refer to the Messiah. "Son of Man" depicts His humanity. It was His humanity that died upon the cross. His deity could not die. The second person of the Trinity died on the cross in a human body.

John writes the Book of Revelation about 65 years after Jesus died. He is now functioning as great High Priest ever living to make intercession for us.

"Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession" (Hebrews 4:14).

"Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25).

clothed with a garment down to the feet

The picture is of a priest in the Old Testament dressed in a long robe.

and girded about the chest with a golden band

This "golden band" was probably a golden sash like the breastplate of the High Priest of the Old Testament.

Revelation no longer depicts Jesus as a criminal on the cross but as the glorious Son of Man sitting at the right hand of God interceding for the saints.

Principle

Jesus removes churches that do not shine the light of His glory.

Application

Jesus will snuff out the light of the church that does not shine His glory. Jesus will remove its testimony completely. Eventually, all these seven churches lost their testimony. That area of the world became Muslim. Jesus completely removed their testimony.

Paul never ministered in any city longer than the city of Ephesus (three years). Today there is little testimony left there. Many churches in North America no longer have a testimony. Their churches stand as empty shells of what they once were.

If the Lord Jesus were to come to your church to examine its effectiveness in shining the light of Jesus, how would He evaluate your church? Is your church effective in reaching people for Christ? Are the Christians in your church reflecting the glory of Christ.

If your church does not measure up to Jesus' standards, He will eventually remove your church from His plan.

Revelation 1:14

"His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire..."

From verse 13 through to 16 we have a depiction of the Lord Jesus in His glory. John uses the word "like" five times and the word "as" four times. These are terms of analogy and symbols. Jesus shows us a full-length portrait of Himself.

His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow,

"White" depicts purity and occurs twice for emphasis.

and His eyes like a flame of fire

"Eyes like a flame of fire" indicates penetrating judgment of the church (2:18, 23).

"Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's

work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward" (cf. Proverbs 20:8) (1 Corinthians 3:12-14).

Principle

We can hide nothing from Jesus--why try?

Application

When it comes to His church, Jesus calls a spade a spade. He is not afraid to step on the toes of the church when it goes astray.

Jesus judges with purity and righteousness, not temper. None of us can escape the scrutiny of His perspicacity. He will expose sin with the x-ray of His omniscience. He will search us out and expose our sin for what it is.

Revelation 1:15

"His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters..."

His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace,

Jesus' feet were like bronze purified in a furnace, which represents strong and steadfast judgment. Brass was the metal of judgment in the Old Testament. That is why we have the brazen altar. The brazen altar represents Jesus' death on the cross. Jesus will eventually stamp out with His foot of judgment all that is contrary to His will.

and His voice as the sound of many waters

I wonder what Jesus' voice sounds like. We know something of what His voice sounds like in judgment. Jesus will make His judgment heard with a roaring voice like a waterfall. He is not timid as many like to portray Him.

Principle

Jesus' strength disturbs people who like to view Him as a weak person.

Application

The world does not like a strong Jesus. People do not like a person who exposes their dirty lives. The life of Jesus shows us up for what we are. "Why don't you go back to Heaven, Jesus? Your life

bothers me. It unnerves me. You show me up for what I am."

John could not speak of Jesus in normal vocabulary; he had to use the language of comparison. The pastor of my home church, David D. Allen, speaks of Jesus this way: Jesus is "The sovereign, majestic, incomparable Jesus. If you delete the Lord Jesus from the Bible, you have a book without a subject, a play without a plot, music without harmony, an automobile without a motor, a ship without a rudder, and a home without a mother. Jesus Christ is the jugular vein of the Bible. He is the backbone of the Bible. He is the center and circumference of Scripture."

Revelation 1:16

"He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength"

He had in His right hand seven stars

Jesus held "seven stars" in His right hand. These "stars" are seven messengers (1:20). These messengers were probably the pastors of the seven churches. A star is a large body of light. Light declares and exposes. Light defines the object.

Preachers should show the light of God on their people. That light is the glory of God. Preachers are reflectors of the glory of God. Jesus contains the glory and the preacher reflects the glory. In legalism, we produce glory; in grace, we reflect the glory of God.

Jesus held these seven pastors in His right hand. Evidently, Jesus was right handed. That was the hand of His strength. These pastors were in good hands. Jesus holds preachers in His right hand. The right hand is the hand of sovereign control. He has responsibility for pastors. If pastors get out of line, Jesus will discipline them with double discipline for they have double accountability.

out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword

The "sharp two-edged sword" was the Roman sword (Ephesians 6:17). The sword was the principle offensive weapon of the Roman Empire. It was a short sword for close fighting. Here it refers to the penetrating power of the Word of God. Jesus is now a man of war. He fights His war

with words, for this sword comes out of His mouth.

"For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12)

"Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God" (Revelation 19:15).

The sword is the Word of God. Jesus speaks the Word of God for He is the Word of God (John 1:1).

and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength

No one knows what Jesus looked like. Artists have placed their imaginations of Jesus face in our minds but none of them knew what He looked like.

Jesus' face will shine as the sun. His appearance will carry majesty and splendor.

"For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6).

God's glory shines through the face of Jesus.

The Bible promises that we will see His face.

"They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads" (Revelation 22:4).

Principle

The responsibility of every preacher of God is to communicate God's Word.

Application

The essence of a pastor's role is not to be an administrator, a money raiser or a promoter, but a communicator of God's Word. Pastors must study and preach.

The pastor is a "star," not a doormat on which people wipe their feet. I do not think that we should carry the idea of a pastor being a "star" too far. At least, we must respect pastors as communicators of truth.

Revelation 1:17

"And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, 'Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last'"

And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead.

After John receives this full force of the person of Christ, he faints dead away. He passes out cold. The glory of Christ is too much for him to handle. John is full of fear.

When the glory of God appeared to others in the Bible, similar reactions occurred to other people: Job (42:5-6); Abraham (Genesis 17:3), Manoah (Jude 13:20; Isaiah (6:5), Ezekiel (3:23; 43:3; 44:4); Daniel (8:17; 10:8-9, 15-17) and the disciples (Matthew 17:6).

But He laid His right hand on me,

Jesus consoles John. He helps John recover from his fainting spell. God strengthens us with His power.

saying to me, 'Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last

Jesus gives John assurance by appealing to who He is. He is the ever-living one, the self-existent one. Jesus is before all who precede Him and He is after everyone who follows Him.

Jesus is both the author and finisher of history. He originates and He culminates time. He spans the whole of human history and has a plan for it all. If this person cares for us, why should we fear? Fear debilitates us. It paralyzes us from reaching our potential.

"Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand" (Isaiah 41:10).

Principle

Knowledge of Jesus as the originator and culminator of history eliminates our fears.

Application

We cannot apply truth with an attitude of fear. Fear and worry debilitates us. If we are going to understand God's Word, our mind must be clear. We clear our mind by getting a good grasp on who Jesus is.

"But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid'" (Matthew 14:27).

Revelation 1:18

"I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death"

I am He who lives

Jesus reviews His life in His humanity. His humanity continues into eternity even as He speaks.

and was dead

Jesus died on the cross. John saw Him dead on the cross. Jesus' death on the cross gave Him authority over death. That is why He has the keys of Hades and Death.

"Was dead" is literally "became dead." Jesus died of His own volition. He did not merely die. By His own will He laid down His life (Matthew 27:50; John 19:30).

and behold, I am alive forevermore.

The resurrected Jesus makes a proclamation of His victory over death. He rose never to die again. The humanity of Jesus sits at the right hand of the throne of God forever. He is throughout eternity the unique person of the universe. Death will never make any claims on Him again.

Amen.

This is the third "amen" of this chapter. It means so be it. Jesus affirms His conviction about the importance of His resurrection.

Principle

Jesus paved the way for our immortality.

Application

Death can no longer affect Jesus and it can no longer affect the Christian. Once we become Christians, we become immortal.

"Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.'

'O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?'" (1 Corinthians 15:51-55).

And I have the keys of Hades and of Death

The Bible nowhere teaches soul-sleep. Both believers and unbelievers are alive in Hades. The New Testament divides Hades into two sections, one for those who belong to God and one for those who belong to the Devil.

Paradise for believers is a section of Hades (Luke 16:9, 23ff). Sometimes the New Testament presents Hades as simply the abode of the lost (Luke 16:23; Revelation 20:13-14). Jesus is Lord of Hades (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:31). Jesus descended into Hades (1 Peter 3:19ff.).

To have the keys of something means that Jesus has the right to enter the place where the keys fit. Jesus has authority over death and the place of the dead. Jesus possesses authority over the Christian's death and resurrection.

"Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear

of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Hebrews 2:14-15).

Peter does not have the keys of Heaven or Hades. It is a myth that Peter will meet us at the Pearly Gates. The Bible does not affirm this. It is a fairy tale. He is not the keeper of the Gate of Glory. Jesus is the keeper of the Gate. Only He can lock and unlock these doors.

The word "Hades" here is not Hell. Hades is a temporary Hell. The Old Testament term for this word is "Sheol." No one can escape Hades for ultimately God will dump it into Hell (Revelation 20:13). The rich man went to Hades and Lazarus went to Paradise (Luke 16:22; 23:43). Jesus said to the thief on the cross, "Today, you will be with me in Paradise."

Hades lasted until ascension of Christ. Jesus moved Hades to different places at His ascension because the sins of Old Testament saints were not purged until the cross (Hebrews 10:4). Sins were simply covered but not purged before the cross. After the cross, Jesus vanquished sin completely. Old Testament sacrifices were IOUs but Jesus paid the full bill on the cross. That is what Jesus meant when He said, "It is finished" (John 19:30). Jesus has the keys to Hades.

Hades is not Purgatory. There is no biblical basis for Purgatory anywhere in Scripture. It is a religious fabrication.

Hades claims the soul of the lost and "Death" claims the body. When the immaterial part of humans (soul and spirit) leaves the body, the body dies.

Jesus has the key to Death as well. Jesus is sovereign over physical death (Hebrews 2:14-15). No one dies until Jesus says so. Nothing will keep us alive one second longer than Jesus' decision to keep us alive.

Principle

The Christian is more than his body.

Application

We are not our body. We live in our body. Our soul never dies. It goes to either Hell or Heaven. Only the body dies. Every person, Christian or otherwise, will rise from the dead. Some will rise to damnation and others will rise to eternal life.

"Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth – those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation" (John 5:28-29).

Either we go up or we go down. Our bodies wait for one of two resurrections.

When Christians die, they go immediately into the presence of God (2 Corinthians 5:8). Jesus takes the sting out of death.

"So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.' 'O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?'" (1 Corinthians 15:54-55).

Non-Christians have no hope. Their only future from their viewpoint is a bleak, barren terminus of existence in some dank, cold and clammy grave. Jesus takes the sting out of hopelessness.

At the end of life's long day you will not say, "Oh, I am glad I belonged to the right political party." "I am glad I joined the Masons or the Knights." "I am glad I earned at least \$70,000 a year." No, these things will become irrelevant when you meet the Lord Jesus.

Are you placing your confidence in religion? I hope you do not do that. The only person who has the authority of Heaven and Hell is Jesus. Place your confidence in Him.

Revelation 1:19

"Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this"

Write the things which you have seen,

Again, Jesus commands John to "write." Jesus wants John to write something about the three tenses: past, present and future (the actual divisions of the book). This is exactly the outline of the Book of Revelation. Revelation is chronological. This verse gives us the key to the interpretation of the entire book.

The "things which you have seen" is chapter one, the vision of the glory of the Lord Jesus.

and the things which are,

The "things which are" is the message John was to write to the seven churches (chapters 2-3).

and the things which will take place after this

The "things which will take place after this" are future events recorded in Revelation. John records these things in chapters four to 22.

Principle

We interpret Scripture by Scripture.

Application

Context is the most important principle of interpretation. The argument of the book is the most important principle of context. Jesus gives the argument of the Book of Revelation in this verse.

The argument of the Book of Revelation centers on the person of Christ: the glory of His person (chapter one), His ministry to churches and His sovereign acts to come. Jesus is the purpose of history.

Revelation 1:20

"The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches"

In this passage, Scripture interprets Scripture.

The New Testament usually presents the doctrine of the church as a "mystery." A mystery was not something spooky but a secret not known to those not initiated (Ephesians 3:1-6; Colossians 1:25,26; Romans 16:25,26).

The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches,

The word "angels" means messenger. These are probably pastors or preachers who make announcements for God to specific churches. If the "lampstands" are churches then the "stars" are pastors.

and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches

Jesus interprets the "lampstands" as churches. First, Revelation deals with the church (2-3) then it deals with Israel (4-22). These seven churches probably represent churches of all ages.

Churches are "lampstands" and are therefore light-bearers. They are not the lights themselves, but they witness to the light. The light is Jesus Himself.

Principle

The business of the church is to bear witness to the light.

Application

The business of the church is to tell the world the truth about Jesus, the Light of the world. The church should not be a holy huddle snuggled in a corner protected from the world. The church must get involved with its message about the Lord of Glory, the Lord Jesus Christ. The church must exert its authority on the world. Most churches are impotent at this. The central ministry of the church is as a dispenser of light in the midst of darkness.

It is the responsibility of the pastor to make sure the church stays on the track of dispensing its message clearly.

Revelation 2:1

"To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, 'These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands:'"

The book of Revelation partitions into three unequal sections (1:19). Chapter one is the "things which you have seen."

Now we come to the "things which are" (chapters 2 and 3). The "things which shall take place after this" are chapters 4 to 22. This chapter begins the messages to the seven churches. These messages contain strong exhortations toward spirituality.

There were more than seven churches in Asia Minor. Important churches were located in Magnesia, Tralles, and Hierapolis. Note the Muratorian Canon (AD 180): "John also, though he wrote in the Apocalypse to seven churches, nevertheless speaks to them all." He chose the seven churches for specific messages. Jesus scores

the merits and failings of each church. He then encourages and exhorts them accordingly. Each of the seven symptoms of these churches is found in the churches of today.

To the angel of the church of Ephesus write,

At the time of writing, Ephesus was a major commercial metropolis of Asia Minor. Ephesus was located on a seaport. Ephesus was a center for trade, travel, culture, religion and business. The seat of the Roman provincial governor was located there. The population was about 225,000.

One of the great wonders of the world located there, the great temple of Artemis (Acts 19:24,27-28, 34-35). The temple of Artemis was 425 feet long by 220 feet wide with 120 columns (each 60 feet high). Artemis was a squat, black and man-breasted image. Ephesus was also a center for the imperial cult (four imperial temples).

Paul came to Ephesus about AD 53 (Acts 18-19, cf. esp. 19:8,10; 1 Corinthians 15:32; 16:8). He stayed in Ephesus longer than any other city (Acts 20:31). He was so successful in his ministry there that his ministry turned the city upside-down (Acts 19:11-41). The silversmiths launched a riot because they lost their business of making shrines of Artemis.

The church in Ephesus was about forty decades old by the time John wrote this letter. Paul wrote the book of the Bible to the Ephesians fifteen years after he founded the church there. The principal churches of Asia Minor were located in Ephesus. The Ephesian church receives a positive evaluation from the Lord. It is not a church that bought into false teaching (2:2). Instead, they unmasked the false teachers. Jesus commends them for their opposition to the Nicolaitans.

The church of Ephesus was not without criticism, however. The Lord faults them for abandoning their first love (2:5). Jesus exhorts them to remember when they first came to Christ. This is the problem of second generation Christians.

Ephesus was syncretistic. It combined many religions of that day. The catalyst for this was the Imperial cult.

Jesus always works through the pastor. He does not by-pass the pastor for the pastor has the responsibility to teach the Word to his congregation.

'These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand,

Jesus gives Himself a title in this and the following phrases. This title consists of two parts, one relating to pastors and the other to churches. Pastors are under Jesus' special care. Jesus' presence is also always in the midst of the churches; He knows and observes their status quo.

Jesus "holds" the seven stars [the seven churches] in His right hand. The word "hold" means to be strong, mighty, to prevail. When it comes to the church, Jesus is strong. He holds sway over and is sovereign over the church. He is Commander in Chief of the church.

who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands

Jesus takes pleasure in His churches. He knows what is wrong and He encourages them to correct their aberrations.

Principle

Jesus is in complete control of the church.

Application

Jesus reminds us that He is Lord of the churches. His presence is among the churches. No church is without His presence.

Revelation 2:2

"I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars..."

Jesus is in the business of appraising His church and Jesus always commends His church first, if He can. He commends first and censures second. He always ends with a challenge to repent.

I know your works, your labor, your patience,

It is interesting to note what Jesus thinks is important. What we deem important may not be the same as what He thinks is important. Jesus commends the church for hard work. Many people today do not value a healthy work ethic, but denounce it as unworthy of a "balanced" Christian. However, the Bible never advocates a "balanced" life in the sense of being lazy or compromising our

devotion to God. It declares the importance of a "sober" life, a dedicated life and a life yielded to God. Relying on His grace and strength, we serve Him with our whole heart.

Jesus takes note of the Ephesian church's "works" and "labor." The Greek word for "labor" is work to the point of exhaustion. Although there is a time for rest, there is also a time for hard work. Forty years after its foundation, the Ephesian church was a hard-working one. These Christians were not couch potatoes. Their faith was real.

Jesus expects more than work and labor, He expects that we will develop a certain attitude toward hard work. He wants us to be tenacious of soul.

"You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier" (1 Timothy 2:3-4).

Jesus commends Ephesian Christians for the tenacity of their character. He notes how much we work for Him. "Patience" is the ability to hang in there in the face of trouble by exercising faith in God. Patience is the fortitude of faith, the ability to endure things that we would not endure without faith.

and that you cannot bear those who are evil.

The Ephesian church could not put up with false doctrine. This is doctrinal evil here.

And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars

The Ephesians knew enough of the Word of God to put false teachers to the test. They had enough sense to know what is true and what is not true in the Word.

Apostolic succession is not a biblical doctrine. Apostleship in John's day was valid. Some people saw the power of the apostle so these fakers tried to pass themselves off as apostles. Jesus commends the Ephesian church for their ability to identify these phony apostles. They unmasked them as liars. This was a church free from doctrinal corruption. The first four churches in this list of seven dealt with false teachers (2:2,6,9,14-15,20).

Jesus values doctrinal orthodoxy. These Christians could define and defend their faith. They knew enough of the Word to not be drawn into theological fads.

On his last visit to Ephesus, about forty years before the writing of Revelation, Paul addressed the problem of false teachers. He called the elders throughout Ephesus to come to a meeting in Miletus. In his farewell message, he challenged them with some important issues.

"For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves (false teachers) will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves (people from the church) men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears" (Acts 20:29-31).

Paul knew that they were going to confront false teaching. They would not let just anyone to speak in their pulpits for they had doctrinal standards.

Principle

We should value doctrinal orthodoxy just as Jesus valued it.

Application

Jesus knows in detail everything every believer is doing. The church cannot get away with anything. Jesus inspects the state of the church at all times. He removes churches from existence and He brings them into existence. Sometimes He removes the "messenger" and sometimes He removes the entire "lampstand" (the church itself).

The church at the 21st century is doctrinally gullible. The reason for this is that we are becoming increasingly experiential as the basis for our evaluation of things. We do not use the Bible; we use our experience to determine whether something is true. This is exceedingly dangerous.

The pastorals (1 Timothy, 2 Timothy and Titus) challenge pastors to "teach" their congregations. Sometimes the word "teach" means "doctrine." These are the key words of all three of these books written to pastors. Yet, this is exactly where the church leaves true Christianity today.

Jesus is constantly removing churches today who do not teach the truth.

Revelation 2:3

"...and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary"

Jesus continues His positive evaluation of the Ephesian church from verse two.

and you have persevered and have patience,

This translation uses two synonyms to describe one Greek word. Another asset of the Ephesian church is that they "persevered" with "patience." They were under attack from the Roman government and religion yet they persisted in the face of persecution.

This is the second time in two verses that the Holy Spirit uses "patience." Literally, "patience" means to abide under. It carries the idea of hanging in there when the going gets tough (2 Corinthians 6:4; 12:12; 2 Timothy 3:10; Hebrews 12:1,2). It is our faith that carries us in times of trouble. Our faith has such capacity that it can bear up under difficult circumstances. Faith in God's promises can support any burden that may come our way.

and have labored

"Labored" carries the idea of supporting a burden - to bear or carry a heavy or burdensome object, to undergo a grievous, difficult experience (Acts 15:10). This person can take a lot of trouble under unusually trying circumstances because he loves the Lord Jesus. This church was willing to undergo difficult and grievous experiences for the Lord.

"From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks [the scars for serving Jesus] of the Lord Jesus" (Galatians 6:17).

The idea is to continue to bear up under unusually trying circumstances and difficulties. This is a stronger term than "persevered." This person can accept situations difficult to understand or respond to properly (John 16:12). He provides continuous and prolonged assistance by meeting the needs of the Lord's work (Acts 20:34). This is the capacity to suffer for someone else (Galatians 6:17).

for My name's sake

The word "for" means because of. The reason the Ephesian church could go through all their difficulties the way they did was that they did it for the Lord.

and have not become weary

"Labored" means to grow tired by toil. The idea is that some can become emotionally fatigued and discouraged and yet not give up or lose heart.

Principle

Faith in the promises of God carries us in times of trouble.

Application

People who love the Lord do not tire as easily as those who do not. Nothing daunts them because of their trust in the Lord. They carry so much of the Word in their daily experience that they apply it to any situation they might face. They persist in and insist on serving the Lord no matter what. No discouragement or hardship will stop them.

Revelation 2:4

"Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love"

Nevertheless I have this against you

Although Ephesus has many fine qualities as a church (2:2,3), yet they do have a fatal fault. There was something amiss in this church. Jesus now passes from commendation to condemnation. It is possible to have both distinction and disrepute at the same time. Jesus notes both their strengths and their weaknesses.

"I have" indicates this charge is still outstanding against the Ephesian church. Nothing has changed it so far. They have done nothing about it. It may be they spent so much time under combat conditions that they suffered combat fatigue spiritually. They took their eyes off the Lord. They became more task oriented than person oriented.

The church at Ephesus faced two problems, one from without and one from within. We found the problem without in verse two, false teachers. Now we come to the problem within, loss of love for the Lord. He no longer had the pre-eminence in their

life any longer. They gave their life to other priorities.

that you have left your first love

The word "left" means to leave, leave alone, forsake and neglect. The Ephesians distanced themselves from their first love. They no longer loved the Lord Jesus as they did when they first came to Christ.

The phrase "your first love" precedes the phrase "you have left" [in the Greek] making the first phrase very emphatic. They not only took their eyes off the Lord but they lost fellowship with Him. The principle is that regardless of how much the Bible we may know, how much we serve Him, or how many past victories we have, we cannot walk with the Lord without loving Him.

What is our "first" love? It is the love we knew for the Lord when we first became Christians. At that time, we had a great sense of gratitude for sins forgiven.

Forty years after the establishment of the church in Ephesus they still held to sound doctrine and worked ardently for the Lord, yet they did not love Him as much as at the beginning. This may be due to a second-generation problem. Most of the congregation was by now second generation.

The problem of the church at Ephesus was not their orthodoxy but their orthopraxy. They lost their red-hot love for the Lord. This was so serious that He says in the next verse that He will remove the church from existence if they do not deal with it. This eventually happened when Islam invaded Turkey and wiped out Christianity in Ephesus.

Revelation 2:5

"Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place – unless you repent"

Jesus turns now from encouragement to exhortation.

Remember therefore from where you have fallen

The "therefore" refers to loss of love for the Lord Jesus (2:4). They fell from a deep love for the Lord Jesus. They fell from fellowship with Him. They

fell from all heart to all head. They lost warm love for the Lord.

In the Greek, the word "fallen" means that they were in a state of spiritual decline. This was more than an occasional slip.

repent

The word "repent" comes from two words: change and to think. Repentance, then, is to change one's thinking about something. The idea is to change one's complete viewpoint on something as the result of looking at life as Jesus looks at life.

The English word "repent" conveys the idea of sorrow or contrition. The Greek word does not carry that idea; it is more a total change of thought and behavior. It conveys both ideas of attitude and behavior depending on the context.

You buy a chartreuse dress and bring it home for your family to see. You ask, "How does this dress look on me?" Everyone suppresses roaring laughter. You take the dress back for something more sensible. That is repentance. You change your mind about the dress.

In this case, the meaning of "repent" is clear -- change your attitude toward your love for Christ (2:4). Reverse your lackluster love into a burning love for the Lord Jesus. Think about the depth of love you have for Him. Change your apathetic love to an appreciating love for Him.

and do the first works

The word "do" is a bit misleading. We almost exclusively use this term for a deed or an action but "do" carries the idea of cause, bring about, purpose, manifestation or practical proof. The context indicates that by "first works" Jesus wants this church to get back to their "first love" for Him, the love they had when they first became Christians (2:4).

or else I will come to you quickly

Jesus is not afraid to give an "or else" to His church: "Repent...or else." Jesus always disciplines those He loves. He would not love His church if He did not discipline it. To discipline is to care about the people you discipline. In this case, this is a collective discipline of the entire church.

and remove your lampstand from its place – unless you repent

The word "remove" means to set in motion, to move. We get our English words "kinetic" and "cinema" from this Greek word. Jesus will remove the church from a sphere of effectiveness or possibly out of existence totally.

Discipline is contingent upon lack of repentance. If we repent, Jesus will not execute His discipline upon the church ["lampstand"]. This is the repentance of the church.

Look at the churches that once preached the gospel but now stand as empty shells. All you find in these churches is "Us four and no more," except for maybe a few mice. Jesus removed the testimony of these churches. Thousands of churches disappear every year throughout the world.

Principle

Some of us were more than we are.

Application

We need to change our thinking about where we have come. We were more than we are now spiritually. Get back to where you started.

There is a tendency to compartmentalize our sin. We can labor with great dynamic albeit in a deep vacuum of fellowship with the Lord. This is sublimation. Sublimation always produces misery. That is why we must change our mind about true communion with the Lord. First we must "remember" and then we must "repent."

Has your church lost its "first love?" Has your church lost its passion for salvation and for the One who gave it that salvation? Remember your first love for Him. Remember the days when you first became a Christian. Remember your love for Him at that time. Remember your enthusiasm for sharing Him with others. Have you fallen from that? Repent! Change your mind about your present state. Quit your complaining. Let go of that critical spirit. Put loving the Lord back at the center of your attitudes.

Revelation 2:6

"But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate"

But this you have

Jesus offers another commendation to the Ephesian church. He praises people for hating something.

that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans

Some people in the church at Ephesus were following Nicholas, a religious sect leader. This sect located in Ephesus and Pergamum (2:6). The Lord accuses them of laxity about eating food sacrificed to idols and sexual license (2:20). This may have been libertine Gnosticism. Gnostics believed in indulging the body. They thought that the body was evil and should be satiated. They advocated sexual tolerance.

This was a compromise with paganism. Since all commercial trade was under the patronage of pagan deities, business people joined trade guilds to do business. This compromised Christianity. Second-generation Christians developed comfortable accommodation with pagans that their fathers would never allow. Jesus commends the Ephesian church for opposing compromise with these trade guilds.

Jezebel may have been a local leader of the Nicolaitans (2:14-15). Jesus gave her "time to repent" (2:21). He brought her to the point of sickness and death (2:22-23). Jezebel is the name of the infamous wife of King Ahab (1 Kings 16:28-19:3; 2 Kings 9:22-37). She introduced harlotry to Israel. John uses her persona as a warning to the church against compromise with paganism.

Much of the social life of the first century revolved around pagan temples. The temples had the best bars and the best restaurants. These temples had temple-prostitutes that men enjoyed as an act of worship. As you can see, paganism was popular.

which I also hate

We do not often think of Jesus as hating someone. This is because we characterize Him as a glorified wimp. Obviously, Jesus is neither prissy nor weak. Jesus hates that which hurts. If we love people then we appreciate principles that help people. If we love passionately then we must hate passionately the principles that hurt people. We must distinguish between hating a concept and hating a person. The concept of the Nicolaitans was unrestrained indulgence. Jesus hates

unrestrained indulgence because He knows that it will hurt people.

Principle

True love for the Lord involves hate

Application

Our society does not hesitate to lower its standards. It does not hesitate to indulge in unvarnished sin. Society has no sense of sham or rebuke of such sin. Christians move in this society. If we buy into the values of our society, we compromise Christ and Christianity. Christians must differentiate themselves from this society and its values.

It is not enough to dislike the sins of society. We must "hate" those sins. We hate that which distorts and counterfeits the truth.

This principle flies in the face of the central value of North American society -- tolerance. Jesus bears no compromise with the values of this world. Our society is rigorously non-judgmental but Jesus asserts that we are to be judgmental [not in the sense of judging motives]. "Live-and-let-live" is no biblical value.

We all make judgments; we are just afraid to admit that we do. Jesus calls for open criticism of the behavior of this world. Even more, He calls for us to "hate" the values of this world. Yet, Christians watch bizarre tabloid TV shows with no sense of "hate" at all.

How is your "hate" doing? Are you exercising it?

Revelation 2:7

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God"

He who has an ear, let him hear

Jesus calls for positive and decisive choice. Some people are disposed to listen to God's voice and others are not. It is a blessing to watch people who are positive forward the Word.

All letters to the seven churches have this challenge to positive resolve. People with an ear for God always listen to His voice. The word "has" means to keep on having an ear for God's Word.

what the Spirit says to the churches

Note that although John is the human author of Revelation, the Holy Spirit is the divine author.

Each letter to these churches has this phrase as well. Jesus wants to let these churches know that the Holy Spirit speaks through the book of Revelation.

To him who overcomes

Jesus concludes this little epistle to the Ephesians with a promise. To those who "overcome," Jesus promises certain kinds of rewards. Each reward is different, according to the nature of what they overcame. Some Christians will not overcome and they will not receive rewards.

The Holy Spirit uses a military term ["overcomes"] to describe the Christian life as a battlefield, not a child's playground. The Holy Spirit challenges each of the local churches of chapters two and three to overcome a specific issue.

I will give to eat from the tree of life

Eating refers to experiencing the joy of reward in heaven for overcoming in spiritual battles. Later in Revelation, John says that the tree of life bears abundant fruit (22:2).

which is in the midst of the Paradise of God

Paradise is a place of the righteous dead, a state of blessedness (Luke 23:43). The phrase "Paradise of God" probably refers to heaven (2 Corinthians 12:4).

Principle

People with a heart for God have an ear for God's Word.

Application

If we have a spiritual ear, we listen for God's will. Is your ear tuned to hear God's voice? Has unconfessed sin in your life launched negative volition to God's Word? Jesus promises you a special reward for the victory of allowing His Word to permeate your soul.

Revelation 2:8

"And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write, 'These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life...'"

Smyrna is the shortest of the seven letters.

And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write

The word "angel" means messenger and refers here to the pastor of the church at Smyrna. Jesus wants the pastor to convey this special message to Smyrna.

Smyrna today [Izmir Turkey] is a seaport located about 40 miles north of Ephesus. It was the second most prosperous city in Asia Minor. Its harbor was one of the greatest of the Roman world. The harbor stood at the end of a great road coming through the Hermus Valley.

Smyrna was a free city and did not pay tax to the Roman Empire. It was a place where Roman judges held court. It was, as Ephesus, a center for the imperial cult. They dedicated a temple to Tiberius, Livia and the senate (AD 29). They also dedicated a temple to dea Roma ("the goddess Rome") in the second century BC

Smyrna portrayed itself as the most beautiful city of Asia Minor. It sat at the head of the gulf on hills sloping down to the sea. Its streets were wide and paved. The famed Golden Street ran the entire length of the city from the harbor to the Acropolis on Mount Pagos. Temples lined this street from the harbor beginning with a Greek temple to the goddess Cybele. Farther, there was the splendid temple to Apollo. Still beyond, sat the temples to Aesculapius (the god of healing) and the temple to the goddess Aphrodite. The monument to Homer stood on this street as well. Smyrna was the birthplace of Homer. Positioned at the end of the street was the Acropolis on Mount Pagos, the imposing temple to Zeus.

Much of the life of Smyrna revolved around athletics, theatre and religion. There was a great gymnasium and stadium in the city. The largest Greek theatre in the Roman world [20,000 seating] sat on the slopes of Mount Pagos.

The church at Smyrna faced severe persecution because of Jewish slander. John calls them the "synagogue of Satan."

These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life

Jesus gives Himself a title with each message to the churches. He appeals to some special authority about Himself in each of these titles. Jesus here

describes Himself in polar opposites: 1) First and Last and 2) who was dead and came to life.

First, Jesus describes Himself as the one who is eternal, the First and the Last (1:8,17; 21:6; 22:13) and the one who conquered death. Jesus is from everlasting to everlasting. He originated everything and He will judge everything.

The phrase "was dead and is alive" indicates His humanity rose from the dead. Jesus died for our sins in His humanity to pay for our sins and He rose from the dead to gain victory over death.

Principle

Jesus conquered sin and death so that we will get the victory over sin and death.

Application

We do not have to pay for our sins because Jesus did all of the suffering necessary for our sins. God is satisfied with His suffering for our sins. He took our hell that we might have His heaven. Our only responsibility is to believe that Jesus did all of the suffering for our sins (John 5:24).

Because Jesus defeated sin, He also defeated death. Jesus rose from the dead. He killed death in doing so.

"So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.' 'O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?'

The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:54-58).

Revelation 2:9

"I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan"

I know your works

Jesus finds something for which He can commend the church at Smyrna. He does not censure this church.

tribulation

Jesus knows the tribulation the Smyrna church faced. "Tribulation" means pressure, distress. Tribulation is anything that oppresses or crushes the soul. He knew everything about the anguish they encountered. He notices all heartaches Christians go through.

It is notable that Jesus does not rebuke these suffering Christians. This stands in striking contrast to five of the other churches whom He censures. Evidently, those who put their faith in God's promises when they experience tribulation become unadulterated in doctrine and spirituality.

and poverty (but you are rich)

The Greek word for "poverty" carries the idea of destitution. The Smyrna church endured extreme poverty. They were beggarly and destitute. This poverty may have been due to their stand for Christ. They lived in a prosperous city yet they were in abject poverty because they loved the Lord.

The Smyrna church was poor in temporal things but rich in spiritual things.

and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not

The New Testament does not use "blasphemy" exclusively to describe defaming God. It uses this word many times of defamation of people. It means slander and refers to all abusive speech. Certain Jews attempted to defame or slander the church at Smyrna. These people tried to harm the reputation of this church.

This slander may refer to these Jews reporting the Smyrna church to the Roman authorities. They tried to discredit both Christ and Christians. Jesus not only notices the persecutions Christians face but He also notices the persecutors.

but are a synagogue of Satan

These persecutors were far from true children of Abraham for they belonged to Satan. "Synagogue of Satan" probably refers to what these Jews did to

the Smyrna church--report them to the Roman authorities.

Principle

We can be rich without wealth.

Application

Those who faithfully walk with the Lord should expect persecution. Jesus knows any plight we might face. There is no tear or blow that may come our way that Jesus does not know. He knows when someone smears your reputation. When people tells lies about you, the Sovereign Son of God deals with it.

Contrary to modern thinking, we can be rich without wealth. There is no price that we could pay for family time. No money is worth the riches we have in Christ. Paul counted his successes as a pile of manure.

"But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish [manure], that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death..." (Philippians 2:7-10).

God does not want us to depend on a monetary worldview. He wants our worldview to centre on our relationship to Christ. When we hold to this perspective, all suffering makes us strong. God designs all suffering for our blessing (1 Peter 1:6-8). It makes us rich in our relationship to God, rich in the Word, rich in the promises of God. Nothing shakes a person like this. This is a different scale of values.

Revelation 2:10

"Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you

will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life"

Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer.

The word "fear" carries the idea of put to flight. Jesus addresses the problem of lack of courage. "Don't turn chicken. Stand up to trial. Don't cave in. Do not let the Devil subdue your soul. Draw your courage from me."

Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison,

The Devil will cast only "some" into prison. Some, not all, will go to jail. God limits suffering to some; He does not universally assign it to all.

that you may be tested,

The Devil puts us to the test as well as God. He will assay the metal of our soul to prove whether we are what we say we are. When you face temptation, do you answer to sin?

We can translate the word "tested" as try to trap. The Devil tries to trap us in sin.

"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

"Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone" (James 1:12-13).

The Devil will attempt to lure us into his lair. Once there, he will trap us in his system. There, our true character will come out.

and you will have tribulation ten days

"Ten days" probably means that these suffering Christians will only suffer for a limited period.

Some people believe that this refers to ten periods of suffering under the Roman emperors.

The brief time of tribulation we face here on earth contrasts with the eternal reward (2 Corinthians 4:17). God only allows suffering for a set time. He does not allow limitless suffering for Christians. Because Jesus predetermined that this test will last ten days, no power in the universe can make it last eleven days.

Principle

Jesus foreknows our trial. He forewarns and forearms us of our trial.

Application

As the storm clouds gather in your life and are about to burst upon you, are you faithful? Jesus' watchword was "fear not."

When trial comes, it strips us of superficial support systems. Instead of leaning on the grace of God's provision, we lean on self. That will not sustain us in time of trial. Only by committing our souls to a faithful Creator can we cope with trial appropriately.

"Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator" (1 Peter 4:19).

Jesus, the Sovereign Son of God, manages the trial that comes to us. Therefore, our trial is not capricious but in His plan. That is why we can "commit" our souls to Him.

Be faithful until death

The New Testament uses "faithful" of God (1 Corinthians 1:9; 10:13; 2 Corinthians 1:18; 2 Timothy 2:13; Hebrews 10:23; 11:11; 1 Peter 4:19; 1 John 1:9) and of believers who are disposed to believe God.

"And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2)

Jesus asks His followers to remain faithful even to the point of death.

and I will give you the crown of life

The "crown" here is the victor's crown. Usually this was a wreath consisting of foliage or precious metals (resembling foliage) worn as a symbol of honor and victory. This crown was a symbol of triumph in athletic contests (1 Corinthians 9:25; 2 Timothy 4:8; 1 Peter 5:4). It is a token of public honor for distinguished achievement.

The Christian's prize consists of "life." He will have a crown consisting of life. Persecutors may take the lives of believers at Smyrna but Jesus will give them life. Their enemies take their temporal life but Jesus gives them eternal life (Revelation 20:15).

In 155 AD, the Roman government martyred Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna. He personally knew the apostle John. They burned him at the stake for his stand for Christ. He refused to affirm that "Caesar is Lord." At his death, he gave testimony to his trust in Christ.

Note the promise--"I will give." We derive assurance from this. If Jesus said it, He is able to deliver it. The Devil will not be able to wrench it out of His hand (John 10:29,30).

Principle

The Christian is to aim for a badge of distinguished service for the Lord.

Application

Some Christians will wear a badge of distinction in God's eyes. Will God look at you as a Christian who executed the Christian life in an outstanding way?

"Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it" (Hebrews 12:11).

Revelation 2:11

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death"

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Christians who die in serving the Lord know a victory that others do not know because death

releases them from the hurt of tribulation. They base their victory in the present on their understanding of the future. The Holy Spirit points those who face death to eternity. Those who give their lives for Christ, who are positive toward God ["has an ear"] keep eternal values in view.

He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death

There are two deaths a person can experience: physical and spiritual. Our passage deals with spiritual death, which is eternal death. We die first physically. We die a second death, a spiritual death for eternity, if we do not receive Jesus Christ as our Savior. The book of Revelation refers to the second death four times (20:6, 14; 21:8).

Principle

The Christian is exempt from the second death.

Application

There is a death beyond death for the non-Christian. There is no death beyond physical death for the Christian, only eternal life.

God separates those who enter the second death from Himself for eternity. Those who ultimately reject God, He ultimately rejects eternally. The second death hurts more than the first death.

Once a person becomes a Christian, nothing can separate him from God.

"For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39).

Revelation 2:12

"And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, 'These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword:..."

And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write
Pergamum, 45 miles north of Smyrna, was an ancient and prominent city of western Asia Minor (Mysia area). Bergama Turkey today covers part of the ancient site below the acropolis of the ancient

city. Pergamum was a beautiful city built on terraces.

In 3 BC, Pergamum became the centre of an independent kingdom for many centuries. Attalus III bequeathed his kingdom to the Romans which became the province of Asia in 133 BC. Augustus constituted the province as a senatorial province.

King Eumenes II (197-159 BC) instituted a library of 200,000 volumes given as a gift from Anthony to Cleopatra, second only to the library in Alexandria (founded by Ptolemy Philadelphus). A famous sculpture school located there. Its economic base was agriculture, silver, livestock breeding, wool and parchment.

The Romans built a shrine to Asclepius, the Greek god of healing, in the lower city. It was a spa where both natural and supernatural healing occurred. They built the first temple of the imperial cult in Pergamum in 29 BC in honor of Augustus and Rome. Pergamum was the centre for the cults of Zeus Soter, Asclepius Soter and Athena Nicephorus which all had temples there.

Pergamum had already persecuted Christians (Revelation 1:11; 2:12).

These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword

Jesus depicts Himself with a different title for each church. Each title is relevant to that church. The title for the Lord Jesus to Pergamum is one of a judge. Jesus judged his people when they engage in evil. His truth will slay this evil.

The Greek word for "sword" here was a Thracian sword of large size (1:16; 2:12, 16; 19:15, 21) and may be figurative of the Lord's judicial utterances. Christ carries ultimate authority with His sword over Rome and her sword.

Principle

Jesus is a warrior ready to judge.

Application

Jesus judges His church because He possesses ultimate authority. He will not allow His church to go sideways without disciplining it.

Revelation 2:13

"I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. And you

hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells"

I know your works

Jesus is knowledgeable about everything the church does; He is omniscient. No one fools Him. He takes note of our successes and our failures and appraises the church for what it truly is.

and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is.

Satan's throne here is not located in hell but in Pergamum. Satan's throne may link Rome with its Satanic influence in persecuting Christians. Emperor worship was the central religion of Pergamum. The Roman governor alone possessed the right of capital punishment. The sword of Jesus may stand in contrast to the sword of Rome. Satan's "throne" was probably the Roman court. Satan ruled in this city.

And you hold fast to My name

Jesus commends the Pergamum church for its perseverance in persecution. Jesus' name represents His person. This church did not deny their relationship to Him. They were glad to identify with Him.

and did not deny My faith

The Pergamum church was true to their faith, the body of doctrine. They were orthodox. There is a direct corollary between our faith and our faithfulness. Our faith inspires faithfulness. When we shipwreck our faith, we may shipwreck faithfulness.

even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr

People at Pergamum martyred Antipas for his faith. He probably would not sacrifice to the gods of the emperors. He refused to renounce Christ and embrace the gods of Rome. He got his name in the Bible for martyrdom.

There is a legend that Tertullian said that they placed Antipas in a brazen bull and slowly roasted him to death.

who was killed among you

Evidently, the readers of Revelation were present when they martyred Antipas. They saw it with their own eyes. The purpose was to intimidate them.

where Satan dwells

Pergamum was the location of a complex of pagan cults such as Zeus, Athena, Dionysius and Asclepius. Antipas flew in the face of all this. He took a stand against false religion.

The word "dwells" indicates that Satan had a permanent residence in Pergamum.

This verse began with the church living where Satan was. The verse ends with Satan living where Christians were.

Principle

Conviction makes a difference.

Application

Many of us feel that it would be easier to live for Christ in some other city where people are more sympathetic to Christianity. "It will be easier to witness there." We want a convenient Christianity.

The Christian life is not escape but conquest. Christians with great conviction willingly stand alone. They will face down any foe. Some will go to the point of death for their Lord.

Our witness can be costly. This may mean that we live as a speckled bird in our society, so we don't buy into the values of our society. Another analogy is this: the ship is supposed to be at sea but the sea is not supposed to be in the ship. The reason the church has little power is that no one can tell the difference from the world. There is no conviction that makes the church distinct from the world.

Revelation 2:14

"But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality"

But I have a few things against you

The "but" here is a strong contrast. People in the same church gave their lives for Christ and others compromised with the world. Jesus rebukes this church for tolerating a religion that promotes immorality.

because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam

Balaam was a non-Israel diviner who led Israel into idolatry and immorality. The doctrine of Balaam is the doctrine of combining idolatry with immorality. Idolatry is a justification for immorality (2 Peter 2:15; Jude 11). Corruption of doctrine and corruption of ethics go together.

The church at Pergamum permitted libertine doctrine to run free. They ate idol meats and entered free sex as a show of their freedom. Religion and free sex is a deadly combination.

Balak, King of Moab, hired Balaam to subvert Israel. Balaam counseled King Balak to encourage his women [heathen] to intermarry with Israeli men (Numbers 22-25; 31:15-16). This neutralized Israel from a dynamic relationship with her God. Israel lost all divine power over this.

Balaam is famous for a debate he had with his donkey, a debate that he lost! His donkey had more sense than he had! What a reputation to carry throughout the centuries of time -- having a debate with a donkey and losing the debate.

who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel

By entering this false teaching, Israel encountered a "stumbling block" in their walk with God. Syncretism always neutralizes dynamic Christianity.

to eat things sacrificed to idols

If the church absorbed Pergamum's religions too closely, she would have to compromise with idol worship and immorality.

and to commit sexual immorality

The word for "immorality" here is the word from which we get the English word "pornography." The Greek word carries the idea of sexual degeneracy no matter which kind, immorality of any kind. The temple of Aphrodite kept

prostitutes as part of their religious practices. No wonder their religion was popular!

Principle

There is a close correlation between false religion and immorality.

Application

Although a church can have outstanding believers, the very same church can house immoral Christians.

Every generation has at least one great heathen revival. Usually, this originates in false religion. When we compromise with religion, that is the beginning of our downfall.

There is a tendency to blur theological and moral distinctions. When it becomes popular to become Christian, we probably have lost our distinctives. Conformity to standards other than the Word of God will neutralize our convictions and bring us down to a lower level.

The Devil always ruins the church from within. Immorality can do what persecution can never do. "If you can't curse them, corrupt them."

Toleration always compromises Christianity. When we tolerate evil, we tear the soul out of Christianity. When the church sympathizes with apostasy, she is on a downward slide that will end in destruction. This is complicity by indifference. Laxity of conviction produces laxity of life.

Revelation 2:15

"Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate"

Thus you

The word "you" is emphatic throwing emphasis upon the idea that the Pergamum church imbibed false teaching.

also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans

Two false doctrines seduced the Pergamum church, the "teachings of Balaam" and "the doctrine of Nicolaitans." People in the church of Pergamum held tenaciously to false doctrine just like the church at Ephesus (2:6). The doctrine of the Nicolaitans was a syncretism between

Christianity, false doctrine and pagan living. This was compromise of Christianity with both false doctrine and false living.

Jesus names names. He identifies the Nicolaitans by name as false teachers who corrupt the people of Pergamum.

which thing I hate

It is no sin to hate what God hates. Jesus directs His hate here to false doctrine, not to people. Jesus hated the doctrine of the Nicolaitans.

Principle

Compromise neutralizes the church.

Application

The idea that "all roads lead to Rome" is a biblically bad doctrine. "As long as we are sincere, that is all that counts. The world is just one great brotherhood and we are all one." If we break down doctrinal distinctions, we will neutralize truth that we hold and make it ineffective. Christianity proclaims mutually exclusive doctrine that is powerfully distinct from other views.

Jesus proclaimed a mutual exclusive doctrine; He "hates" anything that stands contrary to it. He has a "doubled edged" sword ready for false teaching. His sword pierces perversion of truth. The worst type of person to Him was a religious unbeliever.

Compromise is a comforting doctrine because we do not have to distinguish between the things that differ. The Christian should not tolerate false doctrine nor breakdown fundamental doctrinal distinctives. Doctrinal separation is the highest form of biblical separation.

Revelation 2:16

"Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth"

Repent, or else

The word "repent" is a strong command. This is sharp censure for imbibing false doctrine.

I will come to you quickly

"Quickly" has to do with the rapidity with which Jesus will come if the church at Pergamum does not repent. Jesus will go to war swiftly. He does

not give leeway when it comes to false doctrine (2 Peter 2:1).

and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth

The word "fight" means to make war, to engage in open warfare (12:7; 13:4; 17:14). Jesus will make war on false doctrine. We do not often think of Jesus in terms of General Jesus. In this verse, He personally wields a sword of war. He is totally intolerant of tolerance.

Principle

Jesus is intolerant of tolerance.

Application

Jesus' sword will cut to the quick those who tolerate false beliefs. He will inflict a mortal wound on churches or organizations that leave the fundamentals of the faith. Confusion and sloppy thinking about truth is no excuse, He will judge them in any case.

Revelation 2:17

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it"

He who has an ear

Jesus challenges those with a positive system of perception to divine truth. Those willing to hear what He says will receive a special blessing. Those indifferent to this message will not listen.

let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Jesus says, "Use your system of perception toward divine things." A system of perception is no good unless we use it. We may be positive to the Word of God but that will do no good unless we expose ourselves to what the Holy Spirit says to the churches through the Word of God.

To him who overcomes

A person who "overcomes" is a victor (2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21; 21:7; 1 John 5:4). The overcoming here is the overcoming of the value system of the

world. This person consistently walks in the Spirit. It is possible to defeat the influences around us.

I will give some of the hidden manna to eat.

Jesus promises two things to those who "overcome." He promises them "hidden manna" and "white stone" with their name written on it. "Hidden manna" has to do with time and the "white stone" has to do with eternity.

Manna is the supernaturally provided food given to Israel during her wilderness wandering (Exodus 16; Numbers 11). Jesus promises "hidden manna" to those who live victorious lives. He hides this manna from the eyes of those who are negative toward Him. Jesus gives spiritual nourishment to those that live of victory.

And I will give him a white stone and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it

The importance of this stone is that Jesus writes our names on it. This indicates God's acceptance of us and thus assurance of eternity and the blessings that come with eternity. A secret name is a name of intimacy. We receive full fellowship with the Lord when we overcome sin.

Principle

God blesses spiritual victors with special fellowship.

Application

Those who stand against sexual immorality will get the blessing of Jesus the Lord. Those who resist sin, God blesses with special intimacy.

Revelation 2:18

"And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write, 'These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass...'"

And to the angel of the church

Again, Jesus speaks to the leader of the church as the representative of the church and the one responsible for the church.

in Thyatira write

The fourth and longest letter to the churches is the letter to Thyatira. This was the most corrupt of all seven churches.

Thyatira is about 55 miles northeast of Smyrna (Izmir Turkey) and 45 miles southeast of Pergamum. This city is of lesser prominence than the other seven cities. They had no temple dedicated to an emperor. Seleucus I Nicator founded the city in 300 BC. The town Akhisar stands on this site today.

Thyatira lay on the Lycus River. Thyatira, situated strategically, located on an important low-lying corridor that connected the Hermus and Caicus valleys. It was an important place in the Roman road system as a frontier garrison and postal route. Many people traveled this road.

There were many industrial and commercial guilds in this city by the time that John wrote Revelation. Trade was very difficult without belonging to a guild. The guilds were social clubs fettered with pagan worship and immorality. These guilds carried vast power in the community. These guilds formed opposition to Christianity (Acts 19). The city manufactured wool, linen, leather, pottery, brass-smiths [renowned for this] and slave trading. Thyatira was a dyeing centre as well.

Thyatira is the home of Lydia whom Paul led to Christ (Acts 16:14). Lydia was a "seller of purple goods." She may have been an agent of a Thyatiran manufacturer of dyed woolen goods.

A significant Christian community existed in Thyatira toward the end of the first century.

"These things says the Son of God

Jesus calls Himself "the Son of God." He stresses His deity, "This is God talking to you." The two characteristics that follow stress attributes of His deity.

who has eyes like a flame of fire

John uses terminology common to bronze workers in Thyatira. This description is similar to that of the first chapter (1:13f). Jesus' eyes here may represent eyes of fury and judgment that can penetrate any sham. No facade will pass His

notice. We cannot disguise ourselves or pretend in His presence.

and His feet like fine brass

The first chapter used the term "fine brass" (1:15). This brass was brilliant when polished. This may represent His fixed orientation to truth.

Principle

Jesus sees everything for what it is.

Application

Some Christians compromise their Christianity because of their business network. They put business over Christ. Jesus can see right into the heart of those who hold this attitude. He knows our secret sins (Hebrews 4:13). We will not get away with this. Jesus penetrates this sham.

Revelation 2:19

"I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first"

I know your works

Although there was a great deal that was wrong in the church at Thyatira, yet Jesus commends them for certain things. He knows everything about their production.

A church can do many wonderful things and still be out of phase with God.

love

The Thyatiran church had a disposition to love others. Jesus commended none of the other six churches for their "love." Love is no panacea that covers other wrongs.

service

This church ministered to others. If a church does not produce, then it is out of business. A church is not supposed to be a social club or a rest home.

faith

Some Christians in Thyatira walked by faith (Colossians 2:6,7).

and your patience

The word "patience" literally means to remain under. Patience is the ability to hang in there. They

were people of perseverance (2:2). They did not throw in the towel when things got tough. They had fortitude and tenacity.

Patience has to do with our understanding of God's sovereignty. If we know that God is control of our circumstances, then we keep at it for we know that God is working out the situation according to an eternal plan.

And as for your works, the last are more than the first

Most of us would have been impressed with this church. They were a bustling church. They were busy about doing God's work. That is how most of us evaluate a church -- by how active it is.

Principle

It is possible for a church to be orthodox in some things and heterodox in other things.

Application

Although a church may hold zeal for certain Christian qualities, distortions neutralize its effectiveness for Christ. It is possible to have orthodoxy in some things but heterodoxy in something else. Thyatira was a church that did many wonderful things but they distorted the Christianity in other things. This is true of many churches today.

If someone gave you an ice cream banana split with one drop of poison in it, you would say, "I don't want the banana split. No matter how good the rest of the banana split, I do not want to risk eating the poison." Some people say there is good in all churches. However, if there is some false doctrine [poison] in the church, why go to that church at all? Saddam Hussein has some good in him. He must love his mother. All churches have some good in them.

Revelation 2:20

"Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols"

Nevertheless I have a few things against you

Jesus turns from commendation to condemnation of the church at Thyatira.

because you allow that woman Jezebel

The trouble in Thyatira was tolerance. The word "allow" means to tolerate. The church at Thyatira tolerated a false teacher by the name of Jezebel. The church distanced itself from this problem and let it lie to fester only to become a greater problem later. Tolerance is a concept of compromise.

The Jezebel of the Old Testament was King Ahab's queen. She was a Canaanite and daughter of a pagan priest by the name of Ethbaal, a worshipper of Baal. He killed his brother in order to become King of Sidon, Lebanon. Jezebel may have been a priestess who worshipped Astarte, later called Aphrodite [the Romans called her Venus], the goddess of lust.

When King Ahab of Israel brought his wife to Samaria, the capital of the northern tribes, she brought her religion with her. Baal was a fertility god. Baal worship used both male and female temple prostitutes to appease him. Jezebel built a temple to Baal and an altar to Astarte. With this came hundreds of prophets to promote her religion.

"Now it happened, when Joram saw Jehu, that he said, 'Is it peace, Jehu?' So he answered, 'What peace, as long as the harlotries of your mother Jezebel and her witchcraft are so many?'" (2 Kings 9:22).

Jezebel fancied her religion, a Phoenician Baal cult in Israel that promoted harlotry and magic. She seduced her tolerant and weak husband to persecute the Lord's prophets and led Israel into idolatry. Her name stood for anything that endangers orthodox teaching. The Jezebel counterpart of this verse is a symbolic name for a person who distorts doctrine.

Some manuscripts read "your wife" instead of "that woman." If so, this would mean that this Jezebel was the pastor's wife! However, the strongest manuscript evidence does not support this.

who calls herself a prophetess

Jezebel was a self-styled and self-appointed prophetess, but she was no true prophetess. Just

because people claim something does not make it true. Many people claim religious status in our day but this does not mean they carry authentic biblical authority.

Jezebel taught that it was permissible to belong to a trade guild. Belonging to a trade guild included idol worship and sexual immorality at religious feasts.

to teach and seduce My servants

This phony priestess both taught and seduced her followers. "Seduce" means deceive. Jezebel was probably beautiful, brainy, personable but deceptive. The church at Thyatira was more interested in the delivery than the content. The church of our day is more interested in form than substance.

Jezebel seduced God's servants. She seduced Christians.

to commit sexual immorality

Committing "sexual immorality" is not the same as committing adultery. This is a much more general term than "adultery" and means to engage in any illicit sex act. This could range from fornication to prostitution. A person who commits this sin, sins against his own body (1 Corinthians 6:18). It is God's will that we abstain from sexual immorality by consecrating ourselves to Him (1 Thessalonians 4:3).

"Sexual immorality" here is sex acts associated with idol worship. Jezebel taught Christians to engage in sexual promiscuity in idol worship. The Jezebel of this verse attempts to draw God's people into sexual immorality through religion.

and eat things sacrificed to idols

The combination of religion and sex is a great problem. Jezebel taught the church to combine paganism and Christianity. The appeal for this combination was sex. Whenever we combine Christianity with paganism, truth always loses out.

Principle

Unadulterated tolerance is not biblical.

Application

A church may think that unrestricted tolerance is a virtue, but the Bible demands that we make choices. Indifference will not do. It is not right to go along with the permissiveness of unadulterated tolerance.

Some churches have scanty standards. These churches are indifferent to sexual immorality, abortion or euthanasia, "This is just a matter of preference." Their central operating principle is "choice." They want the autonomy in determining what is true. This is unadulterated relative thinking, a philosophy perfect for a pluralistic society.

Pluralism demands toleration. Toleration used to mean patience and longsuffering with people. Now tolerance means that all views are equally valid. That is a major shift in thinking. Not only are all views equally tolerable but all views are equally valid. In this situation, we kill truth. The only truth left is tolerance, which, in reality, is no truth. Values then have no value.

Revelation 2:21

"And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent"

And I gave her time

The deviation from biblical ethics had gone on for a considerable time. Jesus was patient with her and gave her plenty of time to repent.

to repent of her sexual immorality

The word "repent" means to change ones mind or purpose. A person who repents changes their thought and attitude toward God's will. Sorrow is the focal point in the English word "repent" but it is not the essential idea of the Greek word. The primary idea behind the Greek word is change of thinking.

and she did not repent

Jezebel remained intransigent in her doctrine and practice. It is interesting that her message was a message of tolerance, but she was intolerant when it came to repentance. This is a grave indictment of the church at Thyatira.

Principle

Immorality intransigently rejects the will of God.

Application

Immorality is often obstinate and defiant of God's will in the face of warnings. Eventually Jesus' patience runs out. He will discipline the church at some point.

God will give churches of our day time to repent. If the church hardens her heart, she will go from bad to worse. It is like a runaway truck going down a mountain; it is hard to stop.

Revelation 2:22

"Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds"

Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed

Adulteresses usually commit their sin in bed. Jesus casts Jezebel into bed, but it's not a bed of sexual pleasure. It's a bed of pain and sickness (1 Corinthians 11:29-30). An adulteress practices her occupation in bed, so Jesus will cast her into a bed of pain. The place of sin becomes the place of discipline.

and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation,

"Adultery" here is metaphorical, representing those whom Jezebel led away with her solicitations to false doctrine.

unless they repent of their deeds

God is open to those who repent of false doctrine. Repentance averts God's discipline.

Principle

False doctrine is unfaithfulness to truth.

Application

God will not endure false doctrine forever. Churches that deceive their people will face God's judgment. False doctrine is like adultery; it is unfaithfulness to truth.

Revelation 2:23

"I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works"

I will kill her children with death,

The "children" here are not Jezebel's physical children but her spiritual children – those who join guilds that worship idols. These guilds entered cultic prostitution as part of their worship. God will inflict death upon her disciples.

and all the churches shall know

"All" churches, not just the church at Thyatira, will know that Jesus is the judge of peoples motives and actions.

that I am He who searches the minds and hearts

The word "I" is very emphatic. Jesus will personally search the hearts of the people at Thyatira. The word "searches" expresses an accurate tracking down of who the person is.

The word "minds" literally means kidney. The ancients viewed feelings and emotions as abiding in the kidneys. Jesus searches emotions. Emotions are not the primary means of spirituality except as manifestations of the spirituality that is already there. Great spiritual blessing cannot help but flow into the soul. However, that emotion is not spirituality per se. Jesus searches the indicator of our spirituality. We cannot make emotions the criteria of our spirituality, but we can use them to understand our spirituality. The objective standards of the Bible are the true criteria for spirituality. How we feel has little to do with it.

Our "heart" is the source of our decisions. Jesus examines our emotions and the basis for our decisions. He will hold us all responsible for our choices. We can blame no one else.

And I will give to each one of you according to your works

The "works" here involve more than overt acts; they include what has been going on in the "minds and hearts" of the previous phrase. Jesus uses objective standards for dealing with us. These standards encompass our true motives and acts.

Principle

Jesus will examine our motives by searching our emotions and the basis for our decision-making.

Application

Most of us have dull spiritual perception. Jesus has complete clarity and fairness in His understanding of our motives and actions. It is incumbent upon us to make our motives clear to ourselves, for Jesus will make them clear if we do not.

Revelation 2:24

"Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden"

Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira,

After His words of condemnation, Jesus now turns to those who walk with the Lord. There is always a remnant that is true to truth and does not follow false doctrine.

as many as do not have this doctrine

"This doctrine" is the doctrine of immoral practices through the cultic guilds that participated in sex as a part of worship.

who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say

Some people believed that they had an edge on the "depths of Satan."

I will put on you no other burden

Jesus asks no more than they "hold fast what you have till I come" (2:25). He wants us to be true to the objective Word of God and measure everything by the Bible. A subjective approach to spirituality is dangerous.

Principle

Jesus wants us to be true to the objective Word of God.

Application

There are people today who believe that they have "deep" knowledge of God. Invariably, when people drift from the Bible, they buy into cults and mysticism. Usually this is some form of mystical

spirituality. No one can measure whether this "deep" spiritual knowledge is true, because only the person who proclaims this knowledge is privy to it. If we cannot measure something by the objective Word of God, we should not buy into it. If we do, we may enter "the depths of Satan."

Revelation 2:25**"But hold fast what you have till I come"**

Jesus does not want us to let go of objective truth. False teachers want to wrench it from us. Jesus wants us to be true to what we have already, not to learn some new mystery of spirituality.

till I come

When Jesus comes, our conflict with evil will end.

Principle

Things tend to degenerate rather than regenerate.

Application

There is a tendency to accept degrading moral standards. It is easy to go with the flow, especially if other Christians are doing it. The second law of thermodynamics says that something will degenerate if there is no outside force to spawn towards a constructive direction. Unless we allow God to intervene, we will devolve towards the standards around us rather than go against the flow. You must work to "hold fast" to "what you have."

Revelation 2:26

"And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations..."

And he who overcomes

We come to the promise portion of the epistle to Thyatira.

An overcomer is a person who wins a victory over sin, the flesh, the world and spiritual failure, and thus who conquers spiritually.

and keeps My works until the end

Jesus challenges this church to keep His works, that is, to be true to that He stands for. The "works" here are the standards that Christ compels

us to keep, in contrast to what Jezebel teaches (2:22).

The "end" here is until the time when Jesus comes (2:25).

to him I will give power over the nations

Those who are true to Jesus will receive reward. Jesus now gives the nature of reward for being true to truth. He gives to victors authority over nations in the millennium.

The words "give power over" indicate that Jesus gives believers who conquer authority to rule in the millennium, the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth (v.27). The word "power" means authority.

Principle

When Jesus reigns over this earth, those who lived victorious lives will reign with Him.

Application

Christians will reign with Christ during the millennium. The decree of the individual Christian's rule in the millennium will depend on the extent of victory during the church age.

Revelation 2:27

"He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels' – as I also have received from My Father..."

He shall rule them with a rod of iron

This verse is a quotation of the second Psalm (2:8,9). This refers to Jesus setting up His millennial kingdom on earth.

"Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth for Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel" (Psalm 2:8-9).

Faithful believers in the church age will rule with Christ in the Millennium. The word "rule" means shepherd. A shepherd uses his crook and his rod. He protects his sheep. Christians will function with the authority of a shepherd.

Jesus will establish a perfect environment in the millennial state. He will control crime. The capital

of the world will be in Jerusalem, not Washington D.C.

They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels' –

Jesus will remove every person and government that revolts against Him from the face of the earth. Jesus will break all the authority of the nations of the world. He will be King Jesus, King of the World. Jesus will break up the forces of evil in His kingdom.

as I also have received from My Father

The Christians will receive authority like the authority that the Father gave the Lord Jesus.

Principle

Christians have a place of privilege as well as responsibility in the millennial kingdom.

Application

When Jesus comes back, He will establish a perfect government. He will "rule them [governments of the world] with a rod of iron." No one will have a vote or even a voice in the government of the millennium.

Democracy is not the ideal government in God's economy. Jesus will reign as King, who knows best what the world needs.

Revelation 2:28

"...and I will give him the morning star"

Jesus gives a second promise to victorious Christians. He will give them "the morning star," fellowship with the Lord Jesus Himself.

The "morning star" emerges just before the dawn. The victor will not only share in the rights of a victor, but he will enter into deep fellowship with Christ Himself when He comes again. Jesus gives special wisdom to conquering Christians about Himself. In eternity, our occupation and adoration will be the person of Christ. This is ultimate happiness.

Principle

Christians will share in the glory of King Jesus.

Application

Jesus says that He is the "bright and morning star" (22:16). Jesus will come to get His own before He comes to receive His kingdom. This may be a promise of the rapture of the church. Jesus will come for His own before He sets up His kingdom. Those who love Him look for that day with anticipation.

Revelation 2:29

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches"

The "ear" is a system of perception and reception of truth. As His custom, Jesus ends this letter with a challenge to positive volition. The exhortation follows rather than precedes this challenge to hear as in the previous epistles.

Principle

Jesus calls for unconditional surrender by challenging our volition to follow His will.

Application

We need to keep our spiritual ears in tune to walking with the Lord. Our spiritual senses should alert us to eroding moral standards around us.

People who surrender to the Lord do not live out their own will, but the will of the King. They live out anything that conforms to the will of the King of Glory. Those who have "ears to hear" repent of anything that violates His will. They devote their life completely to the Lord when they turn it completely over to the Lord for His use (Romans 12:1,2).

Revelation 3:1

"And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, 'These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead'"

We now turn to the fifth church that Jesus addresses.

And to the angel of the church in Sardis write

Sardis, located about 35 miles southeast of Thyatira on an important trade route, was a wealthy city. This trade route ran east/west

through the kingdom of Lydia. Sardis' industries included textiles, dye and jewelry.

It was also a center of pagan worship. Temples of Artemis and Augustus stood there. Today the city of Sart stands on the site. It also had a temple dedicated to Augustus. Archeologists found an ancient Christian church building next to this temple and they also discovered one of the largest ancient synagogues ever found, seating about 1,000 people. The Jewish community must have been very large in Sardis. The primary cult of the city was the Cybele cult.

An earthquake in AD 17 destroyed the Hellenistic city. Tiberius and Claudius rebuilt the city.

These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars:

Jesus describes Himself as the one who holds the "seven Spirits of God and the seven stars" (note 1:4, 20). It is possible to translate "the seven Spirits of God" as "the sevenfold Spirit." If this is accurate, then "seven Spirits" may refer to manifestations of the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 11:2-5). The "seven stars" refer to the seven pastors of the seven churches. No church can have an effective ministry without dependency on the Holy Spirit.

I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive,

Note that Jesus does not begin with a word of commendation as He does in other letters.

Jesus again assesses this church. Evidently, other churches regarded them as a lively church. The church at Sardis gained a reputation [name] for being an outstanding church but lost much of its spiritual punch. We can hide nothing from an omniscient Lord.

Many churches have a great deal of declaration but little authenticity. Churches love to be fashionable. They fear to take a stand that would cast them in the light of oddity. They want respectability above all. That is their core value. Is this a true picture of what churches should be?

but you are dead

The church at Sardis had a reputation for orthodoxy and of sterling past ministry. This church had a reputation for being alive but they were, in reality, a dead church (cf. Matthew 23:27-

28). A minority of Christians "soiled their garments" (3:4). Although they appear alive they are dead spiritually.

Principle

There is a difference between a reputation of a church and the reality of its spiritual dynamic.

Application

Churches can be spiritually dead. Churches can be full of ministries and activity having a reputation as spiritual giants but at the same time be spiritually dead.

Churches need to take stock of their spiritual condition. Both individual Christians and individual churches flag in their spirituality from time to time. Churches that have gained great reputations for winning people to Christ and building believers within the church can lose their spiritual animation. Their reputation is still there but their power is gone. Deadness of spirituality is the norm.

If you attend a dead church and do not realize the church is dead, that may be because you are dead yourself. People freezing to death are so numb that all they want to do is sleep. If they go to sleep, they will die. Many churches are putting people to spiritual sleep, to their spiritual ruin.

Most churches do not die in one fell swoop. They die gradually. Almost all liberal churches today started as evangelical churches. Churches die by degree. Is your church [and you as an individual member] dying gradually?

Revelation 3:2

"Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God"

Be watchful

The word "be" indicates this church was not spiritually alert. The word "be" means to become. Jesus commands them to be what they were not. They were not spiritually alert. Now He wants them to become spiritually alert.

The contrast to watchfulness is sleepiness. Jesus wants this church to be vigilant about spiritual death among Christians. Laxity and indifference

results in spiritual deadness. Christians are to stay awake spiritually so that they do not fall asleep at their spiritual switch. Spiritual alertness is the issue (Matthew 24:43). Remain spiritually alive. Continual readiness and alertness must be the watchword against spiritual deadness.

Sardis reached a point where they thought they were impregnable. The city sat on a hill surrounded by steep cliffs which were very difficult to climb and there was only one narrow path to enter the city. Sardis did fall because of inattention. They fell twice in military conquest. Cyrus, king of Persia (549 BC) and Antiochus III (218 BC) both took the city by scaling the steep walls of her fortress. The city did not stay alert. Christians, like the city itself, needed to stay awake to spiritual dangers.

"Therefore He says: 'Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light'" (Ephesians 5:14).

Principle

Christ wants Christians to wake up from their spiritual sleep.

Application

Christians can decline into spiritual lethargy if they do not stay alert. Whenever we do not watch our spiritual condition, we always begin to decline. We lose ground and revert into previous lower levels of spirituality.

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

and strengthen

"Strengthen" means to fix, make fast, to set. The idea is to put something firmly in a location. The New Testament uses this word for establishing or stabilizing something.

Jesus wanted Peter to establish his brothers in Christ (Luke 22:32). Paul visited Rome that the saints might be established (Romans 1:11; cf. 1 Thessalonians 3:2, 13; 2 Thessalonians 2:17; 1 Peter 5:10; 2 Peter 1:12).

Principle

Stability comes from spiritual maturity.

Application

God wants us to form spiritual stability. Many Christians are not spiritually fixed. They wobble from one doctrine to another and from victory to defeat.

It is one thing to be spiritual; it is another thing to be spiritually mature. Immature believers spend their lives blaming their problems on other people or their church. It is always someone else's fault. "I am really a wonderful person. It is just that no one understands me, that's all." Mature persons take responsibility for their own failures. People who spend their time running other people down will not have any friends either. If these people can find a patsy, it makes them feel better.

the things which remain

The "things which remain" is the time remaining for a given church. As long as a church remains, God still has a purpose for it. Once the church loses its life, God's purpose for it is over. No matter how a church may have failed, God still has a purpose for it, if it secures a right relationship with the Lord.

It does not help to cry over spilt milk. Carrying guilt for past sins is not biblical. Do not look back but look ahead to what God will do through you. Forget those things that are behind. Jesus suffered all that needs to be suffered for your sins as a Christian. Accept that forgiveness and move on.

Spiritual decline always descends steeply when people stop applying the principles of God's Word to their experience.

that are ready to die

Some in Sardis were about to lose their spiritual integrity. The church was spiritually dead as a whole but there were still some members who had not yet yielded to the things that contribute to spiritual death. Salvage what you can.

Once something dies, what good is it? If our dog dies, we do not keep it in the house! We might even buy it a new collar and doghouse but of what good is that? We bury the corpse. We should bury many churches for they are long dead. They have the appearance of life, such as beautiful buildings and a well-trained staff, but they are dead. Dead churches reek to high heaven.

for I have not found your works perfect before God

There was something missing in the life of this church. They were not living up to God's standards. The word "perfect" means complete. God does not expect perfection of the believer on earth but He does expect maturity and completeness.

Principle

As long as we are alive, God has a purpose for us.

Application

You might be the most awful believer in the world, yet you can still walk with the Lord for the remainder of your life. As long as you live, God still has a purpose for your life. God's purpose for your life on earth ends when you die.

Great believers are not believers who never fail. They are believers who know how to get back on track. David failed miserably yet he got back into fellowship with the Lord (2 Samuel 11,12; Psalm 32; 38; 51). That is what made him great. Christians who think they can never fail will never make great believers.

Revelation 3:3

"Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you"

Remember therefore how you have received and heard

The church at Sardis needs to remember how they both heard and received the original message of Christianity. They needed to remember God's mercy and grace when they first believed. Their first affections are the most impressionable.

The word "received" means they received in the past with the result that they continue to receive. They were to use what they received in the past in their present situation.

hold fast and repent.

Sardis is the third church Jesus ordered to repent. The word "repent" literally means to perceive

afterwards implying change of thinking. The New Testament uses of "repent" always means a change of thinking for the better (except in Luke 17:3,4).

Repentance implies a change of life because of a complete change of thought and attitude. While the emphasis in the English is on sorrow or contrition, the Greek word carries the idea of a total change in thinking and behavior with respect to both how we think and act. Whether the focus is on attitude or behavior depends on the context. Jesus wants the Christians at Sardis to completely change their thinking and orientation about their sin.

Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief

If the church at Sardis does not repent, Jesus will come silently and unexpectedly to discipline the church. Jesus will come in unexpected discipline. If people do not respond to His grace, then He must use a judicial approach in getting their attention. This is the repercussion of non-repentance.

and you will not know what hour I will come upon you

Spiritual deadness gives people a false sense of security. Thieves come when we do not expect them to come. Thieves do not make appointments to steal from us. They do not say they are going to come in two days, at two in the morning. No, Jesus will come unexpectedly. Christians out of fellowship will be totally unprepared.

Principle

This is the principle of church-repentance.

Application

Repentance of the individual is one thing and repentance of a church is another thing. Sometimes entire churches need to repent.

Repentance is more than emotion. Repentance goes beyond emotion to attitude and the frame of reference around which a person orients. Are you oriented to the Lord? If not, you need to repent of anything that stands between you and the Lord.

Revelation 3:4

"You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and

they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy"

You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments

Jesus gives a commendation after condemnation in this letter. Here He commends spiritual giants. A few did not fall into the condemnation of verses two and three. They did not soil their garments. That is, they did not accommodate the immoral and apostate standards around them. They still walk in fellowship with the Lord.

and they shall walk with Me in white

The few believers that resist pressure about them will receive a special reward -- they will walk in fellowship with the Lord on earth.

for they are worthy

These Christians are "worthy" not because of themselves. They are worthy because of what the Lord did for them in grace. Our acceptability before God is because of the finished work of Christ on the cross.

Principle

God always maintains a remnant that is true to Himself.

Application

It is amazing how some truly born-again Christians can continue to attend apostate churches. They not only do not get any spiritual food for their souls in those churches but their preachers attack their faith on a regular basis. They stay in those churches out of loyalty because their family attended there or because their friends are there. In the meantime, their souls dry up. Sentiment is no basis for biblical determination. God says those who are worthy are those who are true to the Lord.

God always keeps for Himself those who are true to His Word. To these people, He supplies a special grace of warm fellowship with Himself.

Revelation 3:5

"He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I

will confess his name before My Father and before His angels"

He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments

The Holy Spirit contrasts the "white garments" of this verse with the "soiled garments" of the previous verse. God gives "white garments" to those who walk consistently before Him. Note the previous verse where some in the church "defiled" their garments by stepping out of fellowship with the Lord. The "white" dazzling garments set apart the remnant as those true to the Lord when others were yielding to sin all around them.

"White" garments are a symbol of the righteousness of people who lived for God. These are the robes of spiritual fruit. This is reward for fellowship with the Lord.

"And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints" (Revelation 19:8).

We also wear the robes of Jesus Himself, the righteousness of God Himself. We stand eternally acceptable to God because Jesus paid for every sin. He suffered all that needs to be suffered for our sins. God judged all sins at the cross.

and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life

The words "blot out" come from one compound Greek word: out and to wipe. Metaphorically, this word carries the ideas of removal, to wipe away, wipe off, erase, obliterate. Acts 3:19 uses this word for our sins.

"Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord..." (Acts 3:19).

"...having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross" [obliterating a written record] (Colossians 2:14).

"...for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And

God will wipe away every tear from their eyes" (Revelation 7:17).

"And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away" (Revelation 21:4).

John refers to the Book of Life six times in Revelation (3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27).

Does the idea of blotting out a name from the Book of Life imply loss of salvation? There is the Book of Life and then there is the Lamb's Book of Life. These are different books. The Book of Life is the book of physical life. The Lamb's Book of Life is the book of eternal life. When we are born the first time, God places our names in the Book of Life. When we are born the second time, God places us in the book of eternal life, a register and roll of all who shall inherit eternal life. When we die, God blots us out of the Book of Life. God never blots our names out of the Lamb's Book of life.

"Then Moses returned to the Lord and said, 'Oh, these people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold!' 'Yet now, if You will forgive their sin – but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written'" (Exodus 32: 31-32).

Moses asks God to kill him. He asks God to take him out of the book of physical life. Jesus will physically blot out the life of those who do not gain victory in their spiritual lives. This letter is a challenge to the church of Sardis. The context deals with an active church with many ministries but also a church that is devoid of spiritual fruit. Therefore, Jesus will blot this church out of existence if she does not repent. This passage in context does not deal with salvation but with a church out of phase with God.

The implication that we can lose our salvation means works justify us. This falls short of salvation by faith alone, by grace alone. Salvation is free, a gift of God based on the death of Christ for our sins (Ephesians 2:8-9).

but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels

Jesus will confess these names before the Father and His angels. He will do this as the one who paid for their sins. "Confess" means to acknowledge. When we stand before God, Jesus will acknowledge that we served Him faithfully and will publicly recognize that faithfulness to the Father.

Principle

If we did not become Christians by good works, we cannot become non-Christians again by bad works.

Application

What does this passage mean by the idea that Jesus will "never" blot out his name from the Book of Life? It obviously does not mean he can ever lose his salvation for John clarifies that in other passages (John 5:24; 6:35-37, 39; 10:28-29; Romans 8:38-39).

If we did not become Christians by good works, then we cannot become non-Christians by bad works. God bases our salvation on the finished work of Christ, not on our works. A person can never have the security of eternal life by what he does; he can only have eternal security based on what Christ did.

Revelation 3:6

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches"

He who has an ear

Jesus again appeals to those with positive volition to Himself and to His message.

let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches

The Holy Spirit said something powerful to the church at Sardis. It is a penetrating message for churches of our generation that emphasize activity over integrity, the end-result over fellowship with the Lord. There is nothing wrong with being results-oriented or activity-oriented. It is a matter of what is priority.

The phrase "let him hear" is a decisive and imperative command. Jesus wants the churches' attention about this matter.

Principle

Churches must operate with integrity above all.

Application

Many churches of our day accommodate the culture about them. They do not want to appear different from the world. They fear someone may charge them with being a speckled bird. They do not want to be different. They water their message down to something anemic and ineffective in order to be acceptable to a pagan society.

Jesus' calls these churches to "repent."

Revelation 3:7

"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, 'These things says He who is holy, He who is true, He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens'"

The letter to the church at Philadelphia is the sixth of the seven letters to the churches of Asia Minor [western Turkey today].

And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write

Jesus addresses the next letter to the church at the city of Philadelphia. Philadelphia was located 28 miles southeast of the city of Sardis (modern Alashehir, Turkey). Philadelphia was notable for agricultural products. Earthquakes destroyed the city several times. The most recent earthquake to the writing of Revelation was in AD 37. Extensive damage occurred to the city in AD 17 (Tacitus Annals 2.47.3-4). It is interesting that Jesus promises to this church that they will be a "pillar in the temple of God."

The city named itself after Attalus Philadelphus, king of Pergamum, who built the city [about 159-138 BC, the youngest of the seven cities]. The city had a significant Jewish population.

Many trade guilds abounded in this city as in Thyatira. The city was known especially for their wool and leather workers.

"These things says He who is holy, He who is true, He who has the key of David

Jesus presents His unique authority to each of the seven churches. To the church of Philadelphia,

Jesus describes Himself as someone who is holy and true and holds sovereign authority over the church. This speaks of the character of the one speaking to the church. His character gives Him authority to deal with the issues of the church.

As someone who is "holy," Jesus has the right to judge the church at Philadelphia. The word "holy" carries the idea in the Bible of someone separate and distinct (Isaiah 6:3; 40:25; 65:16; Habakkuk 3:3). Jesus is the Unique One. No one is like Him. There is no flaw in Him.

Jesus as the "true" one is the one who corresponds to reality. He is the only one true to reality. He is the Genuine One in contrast to liars. He is true to truth. He guards His church against false doctrine. We can count on Him to be true to His Word. He is truth itself (John 14:6).

The phrase "key of David" may come from Isaiah 22:22 where God gave Eliakim the key to the house of David. Before Eliakim received this key, an incident occurred that gave Eliakim the rights to the "key of David." King Hezekiah caught Shebna [the former key holder] in a fraud. God sent him in exile to Babylon. God replaced him with Eliakim, giving him the "key of David." This gave him access to all of David's riches. Jesus, as the heir of the Davidic Covenant, will inherit the millennial kingdom. This is His political right. He will administer His church as He sees fit.

No one can oppose the will of Jesus. He has authority over the church. No one can contravene His will.

He who opens and no one shuts

By His sovereign, political authority, Jesus opens opportunities for the church. He sovereignly acts on behalf of the local church. In places of opportunity that would otherwise be closed, Jesus makes them possible.

and shuts and no one opens

The word "shuts" means shut, lock, bar. Jesus bars certain church situations in His providence from happening. Jesus closes doors of churches when He pleases to do so. When churches become obstinate to His will, He closes their doors. He works to will and do of His own pleasure (Philippians 2:13).

We have a shut door in Acts 16:6,7 and an open door in 1 Corinthians 16:9.

Principle

Jesus sovereignly gives churches opportunities to minister.

Application

If Jesus opens a door for us to minister and we refuse, that is a lost opportunity. We should walk through any door that the Lord opens.

"Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles" (Acts 14:27).

"...meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak. Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one" (Colossians 4:3-6).

"For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries" (1 Corinthians 16:9).

"Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord..." (2 Corinthians 2:12).

Revelation 3:8

"I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name"

Philadelphia is the second church that Jesus does not censure [Smyrna is the other church]. He does not rebuke this church in any way.

I know your works.

Nothing escapes the notice of the Lord Jesus. Nothing that goes on in any churches has ever

passed His attention. Jesus knows. There is nothing that He does not know.

Jesus knows their "works." He knows how they produce.

See, I have set before you an open door

Jesus provides favorable conditions for serving him. In the face of adversaries, He gives opportunities to serve Him.

The words "have set" literally mean give. Open doors are something that Jesus gives out of His grace. We do not earn or deserve the right to serve Him. Our opportunities for service are unadulterated gifts of grace from the Lord Jesus.

The word "open" is a verb and means a door that Jesus opened in the past with the result that the door still stands open (perfect tense). God opens doors of positive volition as He did for the city of Nineveh where an entire city came to God [Jonah]. He also keeps these doors open.

and no one can shut it

No force, whether man or Satan, can shut a door that Jesus opens. The gates of hell cannot prevail against God's church (Matthew 16:18). No one can witness apart from God opening the door.

for you have a little strength

Even though their strength is not proportionate to the wide door Jesus gave them, yet they are true to His name. The church at Philadelphia did not depend on human ingenuity or human power.

have kept My word

The church at Philadelphia stayed faithful to Christ in the face of opposition. They never denied the name of Christ. They were true to truth by being faithful to the Word of God. The word "kept" means guard. They stood on guard for the Word of God. They were true to Scripture.

and have not denied My name

This church witnessed in the face of opposition. They maintained the integrity of what they believed although they faced great pressure to compromise.

Principle

Every open door of service is a gift from God.

Application

If Jesus were to appraise you and your church, how would He view you? Would He view your situation as those who seize opportunities to win others to Christ? Would He see you as true to truth in the face of opposition?

Jesus opens doors of opportunity because of prayer (Colossians 4:3). Do you pray for opportunities?

God is responsible to open doors of opportunity if people open their hearts to Him. When God opens these doors, no opposition will stop our witness.

Although you may not have much strength (you may be a small church numerically), God will use you.

Revelation 3:9

"Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie – indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you"

Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan

The enemies of the church at Philadelphia are those of the "synagogue of Satan." Evidently, they were Jews or at least legalists, who dogged those who preached grace in the first century. Religion is always an arch-enemy of the truth.

Synagogues were not for pagans; they were for lost, religious Jews.

who say they are Jews and are not, but lie –

These Jews were physical descendants of Abraham, but not his spiritual descendants. They never knew his faith. It is a lie to claim that a person can know God without personal faith in Jesus.

indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet

The word "worship" means to make obeisance, do reverence to. "Worship" comes from two words: towards and to kiss. The idea is to give respect by prostrating oneself before a person and kissing his feet. People can give respect through their attitude. Showing respect may even imply

supplication. One day the enemies of the church will acknowledge with respect that the church was right. These religionists will admit that they were wrong. They will see how God opens and shuts doors through the church.

and to know that I have loved you

The enemies of the church at Philadelphia will know that God intervened by seeing His love for the church.

Principle

Religion is Satan's ace playing card.

Application

Some folks are so naive that they believe anything that comes from religion. Little do they realize that most religion is from Satan. Satan has churches as well as Jesus Christ.

"For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works" (2 Corinthians 11:13).

Revelation 3:10

"Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth"

Jesus now turns to a promise for those who persevere under trial.

Because you have kept My command to persevere

We can translate the phrase above by "the word of My patient perseverance." This would make this phrase refer to New Testament teaching, telling us to endure a contrary world like Christ persevered when forced with contrary people (2 Thessalonians 3:5; Hebrews 12:3). The Philadelphia church was faithful to the Word when they faced trial. They kept the Word of perseverance exemplified by Jesus' perseverance.

This perseverance amid trials served Jesus. They did not fall to the seduction of immoral pagan worship.

The word "persevere" means to endure under. The church at Philadelphia, like their Lord, hung in there. They kept Christ's command to stay under pressure. They did not cave in to the temptations and pressures around them. This condition makes the promise of this verse valid. They were people of brave perseverance, They had the ability to remain true to the Word under oppressive pressure. That perseverance came from the Word. These are people that clung faithfully to the Word that deals with Christ (1 Corinthians 1:23). They never denied His name.

I also will keep you from the hour of trial

The "hour of trial" is the trial of tribulation (chapters 6-19). There is one word in the Greek for the English words "keep" and "from." It is a compound word composed of both terms: keep and out of. The word "from" [literally, out of] indicates that this church will not even enter the tribulation period. This is a guarding from rather than a guarding through. Those in the tribulation will clearly go through this time of trouble (7:4). By inference, God must rapture this church before the hour of trial. The point of the tribulation is to get the attention of Israel that Jesus is the Messiah.

God not only keeps this church from trial but from a worldwide "hour of trial." Not only does He deliver us from trial, but He delivers us from a specific time of trial. We call this the Tribulation period. This is a time of unprecedented worldwide trial in the world (Daniel 12:1; Jeremiah 30:7; Matthew 24:21; 1 Thessalonians 1:9,10; 5:9,10). Jesus promises to save this church from this time of trouble.

which shall come upon the whole world

The words "shall come" signify both intention and necessity and therefore, the certainty of what is to take place. This is a word of purpose, certainty, compulsion or necessity. The Greek word gives the idea of an event occurring at a point of time in the future, subsequently to another event and closely related to it. We can translate the word to be about to, to be inevitable, with respect to future developments - must be, has to be. God is speaking of something inevitable in the future.

God is about to do something. God is forming a design for the world.

Note that the words "whole world" indicate the scope of this tribulation. It is a worldwide tribulation.

to test those who dwell on the earth

There is a coming time of war, inflation, famine and plague. Jesus will express His righteous indignation. Fortunately, the rapture of the institutional church will precede these events.

Principle

Christians will not go through the tribulation.

Application

When a football coach tells the quarterback that he is going to take him from the game that is not the same thing than telling him he is going to keep him from the game. Being kept from the tribulation is the idea conveyed in this passage. The church will never enter the tribulation. We will be kept from this period of unprecedented apostasy and the greatest period of horror the world has ever known.

The presence of the Holy Spirit will be removed from the earth during the tribulation (2 Thessalonians 2:1-12). He is the one restraining the world from being worse than it is. Once the Father removes Him, then all evil will break loose. Ecumenical religion will come to the fore. The world will destroy itself through religion in seven years. Religion has a tendency to destroy human freedoms. Religion is also the root of evil in the world today.

Revelation 3:11

"Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown"

Behold, I am coming quickly!

When Jesus says He is coming quickly, does this mean that He must come shortly within the lifetime of the Philadelphia church? John wrote the book of Revelation 2,000 years ago. How can 2,000 years be "quickly?" In context, He is speaking of the tribulation. He will come quickly in relation to the seven-year tribulation.

The word "quickly" means swift, speedy. When He comes, the event will unfold rapidly. It will happen with one fell swoop. His coming will take place in a short time. It will be sudden and unexpected, but will not inevitably soon. When Jesus comes, He will come suddenly.

The coming of Christ is an incentive for perseverance under pressure. The constant expectation of the imminent coming of Christ keeps us on the tiptoe of expectancy. He will not announce His coming. It will come when we least expect it.

Hold fast what you have

Christ calls the church to continue to persevere. Because the coming of Christ is imminent, He charges us to "hold fast." This is a warning against caving in to pressures that violate integrity. Jesus says in effect, "Hang in there with Me. Don't cave in toward the end of the race. We will do this together" (Hebrews 12:1,2).

that no one may take your crown

When Jesus comes, He will dispense rewards. He will examine the quality of our lives and reward us accordingly. It is possible to lose our crown. If we do lose our crown, Jesus will withhold from us a certain kind of honor in heaven.

"And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work" (Revelation 22:12).

Principle

We need to keep an eternal perspective when times get difficult.

Application

As times get difficult, it becomes more arduous to serve Christ faithfully. Jesus will not announce His coming. It will be unexpected and sudden. As hostility to Christianity increases, it will be more forbidding to take a stand for Jesus. We will have to choose between our business and Jesus. The pressures of society will force us to choose between status and Scripture. We will have to choose between our possessions and fidelity to Christ.

We will have to "hold on" to our crown. Our crown is not our salvation; it is our reward for faithfully serving Him.

"According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire" (1 Corinthians 3:10).

Revelation 3:12

"He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. And I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name"

He who overcomes

Every Christian is an overcomer because of Christ and for no other reason. The Greek indicates that this person constantly overcomes.

I will make him a pillar

A "pillar" is a column supporting the weight of a building. Metaphorically, the Bible uses this term for the church (1 Timothy 3:15,16) for a permanent position in the eternal temple. Jesus will make the overcomer to bear the weight of that temple. Throughout eternity, this believer will be a monumental pillar in the eternal temple.

A pillar is a picture of strength. Philadelphia was in an earthquake zone. Its citizens feared earthquakes. Those who live in earthquake zones experience phenomenal insecurity and instability. Jesus offers hope to those who operate in

insecurity and instability. When people sojourn to ancient ruins, they note that often all that remains are the pillars. Once a person accepts Christ as his Savior, Jesus will make him a pillar. That pillar will never crumble. He will never lose his salvation. God's plan is greater than any sin we might commit.

in the temple of My God

The New Testament uses the word "temple" for the inner part of the temple in Jerusalem (Matthew 23:35) called the "sanctuary." This was the shrine. There were many synagogues but only one temple. The temple was the place of God's presence.

and he shall go out no more

People of Asia Minor fled their cities and buildings when earthquakes occurred. Jesus promises they will flee no more. Once a builder puts the column in place, it does not move from that building. So God will not move the Christian from His eternal temple. This is a picture of permanence and eternal security. We will never get out of God's plan of salvation.

And I will write on him the name of My God

Jesus writes three names on the overcomer. The first name is the name of "My God." On this pillar, God will write His very own name. The believer persevered for this name. He went through trial for that name so God will write His own name on this pillar.

and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God.

The second name that Jesus writes on the overcomer is "the name of the city of My God." Chapters 21 and 22 give a resplendent, striking description of the "New Jerusalem." This is the place of wonderful fellowship with God. To people living in an earthquake zone, this is a picture of stability as over against decay. Christians will eternally fellowship with God.

And I will write on him My new name

The third name Jesus writes on the overcomer is "My new name." The conquering Christian's pillar will have the name of God, the city of God, the

New Jerusalem and Jesus' "new name." A name symbolizes character. No one knows that name yet but Revelation 19:12 says that when Jesus appears, He will come with that new name.

"His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself" (Revelation 19:12).

Before Jesus set foot on earth, an angel announced to Joseph that Mary would bear a son and that he should call this new baby 'Jesus' because "He will save His people from their sins." Jesus means "Jehovah saves." Now that Jesus has finished that work, He will have a new name. He will have a new role with a new name.

Principle

The Christian is eternally secure once he or she receives Jesus' death as the only commodity that satisfies a holy God.

Application

Jesus will remove a "lampstand" [church] from its place of effectiveness but never a "pillar." The church is the pillar and ground of truth.

"...but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness:

God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory" (1 Timothy 3:15).

The church is the pillar of Christ's new name, God's name and the name of the New Jerusalem. This is a pillar of permanence--the permanence of eternal life.

The church with "little strength" is now a pillar of strength. The church possesses honor forever in the very presence of God. Every Christian who accepts the finished work on the cross for suffering for sin, has eternal life, not temporal life.

Revelation 3:13

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches"

Again, Jesus challenges the church at Philadelphia with the same words given to the previous churches--a challenge to positive volition. This is a demand for our attention.

Principle

We should stay focused on what Jesus is saying to us.

Application

We have all heard the phrase, "Stop, look and listen." We need to do this spiritually. We need to tune our spiritual ears to the message of Jesus.

If we are not vigilant, we will lose everything but our salvation. We work for reward, not salvation. We can lose everything including our lives except our salvation. If we are not alert, we can lose our life due to sin (1 Corinthians 11:30).

If we obtained salvation by good works, we would lose that as well. However, we do not obtain salvation by good works, but by the work of Christ on the cross. Salvation is a gift from God (Ephesians 2:8,9). If God gave us salvation as a gift and then took it back, He would not be on the level with us. Salvation rests on the character of God.

We can lose our crown but we can never lose our salvation. We work for our crown but we do not work for our salvation.

"Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward" (2 John 8).

Revelation 3:14

"And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God'" (Revelation 3:14).

And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write

Laodicea was an important city of Phrygia in Asia Minor on the Lycus River strategically situated where three highways intersect. A large colony of Jews resided there. Christianity took footing there (Colossians 2:1; 4:13,15f). Laodicea was the most prosperous, commercial city of the seven. It was situated on a plateau in the fertile southern Lycus

River valley. It was an important banking center. The city also produced glossy black wool. It was a medical center especially famed for ophthalmology. Today, doctors in the military of the United States wear the symbol of a staff with two serpents wrapped around it. This is the symbol of Aesculapius, a medical cult in Laodicea.

Antiochus II named Laodicea after his wife Laodice in the third century BC. Nero supplied aid after a calamitous earthquake in AD 60 (Tacitus, Ann. 14.27).

Laodicea did not have a good supply of water in its own region so it caught its water through an aqueduct from a spring four miles to the north. These waters came from the waters of Hierapolis [the famous hot springs] and probably arrived lukewarm.

The gospel came to Laodicea probably while Paul was in Ephesus (Acts 19:10). Although Paul mentions the church (Colossians 4:12-16), he may have never visited the city personally. The cities of Colossi and Hierapolis (Colossians 2:1; 4:13-16) were in the Lycus Valley as well. Epaphras, a companion of Paul, worked in these three cities.

'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God'

Jesus calls Himself by three descriptions. First, He refers to Himself as "the Amen." "Amen" means so be it, it is true. God's promises find their fulfillment in Christ (2 Corinthians 1:20). He is the culmination of all history. Jesus is true to His Word. He is unchangeable in His promises. He is true to His Word.

"So that he who blesses himself in the earth Shall bless himself in the God of truth; And he who swears in the earth Shall swear by the God of truth; Because the former troubles are forgotten, And because they are hidden from My eyes" (Isaiah 65:16).

Jesus calls Himself "the Amen" to authenticate His message to this church. His message was authoritative. Whenever Jesus uses the term "Amen," it always indicates some significant truth. Jesus is the object of faith and the foundation for all truth. We can trust Him because He keeps His promises.

Secondly, Jesus calls Himself "the Faithful and True Witness." Jesus' testimony about revelation was true to truth. We can fully and confidently believe Him. There is nothing false or pretentious about Him. God is unchangeable in the truth of His revelations. Whatever He says in this message, the Laodiceans can count on His attestations. Jesus not only tells the truth but He tells all the truth -- He is "faithful" to the truth. He does not hide behind "partial truths." Jesus faithfully reveals what God is like. God is invisible so to understand Him we must receive faithful revelation of Him.

Thirdly, Jesus calls Himself "the Beginning of the creation of God." Does this mean that Jesus was created? The word "creation" means a founding, foundation, ordained. Jesus is origin of all history. History begins and ends with Him. He is the first cause, the Creator and Sustainer of creation. The word "Beginning" is the word first. Jesus is first in priority (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16-17; Revelation 1:8; 21:6). Jesus is the source of all creation; He is the Creator of time and space. Jesus is not here the beginning of natural creation but the beginning of supernatural creation (John 1:3; Colossians 1:15-18; Hebrews 1:2).

Again, Jesus' threefold affirmation about Himself to the Laodiceans focuses on His Person. These attestations about Himself give gravity to His statements to follow.

Principle

Materialism spawns a lukewarm spirituality but Christ-centeredness puts us at the core of Christianity.

Application

The wealth of the church in Laodicea produced a self-satisfied, lukewarm attitude toward Jesus. The "hot" springs of Hierapolis were famous for their medicinal properties, and the "cold" waters of Colossi were prized for their purity. The tepid waters of Laodicea, however, were both abundant and bad. Though the church thinks itself rich and lacking nothing, it is actually "wretched, pitiable, poor, blind and naked" (v. 17).

North American culture is consumed by consumerism. Materialism dominates the core values of these societies. Materialism gives an illusion of self-sufficiency, of autonomy from God. This weakens individual Christian living at its

core. Lukewarmness vetoes deep fellowship with the Lord.

God's answer to materialism is to place Christ at the center of our lives. He will satisfy our core and true need. He does not promise us an easy life but a fulfilling life.

Revelation 3:15

"I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot"

I know your works

Jesus gives no commendation to the church at Laodicea.

Jesus is attentive to everything that goes on in every church. He discerns your church as well. He knows whether your church is good, bad or indifferent.

that you are neither cold nor hot

The word "cold" metaphorically means without enthusiasm. This church did not have an absolute cold chill on its spirituality. It was not so frigid that we could characterize their walk with God as in a deep freeze. They were neutral in their walk. Their Christianity was not real. Their hearts were without heart.

Neither was the church at Laodicea "hot." The word "hot" means to boil, to be fervent. The idea is boiling hot. Metaphorically, the church was not at the boiling point in their spirituality. Their heart was not favorable to God's plan for their lives.

This rebuke by Jesus had special impact on the church Laodicea because their city water supply started out hot from Hierapolis. But by the time it arrived in Laodicea, it was lukewarm. Like their water supply, they were tepid in their spirituality because they were content with material things. Self-satisfaction leads to spiritual death.

I could wish you were cold or hot

The church at Laodicea was neither cold nor hot; it was lukewarm. As a lukewarm church, their spiritual water was unpalatable and Jesus spits it out. Jesus is not in the casual business.

The word "wish" indicates an unattainable wish and carries the idea of ought. This ought to be done if one had one's wish. Jesus wishes they

would come to grips with where they were spiritually. They diluted themselves into thinking they were right in taking this middle-of-the-road position. Taking no clear position always leads ultimately to spiritual disaster.

Principle

A tepid heart is an indication of spiritual indifference; a boiling heart for God is an indication of spiritual dynamism.

Application

Can Jesus draw the charge of a cold heart against you? Being cold or hot is better than being in-between. If Jesus is real to us, our hearts cannot be anything but boiling hot toward Him. It is impossible to maintain a neutral spirituality. An aggressive enemy is better than treacherous barrenness.

As long as we live an in-between life, we will never live a dynamic Christian life. Apathetic and mediocre spirituality is delusional. Some churches feel that they dare not go to any extreme. They would never be as cold as ice nor as hot as fire. They love being half-hearted. Middle of the road Christianity never accomplishes anything much. Passionate people always outstrip indifferent people. A neutral church is nauseating, as we will see in the next verse.

The dynamic Christian boils. This person walks in the Spirit on a constant basis. A boiling hot believer constantly confesses his sin and keeps short account with God (1 John 1:9).

Revelation 3:16

"So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth"

So then

Jesus draws an implication of tepid Christianity.

because you are lukewarm

The word "lukewarm" means tepid. The tepid church at Laodicea did not furnish any refreshment to the Lord.

and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth

We get our English word "emit" from the Greek word for "vomit." We also get the word "emetic" from this word. An emetic is a mixture that doctors give a person when they swallow poison; it makes them vomit. A tepid church makes Jesus vomit. Jesus rejects this kind of Christianity. There is nothing mediocre about Jesus.

The implication in this statement by Jesus is that we must care about what makes Jesus nauseous.

Principle

Complacent spirituality is repugnant to Jesus.

Application

Jesus rejects tepid Christianity. A lukewarm church makes Jesus sick to His stomach. Jesus wants to get this kind of church out of His system. Complacent Christianity is utterly offensive to Him.

A church with no enthusiasm, no passion, no compassion or urgency offends Jesus. Many churches are thoroughly evangelical but have little passion for evangelism. Tepid Christianity nauseates the Lord Jesus.

Revelation 3:17

"Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' – and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked – ..."

Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' –

The Laodicean church claimed material wealth. The word "wealthy" means opulence. They felt that they did not lack anything. Because of that, they deemed that they needed nothing, as if all there is in life is material wealth. They did not require God in their lives. They did not need Him for they have "everything."

and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked –

The word "wretched" carries the idea of a distressed, miserable and wretched person (Romans 7:24). These people were "distressed" but

they did not know it. Material things can make us depressed if we make them the center of our lives.

The word "miserable" means pitiable (1 Corinthians 15:19). Jesus pitied these people but they did not know it.

The church at Laodicea was wealthy in terms of material wealth but poor in terms of spiritual wealth. The word "poor" describes someone who crouches and cowers, a beggar. This church was spiritually poverty-stricken. They were powerless to enrich their life or that of anyone else. They went begging spiritually. They were unable to make any eternal impact. They were destitute of the wealth that comes from God.

The church at Laodicea was also "blind." They were blind to the reality of a godly life. They were in the dark. Spiritual things were obscure to them. Spiritual values were as clear as mud. They did not have the capacity to comprehend God's plan for their lives (Matthew 15:14).

The last characteristic of the church at Laodicea was that it was "naked." This was a church without spiritual clothes. They thought that they had a complete wardrobe by their material wealth but Jesus saw them as walking around naked. They were not even like the poor who at least had some clothes to cover themselves. This church had nothing to cover themselves spiritually.

Principle

God's estimation of us is often very different from our estimation of ourselves.

Application

We can be in a deplorable spiritual state and not even know it. Our pride can blind us so that we cannot see what we are. Self-conceit brings self-delusion. There is a big difference between how we view ourselves and how Jesus views us. We think that we do not have any needs. But Jesus sees us as totally needy. A materialistic worldview makes us blind to a spiritual worldview. Care of our bodies blinds us to care of our souls.

This condition is a cause for pity. Our souls starve while our bodies are full. We are blind to all this. We can not see our state. We think that we know ourselves. Yet we are naked and lay exposed to embarrassment to Jesus. Riches of the body cannot enrich the soul.

Revelation 3:18

"I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see"

I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich

The word "counsel" means to take counsel together, give advice, deliberate. There is only one market from which you can buy the goods Jesus offers --"from Me." The Laodiceans do not have to run to the malls of wealth in Laodicea to obtain satisfaction.

Jesus wants to do business with the Laodiceans. First, He counsels them "to buy" a certain kind of "gold," a "refined" gold of character that comes from the fires of testing. This is not a monetary transaction but a spiritual transaction, which results in quality of life.

and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed

Secondly, Jesus not only wants the Laodiceans to buy gold but He wants them to purchase "white garments" from Him. If they do this, they will not expose their nakedness to others and they will not be ashamed. Laodiceans were famous for their glossy black goat's wool. Ignominy always comes from sin. We will not disgrace ourselves with our sin if we enter into transaction with the Lord Jesus. The clothes given by Jesus result in a sense of modesty. This will save us a lot of pain from our disgraceful acts, and from exposure while sinning. Jesus saves us from behavior that brings embarrassment. These Christians will not hide their face in shame.

and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see

The third thing that Jesus wants the church to buy is an "eye salve" that allows us to see spiritually. There was a famous medical school at Laodicea. This "eye salve" was a Phrygian powder used by oculists at the temple of Asclepius. They did not need to go to occultists; they only need to go to

Jesus. If we use Jesus' salve, we will acquire true knowledge of our spiritual condition and we will see the claims of Christ to correct that condition. We need to open our eyes to spiritual truth.

Principle

Jesus gives true riches not illusory wealth.

Application

Jesus gives counsel to those who previously rejected His counsel. His counsel to sinful people is that they drop the illusion that wealth satisfies and accept His true wealth. Our sinful condition, no matter how desperate, has a remedy.

There is only one person who has this remedy--the Lord Jesus Himself ["from Me"]. We get His goods by purchasing them from Him. The true gold of character comes from Him. How do we get it from Him? "Without money and without price."

"Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; And you who have no money, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk Without money and without price" (Isaiah 55:1).

Sin is the only commodity that we must part with. When we do this, we make room for true riches. Our eyes will comprehend the eternal and terminal values found only in Jesus' market place.

The church today needs to repent of the mentality of tolerance and compromise. Churches today are neither cold nor hot. We like moderation and comfort. "Don't disturb me. Don't ask me to move out of my comfort zone." We love moderate temperatures. We want to be as comfortable as possible. Comfort drives our values. This is very much like the value "peace at all costs." It is possible to attend churches like this for years and never seriously confront sin. Compromise lies at the core of these churches.

Jesus vomits when He thinks of churches like this. They are repulsive to Him. Though people may love these churches, Jesus rejects them. They are religious country clubs that exist only for the benefit of their members. Smug complacency does more damage than these churches imagine. These churches may please their community, but do they please their Lord? Public approval dictates the values of many churches today. They use public

approval as a standard of how well they are doing as a church.

Jesus' mall has anything that anyone could possibly want. What we need, we can only find in Jesus.

Revelation 3:19

"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent"

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.

Jesus rebukes and chastens us because He loves us. All ["as many as"] Jesus' discipline emanates from love. We should never infer that because we receive discipline from Him that He does not love us. He loves us unconditionally. There are no strings attached to His love. Jesus says, "When I rebuke your tepid hearts, I do it for your good. If I left you on your course of destruction, I would be like the mother who does not keep her child from harm."

The word "rebuke" means to confute, refute. To rebuke someone is more than telling them their faults, it is of convicting them of their sin (John 8:46; 16:8; 1 Corinthians 14:24). Here Jesus rebukes by action rather than by His mouth. He will bring to light and expose the sin of the Laodiceans. He will demonstrate and prove conclusively that they are off base spiritually. People will not argue otherwise, for He will convince them without question. After Jesus cross-examines us with the kind of questions He can ask, no one will challenge Him. We will stand patently guilty. He will bring convincing proof of this.

"Chasten" means primarily to train children. We train children by our words or corporal punishment. This is their first and basic form of education. God trains His children as well (Hebrews 12:6, 7, 10). A basic idea behind "chastening" is correction, or guidance. This instruction has to do with the purpose of forming proper habits of behavior (Acts 7:22). Ephesians 6:4 uses this "chasten" for training children.

Therefore be zealous and repent

Jesus challenges the Laodicean church to be "zealous." This word means to be eager, earnest. Jesus wants them to be deeply committed to His

values with the accompanying desire to do it. He wants them to set their heart on His plan for them.

If we do not respond to Jesus' discipline in our lives, then we will head into spiritual ruin. We need to take His rebuke and chastening as indications of His love. Better are the wounds of a friend than the flattery of an enemy.

The word "repent" means literally to perceive afterwards. This implies a change which comes after thinking about something. This is the basis of moral and spiritual choice of values. Repentance is a complete change of view and way of life as a result of looking at what Jesus values. The English conveys the idea of sorrow or contrition but the Greek does not necessarily portray this idea. The Greek idea focuses more on total change in thought and behavior based on a fundamental change in terminal values, the values of God (Luke 3:8, Hebrews 6.1, and Acts 26.20). The Greek indicates that we are to make a decision decisively. "Do not delay. Come to grips with this immediately."

To repent is not to vow that we will never do it again. Neither is it a promise to do better next time. It is not a promise to serve the Lord. It does not mean that we have to crawl our way back to God. Nor is repentance a guilt complex whereby we feel bad about sins. All these things are legalistic ways of trying to get God's approval. They are attempts at paying for our sin by self rather than trusting what God did for our sins. We have God's approval because of what Jesus did on the cross.

Principle

God always disciplines the church because He loves the church.

Application

The modern church is typically unconscious of its spiritual needs. It deals more in buildings and programs than in the reality of what Jesus offers. Jesus penetrates this fallacy by rebuking and even chastening the church for this.

"You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: 'My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, Nor

be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the Lord loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.' If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it" (Hebrews 12:4-11).

Jesus in context talks about disciplining churches that step out of fellowship. Repentance is the answer to a lukewarm attitude toward Christ. The purpose of all discipline is to bring the church or believer back into fellowship with the Lord Jesus.

When a Christian turns back to fellowship with the Lord Jesus, God immediately turns suffering into blessing. He takes the pain that we suffer for our sin and produces blessing in our lives. If we fail to restore fellowship with the Lord, then we carry misery with us. The most obnoxious believers in the world are those who know Christ but are out of fellowship with Him. Many of them wonder why God allows certain things to happen to them. They are oblivious to God's purposes in suffering. When Christians stay out of fellowship for a long period, they develop self-inflicted grief. When the combination of God's discipline and self-inflicted misery comes together, then you have a very wretched person. Carnal Christians are very miserable people. The issue here is not the people who stay out of fellowship for a short while, but those who go into prolonged alienation from God.

The Christian can do nothing to destroy God's love for them. No matter how carnal they may become, no matter how long they remain carnal, God still loves them. Although God may inflict misery

upon us and we may inflict misery upon ourselves, we need to remember that we are not persona non grata with God. He loves us through it all.

Above all, we need to change our mind about our most basic value of all -- the value of staying in fellowship with Jesus personally.

Revelation 3:20

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me"

Behold, I stand at the door and knock

Jesus presents Himself as standing outside a house and knocking on the door. When Jesus approaches this house, He finds the door shut. He takes the initiative to break down the barrier to fellowship. His "knock" is His initiative to break that barrier.

If anyone hears My voice and opens the door

Jesus invites us into fellowship with Him not only with His hand by knocking but with His voice. Jesus appeals to those inside the house by His knock. It is their responsibility to open the door. Jesus cannot fellowship with those inside the house unless they invite Him in.

The "if" in the Greek indicates that Jesus is waiting for our decision. He will not compel fellowship by force. He will not break down the door of your heart to have fellowship with you.

I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me

Jesus argues in the previous verse that He disciplines the Laodicean Christians because He loves them. He speaks to Christians who grew lukewarm in their ardor for fellowship with Him. Now He states that He wants fellowship with them.

The word "dine" means to eat the chief meal of the day. Here Jesus speaks of spiritual dining (1 Corinthians 11:25). Jesus appeals here to Christians, not non-Christians. He appeals to them for intimate, prolonged fellowship. He wants to get personal with us. The Creator and Sustainer of the Universe wants fellowship with each and every Christian especially, those who are

lukewarm to Him. Jesus asks carnal Christians for their fellowship.

Principle

Jesus will not force fellowship upon us.

Application

If we want fellowship with the Lord Jesus, we must invite Him into our lives. We invite Him to become the center of our worship. He will not force a relationship upon us. He will not violate our will.

Is Jesus outside the door of your church? Your church is His very own church, yet He stands outside waiting to come in.

Revelation 3:21

"To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne"

To him who overcomes

The person who "overcomes" here is the spiritual Christian.

I will grant to sit with Me on My throne

A "throne" is a seat of authority. God has a "throne" because He is ultimate authority (Hebrews 4:16). God's grace proceeds from that throne. He has the right to give you grace. It is a right that comes from Himself, His person. God is Sovereign and Ruler of the universe.

Jesus delegates some of His authority to Christians. God gave David the "authority to rule" (Luke 1:32) and gave Jesus the "throne of David." Jesus grants spiritual victors the right to rule with Him in his millennial kingdom. These Christians will share some of the prerogatives of Jesus' royalty.

As I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne

Jesus fastens the victory of the spiritual Christian with His own victory on the cross. Jesus met with temptation and came out the victor. Because He did this, in His humanity, the Father gave Him authority to rule in the Father's Kingdom. There is a parallel to Christ's victory and our victory.

There are two thrones in this verse: "My throne" and "His throne." There is the throne of Jesus and then there is the throne of the Father. The throne of the Father is His sovereign rule over the universe. There is nothing that is not under His control in the universe. Jesus sat down at the "right hand of the Majesty on high" with His Father, at His Father's right hand (Hebrews 1:3).

Principle

Spiritual Christians will rule with Christ in the millennial kingdom.

Application

Never to this day has Jesus sat upon His throne in the millennial kingdom. That is in the future (Matthew 25:31). One day the victorious Christian will rule with Christ in His Kingdom.

"If we endure, We shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself" (2 Timothy 2:12-13).

Revelation 3:22

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches"

He who has an ear

Jesus closes this epistle with His redundant appeal to the churches. Seven times to seven churches He makes the same appeal. Never again in the book of Revelation does He make this application. Those churches that are receptive and responsive to Jesus' challenge, He will do certain things for these churches.

let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches

We can expect Jesus to bless us just as He has all the churches of history if we respond to His desire for fellowship. It is one thing to listen to Jesus and it is another thing to respond to what He says.

Note that this is not what the apostle John says to the churches but what the "Spirit" says to the churches.

Principle

We not only need to listen to what the Spirit says, but we must respond to what the Spirit says to our hearts.

Application

It is not enough to listen to Jesus, we must hear and apply this truth to experience it personally. In other words, we need to understand the principle and apply the principle to our experience.

Since these commands come from Jesus and were personally communicated through the Holy Spirit, we should take special note of all seven messages to these churches. Are you in danger of losing your "first love" (2:10), caving into pressure (2:10), defecting doctrinally (2:14-15), developing moral problems (2:20), becoming temporally dead in a spiritual sense (3:1-2), in danger of losing your crown (3:11) or growing cold spiritually (3:15-16)?

"For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?" (1 Peter 4:17).

Revelation 4:1

"After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, 'Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this'"

Chapters 4 and 5 give a prologue perspective of the raptured church on the events of chapters 6 and following [the tribulation, coming of Christ to set up His Kingdom and the eternal state].

After these things I looked

For two chapters Jesus spoke to the churches, now John, the human author of the book of Revelation, is the speaker.

The phrase "after these things" indicates a change in succession of events. We now move to the category of future things. Two times in this verse, John uses the words "after this." After Revelation deals with church issues, it now deals with the future. Revelation does not mention the church again until the final chapter (22:16).

Two times in this verse, John uses the words "after these things." After Revelation deals with church issues, it deals with the future mainly regarding the nation of Israel. Revelation does not mention the church again until the final chapter (22:16).

and behold

"Behold" is a term of vivid exclamation. This vision of a heavenly throne surprises John and maybe even shocks him.

a door standing open in heaven.

John sees a vision "of a door standing open in heaven" (chapters 4-5). First Jesus shows to John the vision of the seven churches, then He shows him a vision of a throne room in heaven. This vision introduces a series of three sevens: seals (4:1-5:14), trumpets (8:1-5) and bowls (15:1-8). This is the longest of the visions of Revelation.

And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, 'Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this'

With the words "Come up here," a voice summons John not only to look into heaven but also to come to heaven itself. This voyage to heaven is via a vision. The remainder of Revelation is the perspective of John.

Now the book of Revelation shifts to dealing with the future -- "things which must take place after this." Remember that the apostle John gave the structure for Revelation in 1:19.

"Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this" (Revelation 1:19).

The things "which you have seen" were the past revelation of the person of Christ in chapter one. The things "which are" deals with the church, things present. The things "which will take place after this" are the things of the future [eschatology].

Chapter 4 is a transition verse from "things which are" to "the things which will take place after this." Note that John uses the same terminology for future things in 1:19 and in this verse.

The structure of Revelation is crucial to understanding eschatology [future things]. First,

John presents the church in heaven (4-5) then the tribulation (6-18), the Second Coming (19), the Millennium (20), and finally the eternal state (21-22). The climax of these events is the coming of Christ in chapter 19 for the centrality of Christ is the central idea of Revelation.

The seven seals of chapter 6 begins the chronological progress of the Great Tribulation culminating in the Second Coming. The seven trumpets follow the seventh seal and the seven bowls of the wrath of God follow the seventh trumpet. God designed the tribulation to bring Israel to her knees in order to prepare her for embracing Christ when He comes. When the nation of Israel receives Jesus as the Messiah, then Jesus will usher her into the Millennium. After the Millennium, Jesus will bring all His people into the eternal state.

The voice in heaven says that the things that will happen "must" take place. God's sovereignty determines these events. No person or thing will deter God's plans for creation.

The Second Coming is not the Rapture. The Rapture occurs at the beginning of the tribulation and the Second Coming comes at the end of the tribulation.

Principle

Nothing will deter God's plan for creation.

Application

The events of time are not capricious; these events fall within the sovereignty of an eternal God. No transaction on earth takes place without God's concurrence.

God reveals only what falls within the tolerance of what we can receive. He reveals what we need to know to orient to His program for time.

Revelation 4:2-3

"Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne. And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald"

Immediately I was in the Spirit

God took John to heaven in his "spirit" but his body remained in Patmos. This was a similar event to 1:10 when he was in the spirit on the Lord's day, that is, he received a special revelation from God.

With chapter 4, a second scene begins with a new vision of the sovereignty of God. The first vision was of Christ walking in the middle of the seven golden candlesticks. In this vision in chapter 4, God conveyed John by his spirit into heaven. His body remained on earth.

and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne

While in heaven, John saw a throne of God there. A throne room introduces all three sets of seven events: the seals, trumpets and bowls (4:1-5:14; 8:1-5; 15:1-8). These throne rooms imply the sovereignty of God. All the events to come in the book are at the sanction of the Father. All creation is under His jurisdiction.

And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance

A "jasper" stone is clear, not opaque. The "sardius" stone was ruby in color. The One sitting on the throne has the appearance of jasper and sardius stones in color. Jasper is a clear stone. The sardius stone is a blood-red stone. God's throne was striking in its beauty and translucence, showing His transcendence. God lives in undiminished light.

and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald

Not only did this throne have great color but it had the appearance of a rainbow like a translucent green emerald surrounding it. The "rainbow" around the throne is a reminder of the seal of a covenant by God not to destroy the world by water again. He will never go back on His promise.

A heavenly throne room introduces each of the three sevens of seals, trumpets and bowls (4:1-5:14; 8:1-5; 15:1-8). This throne room event is the most extensive of the three scenes. A possible reason God conveyed John to this throne room was to remind him that He is in charge of the events of the Tribulation and of history.

God is at once in control of both the history and the purpose of creation. He sits in the court of heaven and rules the universe. God always backs His statements with His absolute character.

Principle

God does not relinquish His responsibility to us as individuals.

Application

No matter what events come into our lives, God is in control. Every event we read about in the newspaper or see on television, God processes them.

Nothing gets by the sovereign control of God. Since God controls the universe, His sovereignty is absolute and cannot be altered or changed. He is immutable. No person or thing frustrates His plans.

God never relinquishes His responsibility for the universe nor does He relinquish His responsibility to you.

Revelation 4:4-8

"Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads. And from the throne proceeded lightning, thundering, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back. The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle. The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying:

'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!'"

Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting,

Around the main throne were 24 lesser thrones on which 24 elders sat.

clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads

The 24 elders dressed in white wore crowns of gold. These elders probably received their glorified bodies and a crown of rewards for service. The twenty-four elders are in close proximity to God.

And from the throne proceeded lightning, thundering, and voices.

John sees displays of lightning and thunder and voices. Each time lightning and thundering occur in Revelation, God exercises His judgment on earth. These are manifestations of God's judgment. This may refer to the coming tribulation.

Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God

In this vision, John sees seven lamps burning. These seven burning lamps may be seven manifestations of the Holy Spirit.

Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal.

A "sea of glass" was before the throne of God. John gives no interpretation as to the meaning of this sea. This could be an analogy to the sea of brass in the Tabernacle or the molten sea in the Temple. Both were washstands so that the priests could cleanse themselves before entering the place of worship.

And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back.

These living creatures had eyes all over their bodies. God unceasingly exercises His omnipresence and sovereignty over creation.

The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle.

These four creatures represent dominance and majesty [lion, the king of animals], vigor [calf],

wisdom [man] and speed or sovereignty [eagle]. The emphasis is upon the nature of these creatures. These living creatures may simply represent aspects of God's attributes. Whatever the true interpretation, the idea is that of the majesty of God.

The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within.

Each of the four creations had six wings. These creatures swiftly see God's uniqueness because their bodies were full of eyes.

And they do not rest day or night,

These creatures never stop praising God.

saying: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come

They thrice repeat the word "holy." Note the similarity to Isaiah 6 where two angels repeat three times the word "holy" (Isaiah 6:3). The word "holy" conveys the idea of unique and distinct. There is no one like God. He is stands distinct from His creation in majesty.

God is "Almighty."

This is the first of 14 doxologies in the book of Revelation.

Principle

There comes a point where God turns from grace to judgment.

Application

God turns from the period of grace toward the church to judgment upon Israel in this passage. Throughout the Bible God exercised His grace, but in the Tribulation He turns from His mode of grace to a mode of judgment. God gets the attention of the world by judgment.

However God may manifest Himself, He is unique and distinct from creation. We cannot merge our idea of God with our idea of man or creation. He is transcendent.

Revelation 4:10-11

"...the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne,

saying: 'You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created'"

the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever

"Fall down" means to prostrate oneself before someone to give him homage.

The Greek word for "worship" is the word used most frequently to render the idea of worship in the New Testament and means to make obeisance, do reverence to, to prostrate oneself before someone as an act of reverence. The emphasis here is upon God's creation revealing His attributes as sovereign Creator.

and cast their crowns before the throne

The elders fell before the absolute uniqueness of God. They own everything they were and are to Him as the Cause of the universe.

saying: 'You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created'"

The word "worthy" carries the idea of weight, value, worth. In addition, the word also carries the ideas of befitting, becoming, right on the ground of fitness. God deserves our praise. He carries the highest degree of merit or worth. No one compares to Him. He meets all our expectations.

The elders ascribe three affirmations to God: glory, honor and power. Glory is the manifestation of His essence and actions. Honor is reverence for what we see in God. Power is God's ability to execute His plans.

Note that the elders do not say that they give God glory, honor, and power. The creature cannot give the Creator anything. They do say that God is worthy to receive these things.

The elders give three reasons for their praise. First, God is the Creator and First Cause of everything. God never began; no one created Him. He is the source of everything.

Secondly, God preserves everything -- "by Your will they exist." God sustains everything in the

universe. All science and all creation depend on God upholding the universe He created.

Thirdly, God is the Final Foundation of everything -- "and were created." God created all things at His liking.

The word "created" is the act of founding. The New Testament uses this word always of an act of God (Mark 13:19; Romans 1:25; 1 Corinthians 11:9; \; Colossians 1:16; 1 Timothy 4:3; Revelation 4:11, 10:6). Because God is creator of everything, He is Lord of all. He is sovereign over history.

Persecuted Christians can take consolation in that. Creation existed in God's mind before He created the universe. The elders worship the Creator whose will and purpose brings all things into existence.

Since God is the Creator of the universe, He possesses prerogatives of sovereignty. We need to recognize God's superintendence over the universe and that He is absolutely supreme over the universe.

Principle

God receives all the glory because He does the work.

Application

Your crown represents your accomplishments, achievements and life's work -- all that you did for Jesus. Every Christian should desire a crown so that he can cast it at the feet of Jesus.

Will you have something to throw at Jesus' feet? By throwing your crown at the feet of Jesus, you give Him the glory for using you on earth. It is not for our glory but His glory. Everything we do for Him accumulates for His glory.

Revelation 5:1-7

"And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals. Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?" And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it. So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it. But one of the elders said to me, "Do not

weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals." And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth. Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne"

In both chapters 4 and 5, the scene is in heaven. Chapter 4 is the worship of the Creator. Chapter 5 is the worship of the Lamb who was slain. Chapter 6 the scene turns to happenings on earth.

And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals.

John now sees God sitting on the throne with a scroll with seven seals. A scroll is rolled parchment. God secured this document so that no one can change its contents. As one unrolls the parchment, he comes to successive seals. The seals must be loosed one by one. With the breaking of these seals judgments pour out upon the world.

Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?"

Twenty times the words "loud voice" occurs in Revelation. This "strong angel" wants to get the attention of those who listen.

The key to the entire vision of the seals is who is "worthy" to open them. The issue is the worth of the person. Once someone begins to open the scroll, then the tribulation will begin. Character should be the standard for any leader.

And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it.

No person in heaven or earth was qualified to open the scroll and read it.

So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it.

John felt a sense of hopelessness that no one was able to open the scroll and read it for no one

would know the purpose of creation and why all this suffering would come upon the earth. Somehow, John knew that this scroll contained the coming judgments upon the world (10:7).

This scroll answers the questions of war, and crime and why human beings cannot solve these problems. There are things in our lives that we cannot explain. How can God be perfectly righteous and absolutely omnipotent and allow the atrocities that take place in the world?

But one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals."

One of the elders says that Jesus is qualified to open the seals because He is of the "Lion of the tribe of Judah" (Genesis 49:9), of "the Root of David" (Isaiah 11:1,10) and He "prevailed to open the scroll." These two titles are the credentials of the Messiah to rule on earth. Jesus falls heir to the Davidic Covenant (2 Samuel 7). A lion is the symbol of majesty, power and dominance.

The solution to the problems of this world is found in a person who is both a Lion and a Lamb.

And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain,

Instead of seeing a Lion, John sees a Lamb who had been slain. The Lamb still had the marks of crucifixion. The word "Lamb" occurs 29 times in Revelation referring to Jesus' sacrificial death for our sins (John 1:29). Lions tend to conquer and lambs tend to surrender.

The Lamb refers to Jesus' first coming and the Lion refers to His Second Coming. As a Lion, He will bring the purpose of creation and history to fulfillment.

having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

This Lamb had seven horns and seven eyes. "Horns" symbolize strength and represent authority and power (Daniel 7:24; Revelation 13:1). The "eyes" represent intelligence and may represent seven manifestations of the Holy Spirit (1:4; 4:5).

Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne

Jesus comes and takes the scroll out of the hand of the Father. He will now execute judgment on the world. He has the authority to do so.

Principle

God will restore His will on earth.

Application

Are things happening to you that you cannot explain by even knowing your God and your Bible? The message of Revelation is that God will resolve the mess of creation.

Men without God dream of world peace by men, utopia on earth. People think man will bring the golden age to this planet. It will never happen. In Revelation, man comes to the end of himself so that he can see the only hope is in God. Many men have tried to bring utopia to earth.

Nebuchadnezzar built the great city of Babylon but his empire fell apart. Julius Caesar led the legions of Rome across Europe to bring the peace of Rome [the Pax Romana]. Hitler tried to institute a thousand-year Reich but it ended in disaster. We weep just like John if we depend on men. No leader in the world has a clue as to how to solve the great problems of earth.

God's solution to the problems of earth revolves around a Lion who submits to death. C. S. Lewis wrote his Narnia Chronicles around this idea. Redemption of creation takes place by Jesus' death for man. Creation revolves around Him. The Lamb of God extends his grace to all who accept it. We need to beware because this Lamb is also a Lion who will judge this earth. The Lion speaks of His Second Coming.

"I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed" (Daniel 7:13-14).

Revelation 5:8-10

"Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth"

Three groups worship from verse 8 to the end of the chapter. First the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders worship in verses 8-10 and then all creation worships in verses 11 to 14.

Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

Each participant had a musical instrument for worship--a harp. Evidently, musicians will make it to heaven!! This speaks of praise.

The gold bowls stored the intercessory prayers of the saints. This shows something of the worth of prayer. Incense burned in the Old Testament temple and gave off a pleasing odor ascending to God. Incense portrays Christ. He is our authority to lift prayer to God.

And they sang a new song, saying:

The purpose of this "new song" is to affirm the worth of the Lamb to remove the seals of judgment. Only Christ is worthy to execute judgment on earth. Only He has the qualifications.

You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals;

Jesus is the only one worthy to judge the world for He is the only one who ever lived without sin. Therefore, He is worthy of our worship and adoration.

For

John now gives the reasons for worshipping Jesus and demonstrating His worth.

You were slain,

First, Jesus was slain. Jesus took my hell that I might have His heaven. This is His substitutionary death for sins. He was my substitute on the cross. I should have died for my sins but He died for me.

And have redeemed us to God by Your blood

Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,

Secondly, Jesus' redeemed us for God by His blood. The word "redeemed" means paid. The basic idea is to purchase in the market. Jesus paid for all sins of all time, past, present and future. There is no more suffering that needs to be suffered for sins. His death effectively satisfied God's demands for payment for sins. That payment is a completed fact.

There is no promotion from hell and there is no demotion from heaven. We reside in both for eternity. The difference that determines the location where we reside is faith in the blood of Christ to forgive sins.

And have made us kings and priests to our God;

Jesus made those who believe in Him to be "kings and priests to our God." The term "kings" implies that Christians will reign in a kingdom. The word "priests" indicates we can represent men to God.

And we shall reign on the earth"

Christians will reign on earth. The church does not rule on earth now but it will rule in a future kingdom, the Millennial Kingdom.

Principle

Jesus took my hell that I might have His heaven.

Application

Jesus is worthy of praise because He provided eternal life for all those who believe in Him. He took our hell that we might have His heaven.

Jesus was the only person qualified to die for the sins of the world because He was the only perfect person. As a perfect person, He did not have to die at all. However, because of His love for us, He took our place of suffering for sin. No more suffering needs to be suffered for sin. Jesus did it all, all to Him we owe. This is the basis of our worship.

Revelation 5:11-14

"Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!" And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: "Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!" Then the four living creatures said, "Amen!" And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever"

Gathered around the throne of God were a countless number of people. This is one great celebration of God's glory.

saying with a loud voice:

Jesus receives a seven-fold proclamation of praise from this great throng. They were not timid about their praise--they sang with a "loud voice."

"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!"

First, the slain Lamb is to receive "power." Jesus can achieve what He sets out to do. He is effective in what He does. He has the inherent power to do what He does.

Secondly, Jesus is to receive "riches." Jesus possesses the resources necessary to give grace. The entire universe belongs to Him.

Thirdly, He is to receive "wisdom." He has the insight to understand what He needs to do.

Fourth, He is to receive "strength." He can overcome and execute His will. He has been endowed with power because of His work on the cross.

Fifth, Jesus is to receive "honor." He deserves public distinction.

Sixth, Jesus should receive "glory." He manifests God in all His essence.

Seventh, Jesus is to receive "blessing." Jesus uses His assets to bless others. He is a giver. He does not clasp His possessions to Himself.

And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying:

The chorus of praise extends throughout the universe. Even those who died will worship Him--those "under the earth and such as are in the sea."

"Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!"

All creation makes a four-fold statement about the Father and Jesus: blessing, honor, glory and power belong to Him. Creation finally fulfills the purpose of time and space. The purpose of creation is to manifest the essence of God--to give God glory.

Then the four living creatures said, "Amen!"

The twenty-four elders respond to this added praise with an "Amen."

And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever

Heaven is now ready by worship for the events of the Tribulation (chapters 6-19). Romans 15:5-6

Principle

The purpose of creation is to glorify God's attributes and actions in time and space.

Application

This scene in heaven is a striking contrast to the scene that follows in chapters 6 to 19. In heaven, there is worship, contentment and bliss. On earth, there is terrible tribulation.

Paul said to go to heaven and be with Christ is "far better" (Philippians 1:23). Not just better--far better. We do not believe that now. We do not appreciate the eternal until we lose someone we love. The most important thing about heaven is that we will meet the Lamb who is "worthy." The object of praise in heaven is the death of Christ for our sin. That is what summons these songs of praise in this chapter.

Revelation 6:1-2

"Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, "Come and see." And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer"

Everything from chapter 6 through chapter 18 describes the Tribulation. That is almost two-thirds of the book of Revelation.

Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, "Come and see."

Chapter 6 describes the opening of the first six seals and introduces the seventh seal. These events unleash great judgment on the earth. Each seal reveals a special kind of judgment. Many of these judgments are cosmic in nature -- worldwide judgments.

"Alas! For that day is great, So that none is like it; And it is the time of Jacob's trouble, But he shall be saved out of it" (Jeremiah 30).

The main purpose of the Tribulation is to bring Israel back to God.

"At that time Michael shall stand up, The great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; And there shall be a time of trouble, Such as never was since there was a nation, Even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, Every one who is found written in the book" (Daniel 12:1).

"For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Matthew 24:21).

During the Tribulation three series of events take place, the seal series, trumpet series and bowl series. Each series divides into four and then into three events.

And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to

him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.

We now come to the four horsemen of the Apocalypse, each with a distinct color.

This verse does not say it is Jesus who rides this "white horse." The rider on this horse may be the coming Antichrist (Daniel 9:26). This rider represents a conquering power that no one can resist. This person has the semblance of Christ but he is not Christ. He comes as a deceiver. He also comes with an implement of war [a bow] with no arrow. He will conquer through cold war.

The world gives him a victor's crown. Satan bequeaths him with this crown. This crown represents his world dictatorship. He runs an international organization. He is the head of the Revived Roman Empire to which Daniel refers. He is Satan's man. He accepts the offer that Jesus refused "I will give you all these kingdoms if you worship me."

Principle

Deception is the ace trump for those who mislead.

Application

We live in a day of smoke and mirrors. Media advertising makes claims that few believe. We buy the cold cream but it does not give us beauty. It is a lie.

People think drugs will give them permanent euphoria but it only lasts for a moment.

As bad as things that come from the white horse are, things will get worse. Bad things always begin with deception (2 Thessalonians 2).

Revelation 6:3-6

"When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come and see." Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword. When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, 'Come and see.' So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living

creatures saying, 'A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine'"

When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come and see."

As in verse 1, a second living creature calls people to see the second seal.

Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword.

The rider on the second horse, a fiery red horse, is also a political leader who leads with military power. He carries a "great sword."

Evidently, the "fiery red" horse implies rivers of flowing blood caused by civil disobedience and anarchy. The rider on the fiery red horse causes civil disobedience throughout the world. No nation can restrain these people even by their own national militaries.

Evidently, the first rider established peace on earth. He had a bow without an arrow. He won this peace by a cold war. This second rider takes this peace won by the first rider away from the world through a global military. It was a pseudo peace in the first place.

When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come and see." So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand.

For the third time, a living creature challenges people to look at another unusual event.

The third rider rides a black horse carrying a pair of scales. This has to do with worldwide famine. The scales indicate people must gauge their food carefully.

And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine"

A voice from the four living creatures makes a statement about food shortage during the reign of the rider on the black horse. The value of a "denarius" is about fifteen cents. This was the

wage of a worker for one day. It takes an entire day's work to buy a quart of wheat or three quarts of barley. That is good enough for one meal. No money would remain for buying anything else such as "oil and the wine." An inescapable outcome of war is starvation. Worldwide inflation destroys the world economy.

Principle

The world economy will come apart in the Tribulation.

Application

Worldwide famine causes great shortages and inflation. Panic in the market causes people to stampede the marketplace to sell their stock. A worldwide depression will make people panic over bread-and-butter issues. In chapter 13 the Antichrist will place enormous economic controls on the world. No one will be able to do business without his permission.

Revelation 6:7-8

"When He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come and see." So I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth"

When He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come and see."

By way of emphasis, a voice repeats the phrase "Come and see."

So I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth.

The breaking of the fourth seal brings a pale horse. "Pale" literally means pale green. The name of the rider on this horse is "Death." "Hades" followed

with him. Death takes the body and Hades takes the soul.

Four forms of death take place in this verse. The "sword" represents not the military but murder; this is individual assault. People will take law into their own hands. This is a lawless society. Famine takes many people in death. The phrase "with death" may refer to endemic plagues. Diseases like AIDS will cover the earth. These plagues will wipe out entire populations. Finally, because the infrastructures of society that protect people will crumble, wild beasts will attack the population.

This is the aftermath of war and famine. People lose their civility. Famine brings out the worst in people. People will descend to new levels of barbarity. The police systems within national entities break down. Many people will die from a variety of crimes.

One-fourth of the earth will die by riots, famine, disease and wild animals.

Principle

The purpose of Tribulation is to get man's attention.

Application

Elements of these four seals are in the world today. However, in the Tribulation these conditions will rise to unprecedented levels.

The purpose of these seals is to make men come to grips with the truth of God. Men will not be able to hide their heads in the sand like the proverbial ostrich. Most of us have never lived in anarchy and mob rule. This will cause significant dissonance in people and will make them do things they never imagined they would do. When people lose a high standard of living and live in an environment of not earning enough for one meal a day, anarchy will break out. In what were previously stable societies, disorder will prevail. Money will have little value because it inflated out of sight. People will bring buckets of dollars to buy a loaf of bread. This is the inevitable aftermath of the evil of mankind.

Revelation 6:9-17

"When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and

for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed. I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! "For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held.

The fifth seal reveals those martyred for Christ.

The phrase "under the altar" may refer to the blood the martyrs shed for their testimony for Christ. The "altar" here is an allusion to the altar of the temple or tabernacle. This was a bronze altar outside the Holy of Holies, the place of sacrifice of animals. This refers to the work of Christ on the cross. These martyrs died for their testimony to His work on the cross.

These martyrs died for their stand on the Word of God and for their testimony to the person and work of Christ for them.

And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and

avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"

The martyrs cry to God with loud voices and ask how long this persecution will last. They call for retaliation upon their persecutors. This is not a day of grace but a day of God's judgment on the earth. God will call to account those who perpetrate injustice on the world. The prayers of these martyrs mirror God's program for the Tribulation. Today, God calls the Christian to forgive like Stephen, the first martyr.

Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.

God gives the martyrs white robes. The "white" robe indicates their victory as martyrs and share in eternal life. "White" indicates that they possess imputed righteousness. This is not a righteousness of their own but the righteousness that God gives them.

They would have to wait [rest] until other martyrs face their fate. God has a perfect time for everything. Vengeance is God's; He will repay in His own good timing. We can leave God's justice in God's hands. God has a time for everything so we can relax and leave it in His care. There is no point in getting upset and bitter. No hatred or vindictiveness, implacability, or fear will help us. We need to rest in the sovereignty of God. There is a right time for God's vengeance.

I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood.

With the opening of the sixth seal comes a great earthquake. The sun becomes pitch black and the moon turns blood red in color. This may be a solar eclipse.

And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind.

The stars fell to earth like figs fall from a fig tree in strong winds. These are great catastrophes in nature and cosmic upheavals universe-wide.

Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place.

The sky looked like a rolled up scroll. The mountains and islands moved from their locations.

And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains,

Due to these preceding events, great fear came upon the leaders of the earth. People of all social strata go into a state of great fear. John indicates that there were seven walks of life affected by these cosmic disturbances. This probably refers to people of all stations in society taken in terror by these events. No politician will be sheltered from these events.

and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!"

The leaders of the earth call for death. They would rather die by natural disturbances than yield to the Lamb.

"For the great day of His wrath has come,

God is not only a God of love but He is a God of judgment -- "the great day of His wrath has come."

and who is able to stand?"

Those who avail themselves of the Lamb slain for our sins can stand. All others will not stand. All those who refuse the offer of God's grace will have nothing on which to stand in the presence of God.

Principle

Pride keeps people from God even in the face of great evidence.

Application

It is strange that people who see the direct hand of God upon earth still refuse to believe. They think death is better than belief. They believe they can escape God by death, by entering oblivion.

God says, "It is appointed unto men once to die but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). Pride will keep them from humbly submitting themselves to God. They must stay in charge of their life. They cannot yield themselves to God. To

yield self to the death of Christ as the only payment for our sin is a hard pill to swallow for arrogant humans. We can only come to God by grace. If grace does not humble us, God's judgment will in eternity.

Revelation 7:1-4

"After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree. Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, saying, "Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads." And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed"

Chapter seven is an interlude, a parenthesis between the sixth and seventh seals. This chapter answers the question at the end of chapter six.

"For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" (Revelation 6:17).

Now we turn to the believers in the tribulation. The previous chapter talked about martyrs of the tribulation. God will protect two categories of people during the tribulation: those of Israel and those of all nations. Great numbers of people will become Christians during the Tribulation period.

Chapter seven falls into two parts: 1) one which deals with Israel (vv. 1-8) and 2) one which deals with Gentiles (vv. 9-17).

After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree.

God's judgment will come from all directions on earth. He deals with the world on a global basis. The four-wind judgment is an approaching judgment not yet launched by God.

The words "four corners" are an idiom for four quadrants -- North, South, East and West. The

Bible never taught a flat earth theory. The idiom in the English is the four points of the compass.

An angel tells four angels who have the right to execute judgment to withhold that judgment until God could seal 144,000 foreheads of Israel. The word "seal" means to make an imprint of wax by a signet ring. It carries the ideas of security and permanency. The seal of the doom of Satan is sure and certain (20:3). This term refers to the sacred formalities of transaction. The papyri of Fayyum refer to the sealing of sacks and guarantees that the person receiving the sacks will receive a full complement.

God seals the believer with the gift of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13; 4:30; 2 Corinthians 1:22). God marks Christians with a seal to identify as those who belong to Him. God attests, certifies and acknowledges that those with this seal belong to Him. They have His stamp of approval, and He will therefore deliver them safely to His eternal destination for them. The seal is proof of authenticity and validates them as God's own. This guarantees their eternal safety.

And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed.

Ancient kings impressed the seal of their ring on their belonging. Everything pressed by that seal was under the protection of the king (Ezekiel 9:4). The Christian is sealed by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30) so God owns him. Here Israel is under God's seal and God owns the nation Israel.

The phrase "from every tribe" clearly marks these people as Israelites. These Israelites are the first converts of the Tribulation (14:4). They come to God at the commencement of the Tribulation.

Principle

Every time God saves a person, He seals him or her with His protection.

Application

Although the direct interpretation of this passage deals with God's sovereign care for Israel, He cares for the church as well. One of the most neglected doctrines of the Bible is the doctrine of the providence of God. God processes everything that

ever happens to a believer. Each one is under His seal.

After someone placed arsenic in bottles of medicine, the government required all medicine to be sealed with protection stickers. Warning labels of "Do not partake if the seal is broken" caution of a broken seal. God placed His seal on us and no one can break it.

The Holy Spirit seals the Christian.

"In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise..." (Ephesians 1:13).

"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption" (Ephesians 4:30).

God's seal is the obvious mark of His proprietorship on believers. He claims them lawfully as His own. We, therefore, have eternal security because the security comes from God. Since no one can take it from God, no one can take it from us either. None of us earns or deserves this. It is an act of sheer grace on God's part.

Only those who have God's seal go to heaven. It makes no difference whether a person is a nice or moral person. The only issue to God is whether we have His seal by coming to trust Christ's death for our sin.

Why should the Christian fear riding on a plane? He is in the hands of God. God takes care of His own. All the king's horses and all the king's men cannot change what God seals. No one can take us from this life until God wills it.

Revelation 7:5-8

"...of the tribe of Judah twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Asher twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Levi twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand were sealed; of

the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Benjamin twelve thousand were sealed"

Verses five through eight identify those God sealed -- members of the tribes of Israel.

of the tribe of Judah twelve thousand were sealed;

Judah is the ruling tribe, the aristocratic tribe. This is the tribe of King David and of Jesus.

of the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand were sealed;

Reuben was the first born.

of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Asher twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand were sealed of the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Levi twelve thousand were sealed;

Usually the Bible omits the tribe of Levi [the priestly tribe] from the lists of tribes because they had no inheritance of land.

of the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand were sealed;

Issachar means strong ass. The ass was a beast of burden. Maybe this was the blue-collar tribe!

of the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand were sealed;

This list does not include Ephraim but on the other hand, it does include Joseph. Joseph may simply be another name for Ephraim.

of the tribe of Benjamin twelve thousand were sealed

These tribes are actual Israelites and are not representatives of the church. No one knows the identity of these tribes today, not even the nation Israel. All records were destroyed by the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. God, however, knows who they are. The Bible includes 29 lists of the tribes of Israel. In no case are there more than 12 listed.

The seals on these twelve tribes indicate God's sovereign protection of these tribes during the Tribulation period. God has preserved Israel down through the centuries.

God does not include the tribe of Dan in this list. Dan committed treachery by initiating apostasy into Israel (Genesis 49:17; 1 Kings 11:26; 12:28-30). However, God will not disinherit Dan during the Millennium (Ezekiel 48:1,2).

Principle

It is important to distinguish between Jews and Gentiles.

Application

These 12 tribes are Israelites, not Jehovah Witnesses or British Israelites. Nor do these tribes refer to the church.

Jehovah Witnesses originally claimed that the 144,000 were people of their religion. That interpretation became a problem when their numbers outgrew 144,000. They juggled their interpretation to adjust to their changing reality. They then said that there was an earthly band of 144,000, then they claimed there was an additional heavenly band. That would now allow for 288,000 people. Since their numbers have gone beyond 288,000, they now claim a third category -- "the servant band." People today who become Jehovah Witnesses can join at the servant level.

Changes in the organization caused changes in their doctrine. This distorts Scripture to harmonize a doctrine and makes up doctrine to suit the current situation. Jehovah Witnesses were never Jews in the first place. This passage excludes every Gentile.

Revelation 7:9-12

"After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before

the throne and worshiped God, saying: 'Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, Thanksgiving and honor and power and might, Be to our God forever and ever. Amen'"

After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands,

The "great multitude" that no one could number was people from all nations. God did not seal these people as He did the 144,000 Israelites. A worldwide harvest of people will come to Christ in the Tribulation. This encompasses not only Gentiles but also Jews beyond the 144,000 listed in the first eight verses.

Clothed in white robes means that these saints in heaven received a forensic or judicial righteousness before God by the death of Christ. They have no righteousness in themselves. They only have righteousness from the death of Jesus for their sins.

Palm branches were symbols of joy by those watching a triumphal procession. They celebrated the victory that is in Christ.

and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" (Revelation 7:10).

The group gathered around the throne cried out with loud jubilation.

"Salvation belongs to our God" means God is the source or origin of our salvation. Salvation belongs to God, not us. It is God's work. We cannot take credit for salvation. People give testimonies today that make it appear that they are a wonderful people for the change made in their lives. They make an issue out of their smoking or drinking. Not one ounce of credit goes to us. All glory should go to Jesus and His death on the cross.

The throne here is the same throne of chapters four and five. This is a place of preference because they stand in the presence of God. The cause of praise to God is the work of God in salvation. It was God who provided the Lamb who would die for our sins.

All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, (Revelation 7:11).

A number of groups stationed themselves on their faces before God. This is an act of humility and worship. When people step into the presence of an absolutely holy God, they see their sin in the clearest light possible.

Even angels who did not sin fall on their faces before God. Their finiteness in comparison to God's infiniteness overwhelmed them with awe.

saying: "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, Thanksgiving and honor and power and might, Be to our God forever and ever. Amen" (Revelation 7:12).

These groups manifest the essence of God. Because of His glorious person, we must worship Him with a sense of awe.

They confirm their ascription of praise with an "Amen." "Yes, God's attributes and actions must be praised." The primary concern of those in heaven is that they recognize, acknowledge and praise the glory of God. "Amen" means "I believe it." They say in effect -- "I believe that we made it to heaven, not by what we did, but by what Jesus did. It was not by my own works but by His work." Thanksgiving is both a recognition and acknowledgement of God's work.

Principle

Our major role in heaven is acknowledging the glory of God.

Application

Are you getting in tune for an eternity of praise to God? This will be our main role throughout eternity.

Revelation 7:13-17

"Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?" And I said to him, "Sir, you know." So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. "Therefore they are

before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them. "They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; "for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes"

Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?" (Revelation 7:13).

One of the elders asks from where those clothed in white robes came. The answer comes in verse 14. These people came out of the great Tribulation. Their white robes indicate that the Lamb made their robes white by His blood.

And I said to him, "Sir, you know." So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 7:14).

These saints were not believers from the church age. They came out of the great Tribulation period. This phrase in the Greek is very powerful, "the Tribulation, the great one." These are the martyrs killed in the last three and one half years of the Tribulation.

It is ironic that the white robes of these martyrs were made white in red blood. By the shedding of the blood of Jesus, the Lamb, these martyrs stand completely clean before God forever. They stand without sin before God.

"Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them (Revelation 7:15).

The word "therefore" indicates the reason these martyrs stood before the throne and in the presence of God: the shed blood of Christ for their sins. They are now in the presence of the one whom saved them.

We will serve God day and night in His presence [temple]. "Night and day" indicates that there is no

cessation to serving the Lord. Evidently, they never need sleep or to go to bed.

"Dwell" means to spread a tabernacle, to live, have one's tent, encamp. Later John uses this term for heaven itself (Revelation 21:3). Here, God spreads his tent over these martyrs to protect them with His presence. God's presence protects these saints perpetually. They no longer need to fear any trouble.

"They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat (Revelation 7:16).

Evidently, the people in white robes were martyrs who suffered hunger, thirst and exposure. In the Tribulation, believers will go without food because of a mark put upon them by world religion. If they have this mark, they cannot buy food. Many will starve to death.

"for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes (Revelation 7:17)

The Lamb personally shepherds the martyrs by leading them to fountains of living water. Jesus sustains these martyrs personally and He leads them to the living water. The person of Christ is central to our adequacy.

The Greek emphasis is on the word "living." Christians will partake of God's life on an ongoing basis -- eternal life.

Principle

We will not grieve in heaven.

Application

Jesus takes away our grieving. No one can get through life without sorrow. God will not allow us to grieve in heaven. God will personally wipe away every tear.

Revelation 8:1-6

"When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much

incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand. Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. And there were noises, thundering, lightning, and an earthquake. So the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound"

Now we come to the opening of the great seventh seal. This is a climactic event in the book of Revelation.

"When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour (Revelation 8:1).

The opening of the seventh seal caused an ominous and eerie silence in heaven for about a half an hour. The seventh seal that launches the second series of seven, the trumpet judgments, caused a hush across heaven. "What can we expect now? It must be something perilous and grim." Great apprehension fell over everyone in contrast to the shouts of celebration in the previous chapter.

And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets (Revelation 8:2).

Out of the seventh seal falls seven trumpet judgments and seven bowl judgments.

The seven trumpets are not the same as the seven seals. They do not cover the same ground as the seals but proceed out of the sixth seal. Both the bowl judgments and the trumpet judgments are within the seal judgments. These judgments are one series in three movements.

Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne (Revelation 8:3).

An angel with a golden censer [shovel] stood at the altar. The priest of the Old Testament used censers to carry hot coals from the brazen altar from outside the tabernacle to the altar of incense

inside the tabernacle. God designed everything in the tabernacle to teach His system of truth.

The censor of the New Testament is the prayer of the saint. The tabernacle and all its function are types of Christ and His work, especially his work of intercession to the Father on our behalf (John 17:9; 1 John 2:1-2). All of our eternal legal affairs are kept in order by our Defense Attorney, Jesus Christ. We do not have to make a direct appeal to the Father; Jesus does that for us. He personally represents us and takes care of our matters very well.

"Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25).

And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand (Revelation 8:4).

Prayer is like the smoke of incense ascending to God.

Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. And there were noises, thundering, lightning, and an earthquake (Revelation 8:5).

In this case, the angel first offered these coals as incense before God and then threw them on the earth. After the prayer of verse three rises into the presence of God, judgment plunges to earth. God brings judgment in answer to prayer; God sent the angel to fling fire to the earth. In this case, prayer brings judgment to earth.

So the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound (Revelation 8:6).

Israel used trumpets to call the nation to assembly and to sound an alert for war. Trumpets were a call to impending action. This is God's public announcement system. Something important always followed the national trumpet.

Principle

Jesus executes His unfinished work over us daily.

Application

The function of prayer from God's viewpoint is very interesting. Jesus as our High Priest

intervenes on our behalf to God for us (Romans 8:34). Do you feel that the heavens are as brass and that God does not hear or answer your prayers? Jesus prays for us. He makes requests for us. He appeals to His character and work on our behalf. God answers our prayer because of Jesus, not because of our work.

Jesus' unfinished work is His work of intercession on our behalf. Jesus personally represents me to the Father. Satan constantly accuses us before the Father.

"So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, 'Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. 'And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death'" (Revelation 12:9-11).

Jesus intercedes for us:

"Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us" (Romans 8:34).

Jesus is in heaven taking care of our concerns both there and here. He processes everything that happens to us here as well. There is no coincidence. Nothing incidental comes into our lives. No fluke or accident ever happens to the Christian. No Christian operates by "luck." God shields us every moment of our existence.

Revelation 8:7-13

"The first angel sounded: And hail and fire followed, mingled with blood, and they were thrown to the earth. And a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up. Then the second angel sounded: And something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea, and a third of

the sea became blood. And a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed. Then the third angel sounded: And a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died from the water, because it was made bitter. Then the fourth angel sounded: And a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them were darkened. A third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night. And I looked, and I heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!"

The remainder of chapter 8 gives us the first four trumpet judgments. The first four trumpet judgments fall on creation and the last three on mankind.

The first angel sounded: And hail and fire followed, mingled with blood, and they were thrown to the earth. And a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.

The first trumpet sounds and one-third of the trees burn up and all green grass on the Earth. This is a judgment of great magnitude on vegetation.

Then the second angel sounded: And something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood.

The second angel sounded his trumpet (vv. 8-9). Some appearance like a massive burning mountain was thrown into the sea. Some scientists make ominous predictions of asteroids hitting the earth. They say the impact will be like many hydrogen bombs causing massive death within hundreds of miles of their collision. According to NASA scientists, an asteroid of four kilometers broad could wipe out half the world's population.

And a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.

Tidal waves will do further damage. The shock waves of this mountain-like ball of fire will destroy one-third of all the sea creatures and ships on the sea.

Then the third angel sounded: And a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water.

The third trumpet brings another object from the skies into the Earth's atmosphere and biosphere. As it hits the earth's atmosphere, it lights up like a torch. This third trumpet destroys one-third of the rivers and springs of water. Evidently, this catastrophe is worldwide. This destroys the fresh water supply of much of the Earth.

The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died from the water, because it was made bitter.

"Wormwood" in Palestine had a bitter taste. The "wormwood" desert plant of Palestine is not poisonous but the Wormwood here caused men to die.

Then the fourth angel sounded: And a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them were darkened. A third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night.

The fourth trumpet affects the sun, moon and stars. One-third of them were darkened both in the day and night. This might designate an eclipse.

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matthew 24:29-31).

And I looked, and I heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the

earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound

The three-fold repetition of the word "woe" indicates that the remaining three trumpets are even more ominous than the first four. A new and greater level of judgment is about to unfold. This is a solemn warning.

Principle

Sin brings bitterness.

Application

The book of Revelation gives us a preview of prophetic events. The evil that is in the world today will pale in light of coming judgment. This implies that the world will not improve with modernization. It is not getting better and better. True, we have more conveniences. We have more bells and whistles. Our cars have more gadgets than fifty years ago. However, the corrupt nature that was in man at the beginning of creation is getting worse. We have more murder and immorality.

"But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived" (2 Timothy 3:13).

Human beings rationalize away the idea of catastrophic judgment. We will do anything to stop thinking about the implication of a holy God. We do not want to deal with the consequence of sin. We avoid facing our fears.

The judgments in the above passage chill our blood, as they should. People who go through tragedy often rearrange their values. They put greater emphasis on the things of greater value. As C. S. Lewis said, God uses pain as a megaphone to get the attention of morally deaf people.

Revelation 9:1-11

"Then the fifth angel sounded: And I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth. To him was given the key to the bottomless pit. And he opened the bottomless pit, and smoke arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace. So the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit. Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the

earth. And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. And they were not given authority to kill them, but to torment them for five months. Their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man. In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them. The shape of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle. On their heads were crowns of something like gold, and their faces were like the faces of men. They had hair like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' teeth. And they had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots with many horses running into battle. They had tails like scorpions, and there were stings in their tails. Their power was to hurt men five months. And they had as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon"

The final three trumpets summon three woes to call attention to the severity of the last three judgments (8:13). The bowl judgments yet to come are even greater in intensity.

Then the fifth angel sounded: And I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth. To him was given the key to the bottomless pit.

The fifth trumpet covers the first eleven verses. Since God gives this trumpet notable attention by the length of this passage, we infer that the events of this trumpet carry great weight in God's economy.

The fifth trumpet causes John to see a fallen star from heaven. This "star" is Satan. The Greek indicates this star is in a fallen state. Satan fell from heaven because God kicked him out of heaven (Isaiah 14:12f; Luke 10:18; Revelation 12:7-17).

God gave Satan a "key" to allow demons in the Abyss to come out and torment the earth. The

"bottomless pit" is a residence of demons (9:11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1, 3). It is a place of confinement for fallen angels.

And he opened the bottomless pit, and smoke arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace. So the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit.

The "he" in this verse is a person -- Satan. God cast him out of heaven at the beginning of the Great Tribulation (12:9) [the Great Tribulation begins half way through the Tribulation]. Satan is Lucifer turned Devil.

Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth. And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.

Scripture associates locusts with judgment (Exodus 10:12-17). Locusts can come in such great swarms that they destroy everything in their path.

This passage does not say that these demons were scorpions but simply that they have the power of a scorpion.

They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.

The demons do not hurt vegetation or the ecological system; they hurt people. These demons hurt everyone except the 144,000 because God protects them with His seal. God guards these leaders from demonic possession.

God sends these demons to afflict the earth with His discipline. God places certain restrictions on these invaders. They can hurt only those God allows them to hurt and only for a limited period. God sovereignly controls the demonic world.

And they were not given authority to kill them, but to torment them for five months. Their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man.

God gave them "authority" to do this so they are not autonomous in their destruction. God limits their torture to five months.

In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them.

People will seek to commit suicide but they will not be able to die. Their torture is not fatal.

The shape of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle. On their heads were crowns of something like gold, and their faces were like the faces of men.

John enumerates eight characteristics of these demons. First, their shape was like horses prepared for battle. These creatures had mobility. These were invading creatures. They came like Calvary. Secondly, they had crowns like gold, a distinctive of conquerors. This could refer to the domination of demons with cultic thinking. Thirdly, their faces were like the faces of men. This may imply intelligence.

Locusts were a nemesis in the day of the Bible. Hoards of locusts could wipe out a crop in one day.

They had hair like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' teeth.

The fourth characteristic of these demons is that they have hair of women. This may infer long, loose hair, giving the impression of ferocious beings. The opposite interpretation might be true as well, that they are of such striking beauty and charisma that few can reject their false teaching. Many people will buy into their propaganda because of the authority and power of these false teachers.

Their teeth will be like lion's teeth. This is a symbol of something frightening. Those who surrender to false teaching will find it vile and hurtful to their belief. False teachers will show no mercy on their followers.

And they had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots with many horses running into battle.

Fifth, they had breastplates like iron. This may have been a chariot of iron. These demons were not vulnerable to attack.

Sixth, the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots going into battle. The sound of false teaching can intimidate.

They had tails like scorpions, and there were stings in their tails. Their power was to hurt men five months.

These locusts did not attack crops but people. God only gave permission to execute judgment for five months.

And they had as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon.

These demons have a king; he is Satan.

"Abaddon" means destruction.

Principle

No demon can possess a Christian.

Application

The judgment of God is real. This section of Scripture is not a place for amusement. False teaching is no joke. When people follow false teaching it always leads to despair. This will increase with great severity in the Tribulation. Today, people fall into "strong delusion" as well. Satanic power will drive people from lie to lie. They want to believe anything but the truth.

No demon can touch those with the seal of God on them. No demon can possess a Christian. The Christian is "in Christ." He holds the same status that Jesus holds before God forever.

Revelation 9:12-21

"One woe is past. Behold, still two more woes are coming after these things. Then the sixth angel sounded: And I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released to kill a third of mankind. Now the number of the army of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them. And thus I saw the horses in the vision: those who sat on them had breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue, and sulfur yellow; and the heads of the horses were like the heads

of lions; and out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and brimstone. By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed – by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which came out of their mouths. For their power is in their mouth and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents, having heads; and with them they do harm. But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their theft!"

One woe is past. Behold, still two more woes are coming after these things.

We come to the sixth trumpet. This is the second of three "woes" (8:13). A "woe" is a great calamity. "One woe is past" refers to the fifth trumpet.

Then the sixth angel sounded: And I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,

The four horns of the golden altar in the Old Testament were located on the four corners of the altar (Exodus 27:2; 30:2f). We saw the altar of incense in the previous chapter. Saints offered their prayers upon that altar. This is another answer to that prayer. This unleashing of judgment is a specific answer to prayer.

saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates."

The sixth angel releases four angels bound by the river Euphrates. These angels are fallen angels – demons. Demons can only act with God's permission, even to the very precise hour of a given day. Nothing can change God's timing.

So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released to kill a third of mankind.

The four fallen angels kill one third of the world's population by an invading force (Daniel 12:1; Matthew 24:21). The extent of death here is almost incredible.

Now the number of the army of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them.

Two million mounted troops come on the scene. This is an overwhelming armed force. This would be the world's largest army in its history.

And thus I saw the horses in the vision: those who sat on them had breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue, and sulfur yellow; and the heads of the horses were like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and brimstone.

John describes this vast army by symbols. This description of 200 million horses is something other than literal horses. This is a mechanized army.

By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed – by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which came out of their mouths.

The description of fire, smoke and brimstone coming out of the mouths of these horses appear to describe modern weapons of warfare such as flame-throwers.

For their power is in their mouth and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents, having heads; and with them they do harm.

Modern weapons have firepower both in front of the vehicle and in the rear such as helicopters.

But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk.

People of the future will be unabashedly religious. Yet, with all the destruction these judgments bring, most people will remain negative toward God and immune from the influence of His judgment. They will worship demons and go into the occult. This explains why they will not repent. They are under "strong delusion."

"The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they

might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12).

People deluded by religion are "works" oriented. They cannot give up the idea that salvation depends on them rather than Jesus.

And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts

These people hung to their sexual immorality and thievery even in the face of one-third of the population of the world being killed. This immorality will probably interface with religion.

The word "sorceries" comes from the Greek word pharmakia from which we get the English word "pharmacy." This is the word for drugs. People in the first century used drugs for occult practices. Vast numbers of people in the future will be drug addicts. There will be more drug addicts than in any other time in history.

Principle

People involved in demonism cannot respond to God.

Application

This judgment produced fear but not repentance. People under demonic possession cannot respond to God. There is a close connection between idolatry and demon worship. Superstitious submission to strange supernatural forces will be a characteristic of people in the Tribulation. That people do not change even under great duress from God is a clear indication of demonic influence.

"Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons..." (1 Timothy 4:1).

When people enter demonism, they are no longer able to believe because their hearts are so hardened that they cannot listen to God's voice. The goodness of God should lead us to repentance but so often it does not (Romans 2:4). God spared

you from judgment yet you will not embrace His Son as your Savior. Just think of what you have done yet God is still patient with you. Why has He spared you?

Revelation 10:1-2

"I saw still another mighty angel coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud. And a rainbow was on his head, his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire. He had a little book open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, and cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roars. When he cried out, seven thunders uttered their voices. Now when the seven thunders uttered their voices, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and do not write them." The angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised up his hand to heaven and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it, that there should be delay no longer, but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets"

The seven trumpet judgments are part of the seventh seal judgment. We have studied six of the trumpet judgments.

This interlude between the sixth and seventh trumpet judgement parallels the interludes between the sixth and seventh seal and bowl judgements. As chapter seven introduced a parenthesis between the sixth and seventh seals [the 144,000 and the martyrs], so chapters 10 and 11:1-14 introduce two digressions between the sixth and seventh trumpets. This interlude consoles believers by announcing the millennial reign of Christ (11:15). This interlude prepares us for the seventh trumpet.

In this parenthesis, there are two sets of forerunners to the Second Advent of Christ: 1) a powerful angel and 2) two witnesses. These two

sets of forerunners [one angelic and two human] are two sets of heralds of Christ's kingdom. In the Bible, the King is always preceded by His heralds. John the Baptist was the herald to Jesus' first coming.

I saw still another mighty angel coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud.

John introduces another angel different from the seven blowing the trumpets. Although the Greek indicates he is of the same kind as the angels who blow the seven trumpets, this angel has distinct characteristics.

Wearing a "cloud" may indicate that He announces the coming of Christ as a herald of the Second Coming.

And a rainbow was on his head, his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire.

The "rainbow" is a reminder that God keeps His Word (Genesis 9:12-17). God promised never to destroy the world by water again. God will never go back on His Word. He never goes back on a promise. God is not unstable. He is always true to Himself.

This angel's face reflects the glory of God and his feet indicate he is come to execute God's judgment.

He had a little book open in his hand.

The Lamb of God opened the seven-sealed scroll (5:1) but the angel holds a small scroll. This scroll held his impending mission. His mission was to announce that Jesus holds the title deed to the world. God is in the process of repossessing the world from Satan. When Jesus comes, He will bring His title deed to prove that He is the rightful owner.

And he set his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land,

The angel had his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land indicating his right of authority over the earth. God is going to take back what is rightfully His (Psalm 2:6-8). This angel is claiming the world for Christ.

Principle

God will regain the world to Himself.

Application

At the present time, Christians live in the Devil's world but we personally belong to the Lord Jesus. We are part of His plan. We orient to that plan by knowing prophecy. If we do this, we fulfill a purpose for which God placed us on earth.

Nothing riles the devil's majesty more than to look at believers oriented to God's prophetic plan for the world. These people gall him. They irritate him to such a degree that he puts a tail on them – a fallen angel, a demon. These demons constantly gather information against believers. The devil brings this list before God and accuses believers for what they have done. He points out the terrible things believers have done. God then calls in the believers' defense attorney, the Lord Jesus, to defend them. Based on the blood of Christ, the Judge [the Father] throws the case out of court.

The devil is not primarily in the business of immorality. He is in the business of religion. He loves sweetness and pseudo light. He wants people to focus on the so called "divine spark" in every person produced through self and Satan. He wants to set up a kingdom independent of God. He wants to make this a "perfect kingdom" but because of the sin capacity of people, his kingdom keeps failing. Now Satan's doom is sealed with the coming of Christ.

Revelation 10:3-7

"...and cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roars. When he cried out, seven thunders uttered their voices. Now when the seven thunders uttered their voices, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and do not write them." The angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised up his hand to heaven and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it, that there should be delay no longer, but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets"

"and cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roars.

The cry of this special angel went throughout the world. This is an announcement to the entire world.

When he cried out, seven thunders uttered their voices.

When the angel roared, seven claps of thunder replied. These seven thunders are messages of judgment from God so terrible that God would not let John write them down.

Now when the seven thunders uttered their voices, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and do not write them."

John is faithfully taking notes as he watches this scene. As John was about to write down the messages of the thunders, a voice from heaven told him not to write these messages down. These messages remain sealed to this day, the only part of Revelation still sealed. We know that these messages are some form of judgment.

The angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised up his hand to heaven

We raise our right hand when we take an oath to tell the truth. This is a sign that this angel is about to swear a solemn oath. This oath is a guarantee that God's program is finally coming down.

and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it, that there should be delay no longer,

The angel swears by the eternal Creator that there will be no further delay in God's final judgment. Swearing by the Creator indicates that creation is God's and He will dispose of it as He wills. The angel especially calls attention to God's authority over creation. When the seventh trumpet sounds, then God will fulfill prophecy (v.7). God is claiming the earth for Christ and that there will be no further delay.

Time has run out for Satan's dominion over the earth. God will not delay His judgment. God will consume His program.

but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets

The special angel announces the end of God's mystery by an oath. A mystery in the Bible is not something hidden but something revealed only to the initiated. This mystery was known by the Old Testament prophets. We see here a fulfillment of that mystery.

This mystery is the plan of God for the world. When the seventh angel blows his trumpet, that will end the Tribulation period, the end of the age of Israel. There is no more mystery because God will manifest Himself in indubitable terms. The purpose of God for time will reveal itself completely and conclusively. The showdown against Satan has come.

Principle

There is an end to injustice.

Application

Some people ask why God allows them to go through injustice. Injustice runs unchecked. They ask where is God in this, "What does not God do something about this evil?"

We have an answer in the above passage. One thing is clear about God throughout the Bible – He is in no hurry (2 Peter 3:8,9). God puts up with a great wrong, yet He exercises forbearance. A hateful, godless, indifferent humanity has gone its own way. God is not willing that any should perish, but there will be a day when His patience ceases. That day will be the end of His program as we know it.

Judgment is God's "strange work" (Isaiah 28:21). God does not want to judge, but His character demands that He does. God is always true to Himself. He is always on the level. Therefore, God will come to bat. When it is His turn at the plate, He will hit a home run every time. We live in "humanity's day" but then will come God's Day. Humanity has struck out with His plans. Now it is God's turn.

No one will say, "You were not fair. You did not give me a chance." Everyone will know that God was more than fair. They will know beyond a shadow of doubt that they get what they deserve.

God has the complete record of everything we did and thought (Hebrews 4:13).

Many generations have expected God to deal justly in their day. At this point in the Tribulation, God will finally bring the purpose of creation to fruition. Up to this point God has ruled over earth, but He has not reigned on earth.

God's will is not being done on earth as it is in heaven right now. That will happen in the Millennium. Jesus will reign as King Jesus, King of the World. If people do not submit to Him there, then He will rule them with a rod of iron. No one will have the civil liberty to go against the King. Civil liberty is not a central biblical value. However, an absolutely perfect autocratic King is biblical.

In the church age, it is wrong to make laws forcing people to go to church. People have the right to go to hell if they choose so. Religious tyranny is the worst kind of tyranny. The day will come, however, whereby everyone will fall in line with God's program.

Revelation 10:8-11

"Then the voice which I heard from heaven spoke to me again and said, "Go, take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the earth." So I went to the angel and said to him, "Give me the little book." And he said to me, "Take and eat it; and it will make your stomach bitter, but it will be as sweet as honey in your mouth." Then I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. But when I had eaten it, my stomach became bitter. And he said to me, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings"

"Then the voice which I heard from heaven spoke to me again and said, "Go, take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the earth."

Three times in Scripture people are told to eat a book (Jeremiah 15:13-17; Ezekiel 2:8-10 and here). Usually, eating a book is not very nourishing! Books normally do not contain vitamins! Eating here is analogous to believing. God wants us to

know but even more so, He wants us to believe what He says.

So I went to the angel and said to him, "Give me the little book." And he said to me, "Take and eat it; and it will make your stomach bitter, but it will be as sweet as honey in your mouth."

The angel wanted John to assimilate the "little book" into his life (Jeremiah 15:16). God wanted him to digest the message of the book so that it would change him personally. When we eat a hot dog it eventually becomes part of our body [whether we like it or not!]. We bear it on our body. When John ate the little book, it soon became a part of him. God gave John some pertinent information about the Tribulation but he needed more than information about prophecy, he needed personal transformation by the truth of it.

The eating of this book by John is a picture of understanding the Bible and then applying it to experience by faith.

Then I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. But when I had eaten it, my stomach became bitter.

To know that God is sovereign in the way He executes prophetic events is sweet to the soul. To see the effect of God's judgment is bitter to the soul.

"The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them Your servant is warned, And in keeping them there is great reward. Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults. Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; Let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, And I shall be innocent of great transgression. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer" (Psalm 19:9-14).

And he said to me, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings"

After John assimilates the prophecy, God gives him a new mission. John's prophecy will be a judgment against the whole world.

Principle

If we apply God's Word to our experience, it will effectively change our lives.

Application

It is important to assimilate the Word of God into our experience. The Bible is the plumb line against which we measure our lives.

"For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12).

Eating this book indicates a Principle the importance of God's Word. Scripture deals with our souls. There is pain in that. Change causes pain. God has plans to change us. We cherish certain sins and become comfortable with them. Now God asks us to deal with them. There is anguish in this. We wince when we ascertain we are part of the problem.

First, God judges us. Then, having dealt with us, He uses us to carry truth to others. Only after God touches us can we carry the message to someone else. Knowing truth truly and experientially, always leads to action. We cannot use the Bible to minister to others effectively unless the Bible first deals with us.

Revelation 11:1-2

"Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, "Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there. "But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months"

Chapter 11 continues the parenthesis beginning in chapter ten. Since this section of Revelation is a

parenthesis, there is no advance on in chronology in chapters ten and eleven. The seventh and last trumpet will sound in verse fifteen.

The theme of chapters 10 and 11 is the heralds of Christ's Second Coming. Chapter 10 presented the angelic heralds, now we turn to human heralds.

Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, "Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there.

John was to take a measuring instrument and measure the temple, altar and those that worship there. This was a measurement of the Holy of Holies of the Tribulation temple, not of the outer courtyard. God is measuring out the things pertaining to the Jews, not to the Gentiles. They are in unbelief about the Messiah whom the temple represents. They stubbornly reject the Messiah. The outer courtyard was the court of the Gentiles. God is not interested in measuring the Gentiles at his point.

The "temple" represents the religion of Israel and the people of Israel at the time of the Tribulation. Unbelieving Jews will build the Tribulation temple. This has nothing to do with the true purpose of God's original temple, which is to reveal Jesus Christ and His work. The false prophet will sponsor the Tribulation temple. In addition, the dictator of the revived Roman Empire will place a gold statue of himself in the Holy of Holies as part of a peace treaty. This statue will not be erected until the alliance is made. This is the "abomination of desolation" (Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11; Matthew 24:15; 2 Thessalonians 2:4; Revelation 13:14-15).

Two dictators worship in this temple: 1) the Gentile political leader of the revived Roman Empire who is also the head of the one-world religion during the Tribulation (13:1-9). 2) The false prophet, a Jew, who is the dictator of Palestine (13:10f). Jesus has his two witnesses and so does the Devil.

"Those who worship" are not true believers. True believers ran to the mountains. Although these religious Jews had an altar, it was a meaningless ornament. Even today, much of Christianity even today does not understand the meaning of the cross. Symbolism supersedes the finished work of

Christ in their minds. Israel will not truly believe until they "look on Him whom they pierced" (Zechariah 12:10). That will also be the point of their national salvation (Romans 11:26).

Nevertheless, the Father watches over the Jews even as Hosea watched over his adulterous wife. Even in apostasy, God watches over His people. He marks them off for judgment if they do not repent.

"But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles.

John was not to measure the courtyard [the outer court]. Gentiles were allowed to go into the outer court but not into the temple proper. The Gentiles will trample the outer court for 42 months. God gives John specific instructions not to measure the court outside the temple. This is not a Gentile issue at this point.

"And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months.

The idea of 1,260 days come from Daniel 7:25, "time, two times, and a half a time." The 42-month length of the Great Tribulation is literal (11:3; 42 months of 30 days each). Gentiles will control the temple for this period. The Tribulation will last seven years, but the Great Tribulation will only last for the last half of the Tribulation, the 42-month period. It is the later period to which the book of Revelation gives the most attention. This period will end with the Second Coming of Christ.

The Tribulation divides into two three-and-a-half years. The later three-and-a-half years is the Great Tribulation. A world ruler will desecrate the temple at the beginning of the forty-two month [three-and-a-half years] Great Tribulation and will establish a shrine of idolatry to himself. He will proclaim himself to be God (Daniel 9:27; 12:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:4; Revelation 13:14-15). The "times of the Gentiles" will end at the Second Coming of Christ (Luke 21:24) to establish His millennial kingdom.

Principle

Religion blinds people to the truth.

Application

The Great Tribulation will be the greatest period of religion the world has ever known. Religion has always been the worst blinder to truth. Satan will use religion as the basis for his counter-revival. Rome will have a world dictator who will be in charge of a worldwide religion during the Tribulation.

Revelation 11:3-6

"And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth." These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth. And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner. These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire"

"And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth."

Two witnesses will come on the scene and prophesy for 1260 days [42 months] dressed in sackcloth. Sackcloth is a sign of mourning and grief. They grieved the whole period of the reign of the Antichrist. It grieved them to preach a message of doom.

Some think that these witnesses are Elijah and Moses but the Book of Revelation does not specify who they are. There is some evidence for one of these witnesses being Elijah because Malachi prophesied that he would come back before the day of the Lord comes (4:5). Both Moses and Elijah were in the Transfiguration scene of Christ (Matthew 17:3). Others think that these two witnesses are Enoch and Elijah. Probably the best way to interpret these men is that they come with the powers of Moses and Elijah. Their main role is to prepare for the coming of the Messiah like John the Baptist prepared for the coming of Christ in the first advent.

These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth.

John depicts these two witnesses as "two olive trees and the two lampstands." This is an allusion to Zechariah (Zechariah 4:2-14). People used olive oil for lamps. The combination of Olive trees and lampstands may allude to the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

"So he answered and said to me: 'This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' Says the Lord of hosts" (Zechariah 4:6).

The two witnesses needed to depend on the ministry of the Holy Spirit. They needed supernatural help. This is what makes any ministry great – the power of the Holy Spirit.

And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner.

No one will fool with these two prophets. They will have the power to deal harshly with anyone who threatens them. No one can kill them for they are invincible until God finishes His testimony through them. God removes that protection later when both of them are killed. Christians cannot die until God is finished with them.

These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire"

The two witnesses have authority to execute miracles. They have the power to stop rain like Elijah (1 Kings 17:1f). They have the ability to propel plagues on the world similar to those of Moses' day. They will be newsmakers. They will have a sensational ministry albeit a devastating ministry.

Principle

The power of any ministry is dependent upon the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit.

Application

The same Holy Spirit who will empower the two witnesses will empower us if we allow Him to do

His work through us. These witnesses understand the importance of grace in their lives. Effective ministry does not come by force of personality but by the power of the Holy Spirit. True ministry does not come from human success.

Revelation 11:7-10

"When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves. And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth"

When they finish their testimony,

No child of God can die until he finishes his testimony. Some Christians possess no sense of purpose. "I am of no account here. Why does the Lord keep me here?" As long as we are alive, God has a purpose for us.

the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them.

After the two witnesses complete their testimony, a beast from the bottomless pit kills them. The book of Revelation refers to this "beast" 36 times. This verse is the first occurrence. A "beast" in prophetic literature portrays two things: 1) a king and 2) a kingdom (Daniel 7). This beast represents world government (11:7).

These two witnesses stood against the religious and political system of the beast. The source of the beast's authority is straight out of the pit. It is a satanic system. This satanic system goes to war against the two witnesses. World government will not allow testimonies such as these to go out to the world if they can keep from it. The beast kills the two witnesses publicly.

And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt,

The religious system of Satan puts the dead bodies of the two witnesses on display in the street to show that the beast has dominion over them and what they represent. Their bodies lie in the streets of Jerusalem which is symbolically called "Sodom and Egypt." Sodom is a symbol of moral corruption, perversion and degradation. God obliterated this city this city along with Gomorrah. "Egypt" reduced Israel to slavery. Two cities, one representing perversion and the other representing persecution, are a picture of the city of Jerusalem in the Tribulation.

where also our Lord was crucified.

This identifies the place where the beast killed the two witnesses - the city of Jerusalem.

Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days,

People from all over the world will see the testimony of the beast - the dead bodies of the two witnesses for Christ. This is possible through satellite television.

and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves.

This government of the Antichrist exhibits barbarism and ghoulish behavior by allowing the dead bodies to lay in the street for 3 ½ days. Television cameras will focus on them as the party continues.

And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth

People around the world will throw a party because of the defeat of the two witnesses. They will even give each other gifts in celebration of the victory of the beast. The message of the two prophets tortured the people of the world mentally and caused them great distress. They could not bear their message. They hated objective dogmatism. That is why they were so glad to get rid of them. Religion is full of sweetness and light until you oppose it.

Principle

For as long as we are alive, God has a plan for us.

Application

God has a plan for all Christians and we are invincible until that plan is done. We need not fear any man or devil. The Devil can do nothing to us without divine permission (Job 1). As long as we are alive, God has a purpose for us. Until we die, we still have a testimony to the world.

The only exception to the principle we just discussed is the "sin unto death" whereby we impose our self will over God's will. If we refuse to give testimony, God may then choose to remove us from this planet because we do not bear fruit.

Revelation 11:11-14

"Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them. In the same hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. In the earthquake seven thousand people were killed, and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven. The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe is coming quickly"

Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet,

The two witnesses will rise from the dead in the midst of their worldwide party, to the great shock of the world. Their worldwide party will come to a sudden stop. God waits for three and one half days to guarantee their death so that there would be no question that it is He who raises them from the dead.

Can you imagine this event being broadcast for three and a half days on worldwide television? After focusing their cameras on these two dead bodies, they then rise from the dead. It will be sensational.

and great fear fell on those who saw them.

Great fear fell on those that observed this ascension. The world went from a worldwide party one moment, to deep fear the next. This fear does not cause them to turn to Christ as the only answer.

And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them.

God translated the two witnesses to heaven. Picture a camera crew following the bodies of these two witnesses as they ascend to heaven! The enemies of the witnesses gawk at the resuscitation and ascension of the witnesses. They recognize that God did this, yet they hardened their hearts toward Him. This is what happens when people become negative toward God and His will.

We who believe in Christ's death for our sins will experience ascension as well. This is our destiny. Death cannot claim the Christian. Death itself is defeated.

In the same hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. In the earthquake seven thousand people were killed, and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven.

Within the same hour, a great earthquake kills one tenth of the city of Jerusalem. Jerusalem sits on a major geological fault. This is God's vindication of killing the two witnesses.

Some people turn to God when they see this spectacle. However, this may simply be an acknowledgment of God's power.

The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe is coming quickly

The third "woe" will transfer all men to Satan because they didn't receive the truth (chapter 13).

This verse concludes the parenthesis beginning at 10:1. Beginning with the next verse, God resumes the chronology of the book with the seventh trumpet. The seventh trumpet carries us to the Second Coming of Christ. The seventh trumpet comes quickly on the heels of the sixth trumpet.

Principle

Sheep give birth to sheep.

Application

The greatest enemy of Christianity is false religion. Religion always distorts the truth. It is the greatest enemy of the Christian. Although much of religion portrays itself as sweetness and light, much of it is ghoulish. Christian testimonies that contrast the message to the Devil's lies will always suffer persecution.

God expects believers to share Christ in our own vernacular and culture. Shepherds do not give birth to lambs but sheep give birth to sheep. Pastors and professional church leaders must depend on their sheep to give birth to sheep. If people in the congregation do not give witness to their testimonies, that particular local church will not shine brightly.

Revelation 11:15-19

"Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!' And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying: 'We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, The One who is and who was and who is to come, Because You have taken Your great power and reigned. The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, And the time of the dead, that they should be judged, And that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, And those who fear Your name, small and great, And should destroy those who destroy the earth.' Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightning, noises, thundering, an earthquake, and great hail"

The seventh trumpet and the six bowls covers chapters 11:15-16:16. The trumpets include the bowls. Between the blowing of the seventh trumpet (11:15-18) and the six bowls are three separate interludes (12:1-14:20).

This section of Scripture sets forth the assumption by Christ of His Kingdom.

Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying,

A dramatic introduction to the seventh trumpet begins with an exciting announcement. God now openly exercises His judgments on man and His sovereign reign over the world. This trumpet extends to the Second Coming of Christ and announces the elimination of all obstacles to Christ's reign over the world. This is the fulfillment of the purpose of the world where Christ will glorify God in time on earth. This is Christ's reign over the world as King Jesus, King of the World.

"The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!"

The kingdoms of the world were always Christ's by right. Now He claims them at the end of the Tribulation as His own. Rule of the earth now proceeds from the rule of man to the rule of God.

This is no temporary victory. Instead, this victory will go beyond the 1000 reign of Christ into eternity - "forever and ever." The first 1000 years establishes Christ's authority on earth. Man will never again rule. Jesus will reign forever.

"Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death" (1 Corinthians 15:24-26).

And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God,

At this proclamation the 24 elders fell on their faces in worship. Time has come for God to deal with the nations and take reign of the world.

saying: "We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, The One who is and who was and who is to come, Because You have taken Your great power and reigned.

John describes God as "Almighty" (1:8; 4:8; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:6, 15; 21:22) and eternal (is, was, is to

come). God will take this great power and reign. "Almighty" means that God possesses all power and authority. God is sovereign and supreme over the world. Therefore, they offer thanks to God that He is in control and now He exercises that control. There will be no more tyranny. Not since the fall of Adam has there been freedom from the tyranny of man and of man's government. Jesus will straighten out all injustice at that time.

The nations were angry,

A pagan world loyal to the Antichrist in the Tribulation now shows its anger to Christ (Psalm 2:1-5). The nations of the world meet the anger of God with their own anger. He will rise rebelling against God's program. God meets anger with wrath. Man will receive his just desert.

and Your wrath has come,

God's wrath is omnipotent; man's is impotent. While people in heaven rejoice, those on earth seethe in anger. They will express this anger by one final rebellion against God in a world war, the battle of Armageddon.

And the time of the dead, that they should be judged,

One day God will cast Hades into the Lake of Fire.

And that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, And those who fear Your name, small and great,

God will judge the righteous dead at this the time in the Millennial Kingdom. God will reward Israel after their resurrection for faithfulness in the Tribulation (Daniel 12:1-3; Revelation 20:3-4).

And should destroy those who destroy the earth."

God will even things up at the Second Coming of Christ. He will balance the ledger at that time.

Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple.

Another dramatic scene closes the chapter. John looks into a temple in heaven. There he saw the ark of the covenant. The ark of the covenant was in the Holy of Holies. The ark indicates God's presence. The ark also represents God's mercy and

faithfulness. We cannot enter the presence of God without the blood sacrifice of Christ.

The opening of the temple reveals the glory of God. People will see God's glory; God will manifest Himself fully. The glory of God will explode upon men. Men will see this in His judgments.

And there were lightning, noises, thundering, an earthquake, and great hail."

Atmospheric disturbances result from the opening of the temple in heaven. All these signal judgment. God has no option but to judge man. John will resume the introduction of the seventh trumpet in chapter sixteen where he will give the full details.

Principle

We live in the day of the silent sky but there will come a day when Jesus will assert Himself sovereign over the world.

Application

Jesus will come one day to take over the governments of the world. He will take reign of the earth. He will finally declare Himself to be King of the world. Today we live in the day of the hushed heaven. God is not presently asserting His rights in the world in the absolute sense. He does not judge man according to His aberrations. There will come a day when that will end.

At the present time, we are "a stranger here" (Psalm 119:19). Our "citizenship" is in heaven (Philippians 3:20). Believers are not in step with the world. We march to a different drumbeat, the drumbeat of heaven. We do not buy into the world's ideas or values. They live for themselves; we live for God.

Today, people are at bat. There will be a day when that will cease. Man's Day will come to an end and God's Day will begin. One day God's forecasting clock will strike suddenly and surely. Only God knows the timing.

God will rule in one universal government over the world. In the Millennium, God assumes complete control over the world. He finally takes what is rightfully His. No wonder the elders fell down in worship. When we recognize God's sovereign working in the world and in our lives, it instills worship in our hearts.

Revelation 12:1-6

"Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars. Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth. And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born. She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne. Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days"

Chapters 12-15 view prophecy from the viewpoint of the people in the Great Tribulation [the last half of the seven years].

Seven personages appear in chapters 12-13 -- a woman clothed in the sun; the red dragon; the male Child; Michael the archangel; the offspring of the woman; the beast out of the sea (the world dictator) and the beast out of the earth (the false prophet). These two chapters do not advance the chronological sequence of the book of Revelation. The chronology resumes in chapter sixteen.

Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars.

We meet the first of seven personages in chapters 12-13 in verse one, a woman clothed with the sun. This woman is a "sign." This is the first of a series of signs (12:3; 13:13-14; 15:1; 16:14; 19:20). A sign is a symbol, of what God is about to reveal. It carries the idea of a wonder. Usually these signs are a warning of something ominous on the horizon. Though this sign appeared in heaven, the events take place on earth.

This woman symbolizes Israel (Genesis 37:9-11) who produced the Messiah. The "twelve stars" may allude to Joseph and his eleven brothers, the

twelve patriarchs of the twelve tribes of Israel. The focus is still on Israel.

Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth.

Israel birthed Jesus in His first coming (Romans 9:5). Satan has always attacked the line of Judah, the line of the Messiah. The Devil did everything in his power to prevent the first coming of Christ. The main point is not the birth of Christ but a focus on Israel as the situation from which Christ came.

Now Jesus is about to arrive in His Second Coming. Though Israel rejected Him in the first coming but in His Second Coming, they will accept Him as Messiah.

And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads.

The second "sign" is the fiery red dragon. This dragon tried to thwart the first coming of Christ 2000 years ago. This is the Devil himself acting through a world-ruler. In 12:9, John calls him Satan.

The "seven heads" represent seven empires that will ruled over Israel. The 10 horns represent a 10 nation confederation with 10 kings (Daniel 2:41-45; 7:20-21, 24). These kings reign concurrently with the world ruler (Daniel 7:7; 13:1). Daniel has similar descriptions of this person (Daniel 7:7-8,24). The "diadems" represent regal power. He rules over world governments. This is a picture of a revival of the Roman Empire (13:1) which will represent 10 European governments.

His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth.

The "stars of heaven" are probably false religious leaders of Israel, "The prophets who teach lies are the tail..." (Isaiah 9). The "tail" of Satan represents his power that throws false teachers into the world scene. These false prophets are Satan's mouthpieces for spreading his lies. Satan draws world civil leaders into to his confederacy of 10 nations by deception.

And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born.

Satan attempts to destroy the messianic line and thus negate the influence of the newborn Child (Revelation 12:4). Herod tried to destroy the Messiah when he was born by murdering babies two years and under. Joseph and Mary fled to Egypt to protect Jesus from Herod (Matthew 2:16-18). Satan again attempts to thwart Jesus in His Second Coming.

She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron.

Israel brings forth a "male Child" who will rule the nations of the world with a "rod of iron." This is Jesus Christ (Psalm 2:9; Revelation 19:15).

And her Child was caught up to God and His throne.

The catching up of the Child to heaven is an allusion to Jesus' ascension. John goes from the birth of Jesus to His ascension in two short verses. God puts assurances in place that the Second Coming of Christ will occur.

Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days.

The women fled into the wilderness where God protected her for three and a half years. Israel will flee into the wilderness at the beginning of the Great Tribulation (Matthew 24:16). God supernaturally protects Israel by a special power for these three and a half years.

Principle

God providentially protects His own.

Application

Even in the face of Satanic attempts to destroy her, Israel will always exist, for God keeps His unqualified and unilateral covenants (contracts). Satan is in the business of waging war with Jesus. Satan failed to destroy Him during His first coming because He ascended to heaven. The ascension is proof of his failure to destroy Jesus. Because he failed to destroy Christ, he turns to destroy Israel but God gives special supernatural protection to Israel.

If God protects Israel, He will do the same for the church. Christians wage war on three fronts: the world, the flesh and the Devil. The Devil's objective is to get us to act independently of God.

"Now whom you forgive anything, I also forgive. For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ, lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices" (2 Corinthians 2:10-11).

The strategy of Satan is to accuse Christians (Job 1:6-11) but our defense attorney, Jesus Christ, personally defends us (1 John 2:1,2). Satan wants Christians to experience anxiety, for anxious people do not trust a sovereign God (1 Peter 5:7-9). Satan willingly "gulps down" Christians who worry (1 Peter 5:8).

Revelation 12:7-12

"And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. "Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time!"

And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought,

The fourth personage is "Michael" the archangel (Jude 9). In heaven, Michael and his angels will

fight with Satan and his demons toward the end of the Tribulation period.

Michael is a principal figure of the book of Daniel (10:12-21; 12:1). He was the guardian angel of Israel. Thus, this continues the theme of Israel during the Tribulation.

but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer.

Satan and his demons will not win the war of heaven. They will be cast out of heaven in the middle of the Tribulation period, the beginning of the Great Tribulation. Fallen angels [demons] will never go back to heaven again. Up until this time, they conducted a relay service between earth and heaven. They constantly carried messages to Satan.

So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

This verse finally identifies who the "dragon" as the Devil and Satan who deceives the whole world. He deceives the world by the beast (13:11) and the false prophet (20:11).

The term "Devil" is both a title and a descriptive term of his activity. The word "devil" literally means to cast through. Metaphorically, it means to slander. The New Testament uses this word three times for a gossips and slanderers. (1 Timothy 3:11; 2 Timothy 3:3; Titus 2:3). Sins of the tongue are characteristic of the Devil. This is why many local churches have no spiritual punch. The Devil loves to defame Christians.

"Satan" means adversary. He accuses us before God. Satan deceives the whole world. He is a beautiful creature. He is on top of the pile of angels in hierarchy. He does not have red skin or wear a red union suit. That modern portrayal has no basis in the Bible. It is a fairy tale. He deceives the whole world by beauty and a good without God.

Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.

An announcement of the coming of the millennial Kingdom causes people to break out into praise. They sing of salvation, the salvation provided by the coming of Christ. They praise God's "strength," His inherent power that will crush the power of Satan.

They affirm that the kingdom of our God has come, and the millennial reign of Christ begun. Jesus defeated the accuser of the brethren.

Accusing the brethren is the Devil's current job. Just as he brought accusations against Job (chapter one), he brings accusations against us.

"And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.

The two means of victory over Satan are 1) the blood of the Lamb and 2) the word of testimony. The angels used these two means to defeat Satan.

We should translate the word "by" as "because of." It is because of the blood of the Lamb that victory comes. This is the blood shed on Calvary's cross. This is Jesus' sacrificial death for sins.

Once people become Christians, they have a testimony. Their love for Christ will be great, and they will be willing to sacrifice their own lives for Christ. In contrast to the deception of Satan, the testimony of the saints sets forth the truth of the gospel. Our testimony is one of our most valuable possessions.

It made no difference to these people whether they lived or died. Note Paul's attitude toward death,

"For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.... For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you" (Philippians 1:21, 23, 24).

"But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the

ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24).

Do you have the belief you must live out a seventy year life? That wasn't Paul's attitude. He was willing to shorten his life for the cause of Christ. Life will go on without us. We are not as important as we often think we are. There will be a few people who will miss us, this life is just a proving ground for eternity. Death is the beginning of eternity for us.

"Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time"

The Devil's days are numbered. Because he only has three and a half more years to do what he has to do, he vents his spleen. His program will come to an end and he will wind up in the Lake of Fire.

Principle

Satan tries to prosecute Christians but Jesus our defense attorney has enough evidence to free us from the charges.

Application

Jesus defeated Satan. He came to an ignominious defeat. Why should we be deceived by his misrepresentations? Our defense attorney, Jesus Christ, makes appeal for us in the courts of heaven.

As in any kind of war, it is important to know the strategy of the enemy. If we do not know the plan of attack, we will be vulnerable to Satan's war on our souls. If the Christian does not realize that he is at war with a supernatural being, he will be most vulnerable to his attack.

People who slander other Christians do the work of the Devil (Titus 2:3). Whenever we slander other Christians, we do the work of the Devil.

The Devil today deceives people into thinking that they are going to get to heaven by good works.

"But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we

have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted – you may well put up with it!" (2 Corinthians 11:3-4).

Revelation 12:13-17

"Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child. But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ"

Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child (Revelation 12:13).

God cast Satan out of heaven to earth. "Earth" is the theatre whereby God works out the angelic conflict and the test of man in that conflict. Israel is a central player in that program.

The persecution of Israel [the woman] here is the beginning of the Great Tribulation.

But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent (Revelation 12:14).

God gave Israel special supernatural powers to flee from Satan (Matthew 24:16). These are Jews who accepted Jesus as the Messiah in the first half of the Tribulation (Matthew 24:14). God always preserves a godly remnant.

The length of Satan's persecution of Israel is "a time and times and half a time." This is three and a half years (Daniel 7:25; 12:7).

So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood (Revelation 12:15).

This "flood" may be a huge flood of soldiers sent by the Antichrist. Satan seeks to exterminate the remnant of Israel from the face of the earth.

But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth (Revelation 12:16).

God intervened into nature and supernaturally delivered Israel from this peril of the Antichrist's armies.

And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ (Revelation 12:17).

The word "rest" means remnant. This is a godly remnant. God always keeps a godly remnant for Himself. These are clearly Tribulation saints.

Principle

God calls upon Christians to resolve the angelic conflict in terms of how he lives out his individual life.

Application

This passage gives much information about Satan. There are many myths about Satan, most of which originated from him. Many people think Satan is in hell. But he is not. He never has been. Though God will cast him into hell on a future day, but he is not presently in hell. Other people picture the Devil as a red monster with forked tail, cloven hoofs, horns and a pitchfork. That too is a fairy tale.

The Devil loves to give distortions of himself so that we miss the real issue. The fact is, we face issues where fallen angels [demons] seek to undermine our Christian lives. One reason God placed us here on earth is to show that Satan did not have to fall. Jesus is the prime example of

someone who overcame Satan and his temptations.

Revelation 13:1-10

"Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name. Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority. And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast. So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?" And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months. Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven. It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. If anyone has an ear, let him hear. He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints"

We are still in a parenthesis of personages that began at chapter twelve. Chapter 13 brings us to the sixth personage, the beast out of the sea. This person is the central person of the Tribulation (13:1-10). John describes two beasts, one from the sea and one from the land in this chapter. The first's beast's sidekick is the beast out of the land (13:11f).

Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name.

Beasts prophetically represent kings and kingdoms. John interprets the seven heads in 17:9-10. This seems to imply that the mountains are symbolic of kingdoms.

The beast out of the sea represents the head of the Revived Roman Empire. The old Roman Empire became modern Europe. In the Tribulation, ten nations from Europe will form the Revived Roman Empire. The city of Rome will be the capital of this Empire. Later in the Tribulation, the world ruler will move his capital to Babylon (Revelation 17:16-18; 18:16-19).

The fourth beast of Daniel also had 10 horns (Daniel 7:7-8; cf. Revelation 13:3; 17:3, 7). The fourth beast is the Roman Empire. The "little horn" is that case is the world ruler. Revelation 13 is an explanation of Daniel 7.

"After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns" (Daniel 7:7).

"The ten horns are ten kings Who shall arise from this kingdom. And another shall rise after them; He shall be different from the first ones, And shall subdue three kings" (Daniel 7:24).

Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion.

The three animals of this verse refers to the empires of Greece [a leopard, Daniel 7:6], Medo-Persia [a bear, Daniel 7:5] and Babylon [a lion, Daniel 7:4]. All these beasts combine into one beast in our passage, the beast not identified by a specific animal in Daniel.

The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority.

Satan directly gave this beast his power. 2 Thessalonians 2:9 says that the lawless one worked miracles, signs and wonders.

The Devil gave the world ruler three things:

1. "Power" can refer to miraculous powers
2. Thessalonians 2:9; Hebrews 2:4; Acts 22:22; 6:8). He will perform miraculous deceptions (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12).
3. "His throne" refers to his ruling authority. He is king of the world during the Tribulation.
4. "Great authority" refers to the extent of his rule. His authority extends beyond the 10-nation confederacy (v.7).

And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed.

One of the seven heads (kingdoms) received a mortal wound by a sword (v.14). This government fell. When Satan resurrected this kingdom, it caused worldwide wonder. This is the resurrection of the old Roman Empire to the Revived Roman Empire.

To which of the seven heads does this refer? 17:8-11 indicates that it is the seventh kingdom. It is the head that "was" (old Rome) and "is not" (present Rome) and "is about to come" (the Revived Roman Empire). In verse two, the beast represents a composite of the kingdoms of Babylon, Greece and Medo-Persia, so it appears that the beast is the world ruler of future kingdoms (13:1,2; 17:8,9).

And all the world marveled and followed the beast.

The word "marveled" means to wonder. Satan overcame the whole world by miraculous workings. The phrase "all the world" indicates that this deception will be worldwide. Maybe they will see this by satellite. This does not necessarily imply that he currently rules over the world.

So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?"

The healing of the beast's mortal wound causes people to worship the dragon (Satan) and the

beast (the world ruler). This is the way that Satan gets people to worship in his counterfeit religion. Their worship extended to the point that they felt that no one could defeat him. In their minds, the beast was invincible. The Bible calls this "strong delusion" (2 Thessalonians 2:11). This is the religion of the Tribulation. Satan designs all religion to worship him. He wants people to do good independently of God.

And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months.

Blasphemy of the beast continued for the last three and a half years of the Great Tribulation (11:2,3; 12:6,14). Satan gives the beast outstanding speaking ability so that he is able to persuade people of all cultures.

Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven.

The beast's religious activity is to blaspheme God and all that He represents. Satan even blasphemes the church in heaven.

It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them.

The beast made war with the Tribulation saints. It will cost many saints their lives to take a stand for God in the Tribulation. Yet, more people will come to Christ by their death than by their lives.

And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation.

The beast rules over the entire world (Daniel 7:23).

All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

The beast also develops a worldwide religion and demands that everyone in the world worship him (2 Thessalonians 2:4). This is a universal church. The only exception to those who worship him are those who have their names in the Book of Life.

Jesus was not only slain in the first century, He was slain from eternity in terms of God's eternal plan (Ephesians 1:4).

If anyone has an ear, let him hear.

John exhorts people who read the book of Revelation to go positive to what he is saying. His challenges to the churches (chapters 2-3) also carried this command. It will be difficult to heed this command under the pressure of the entire world turning to a universal religion. However, there is no invitation to the church here. This is a challenge to the Tribulation saints.

He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword.

If a saint listens to the challenge of verse nine, then he may go into captivity or be killed with the sword. The underlying principle here is that of retribution. It is not God's will for believers to take things into their own hands. God will take vengeance on those who persecute believers. He who kills by the sword will die by the sword. The way a person lives is the way they will die. The beast and his troops will die the way they live.

Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

Believers must exercise great patience (steadfastness of soul) and faith during the Tribulation. Patience is not passiveness. It is fidelity in the face of terrible pressure. They operate on faith and not by retaliation.

Principle

The Tribulation is a period of power politics and one world religion.

Application

One day a Revived Roman Empire will arise out of Western Europe. A world ruler will surface who will be a demon-possessed political dictator of the Revived Roman Empire.

The Revived Roman Empire is made up of a ten-nation confederacy under the authority of a world ruler. We should take note of what is happening in Western Europe. Individual nations are giving their authority to the European Community (EC). This is the United States of Europe.

Revelation 13:11-18

"Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon. And he

exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived. He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed. He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666"

We now turn to the second beast of this chapter, the beast out of the Earth. This is the religious leader of the Revived Roman Empire.

Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon.

The first beast came out of the sea (v.1) but the second beast comes out of the Earth. Some think that this beast is a Jew from Palestine because of the term "Earth." There is no evidence for this.

The second beast masquerades as a lamb with two horns. The "two horns like a lamb" is a difficult phrase to interpret. The "horns" represent authority. This beast has two horns and the first beast had 10 horns. At the same time, this beast is like a lamb that is a mild creature. This gentlemanly creature will deceive people with his mild mode of operation.

The second beast has special demonic powers of communication for he can speak like the devil [dragon]. Apparently, he is the false prophet who speaks for the first beast. He represents world ecumenical religion. He looks like a lamb but

speaks like a dragon. He looks like the Lord Jesus (John 1:29; Revelation 5:6) but speaks like the devil. He pawns himself off as the Lamb, the Messiah.

The dictator of the Revived Roman Empire will eventually destroy this religious system (17:16). God will cast him along with the first beast into the Lake of Fire (19:20; 20:10).

And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.

The second beast does the bidding of the first beast by receiving the delegation of authority of religion. He occupies a secondary role. The false prophet [the second beast] is the head of worldwide ecumenical religion. His purpose is to encourage worship of the dictator of the Revived Roman Empire.

He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men.

The second beast persuades people to worship the first beast by performing miraculous signs. He is a wonder worker. In this, he operates as the personal prophet for the dictator of the Revived Roman Empire. The Greek indicates that he repeatedly performs these miracles so that a momentum of wonders occurs. The word "great" indicates that these will be extraordinary miracles. Present day miracle fakers are no match for this false prophet. The purpose of these signs is to authenticate the authority of the first beast.

Some people think that this "fire come down from heaven" is an imitation of the miracle of Elijah (1 Kings 18:38). His hope is to confuse biblical miracles with satanic miracles.

And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived.

The second beast sets up an image of the first beast. The book of Revelation refers to many images (Revelation 13:14-15; 14:9, 11; 15:2; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4). The first beast accepts worship as he sits in the temple in Jerusalem. This is the

abomination of desolations of which Daniel and Jesus warned us.

"...who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (2 Thessalonians 2:4).

Satan designed the miracles of the second beast to "deceive." The word "deceive" means to "wander, mislead, lead astray."

"The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12).

Not all miracles are of God, for the second beast performs these miracles in the presence and authority of the first beast (13:2). No discerning Christian trusts any and every miracle. He or she must ask the question, "Is this miracle demonic or divine?"

He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.

The second beast gives breath and the power to speak to the image of the first beast. This is his second deception. The word "image" is more than a copy but represents the reality of the thing. This image symbolizes the religious authority of the first beast and is the force behind his world wide power. This image had the power to convince people to kill those who did not worship the first beast.

He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads,

The second beast will require everyone to wear the mark of the first beast. All men of every state in

life must receive this mark in a prominent place – the forehead. This will easily categorize those who worship the beast and those who do not.

The word "mark" means an impression made by a stamp. The beast will brand, like so many cows, those who belong to him.

and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

The second beast restructures the economy of the world. Without this mark, no one could buy or sell even the necessities of life. This will exclude any believer who takes a stand for Christ. By this disenfranchisement, all believers will lose all their civil rights. Many believers will die because they refuse to accept the mark.

Here is wisdom.

There is wisdom in understanding the implications of the mark of the beast.

Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666.

The attempts to find hidden meanings in the 666 are legion. This leads to futile conjecture. Nowhere does the Bible use gematria [mystical interpretation] as a system of interpretation. It does use numbers symbolically but this is different from gematria. This passage explicitly says that 666 is the number of man. All attempts to identify the name of the world dictator to come by running scenarios of numbers are futile.

The word "calculate" means to reckon, compute, count. The believer must calculate the number of the beast. The mark of the beast has something to do with mankind being central to reality. This is similar to humanism today. Humanism is not humanitarianism. Humanitarianism is simply people helping people in need. Humanism is about mankind being central to reality. Mankind will solve its own problems. People can get along without God. This religion promotes worship of mankind. Religion takes our eyes off God.

Principle

Christianity is a threat to world religion.

Application

During the Tribulation, there will be one world government, one world religion and one world economic system. Anyone who refuses to conform to these systems will die. This is the Devil's final attempt to gain the worship of the world.

Christianity is a threat to world religion. Because Christianity claims to be mutually exclusive, world ecumenical religion must put it down. Unity at all costs will be the theme of the future in order to obtain syncretism in religion. World religion must eliminate religions that claim distinction.

The false prophet speaks sweetness and light but deals in death when it comes to Christians. This will require the dissolving of nationalism. Therefore, all nations will surrender their sovereignty to the dictator of the Revived Roman Empire. A single credit card for the world will give him global economic power. This will intimidate dissenters to get with the "program."

The Devil uses the system of religion to deceive. He wants mankind to act independently of God. To do this, he systematizes belief as well as behaviour. There is nothing more misleading than religion. Religion is the ultimate weapon of the Devil.

Revelation 14:1-5

"Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God"

Chapters 14 and 15 introduce three scenes of victory of the Lamb with his 144,000. These scenes in heaven and earth lay the groundwork for the seven bowl judgments.

The first five verses introduce what will transpire with the 144,000 people (7:4-8) during the Great Tribulation.

Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads.

This verse anticipates the triumph of the Lamb and the 144,000 evangelists at the end of the Tribulation.

Mount Zion is a place of worship (Psalm 2:6; Isaiah 24:23; 28:16; Joel 3:5; Hebrews 12:22) in Jerusalem.

John sets forth six characteristics of the 144,000. First, God separates them to Himself. They have the name of the "Father" written on their foreheads in contrast to the mark of the beast (13:16;14:11). These are those whom God set apart as His own. They march to the step of the Father.

And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps.

The 144,000 heard a voice like a thundering majestic waterfall.

There will be instrumental music in heaven. When we get there, God will delight us to the best music in the world. We have heard the saying, "Music charms the savage beast." There will be great latitude for different tastes in music. I doubt that we will all have the same personality, the same physical looks or the same interests in heaven. Some people falsely assume that there will be nothing but classical music in heaven!! Not only will we listen to music, we will also make music.

They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth.

Second, they constantly [Greek] sing a new song. The 144,000 evangelists sing a song on Mount Zion

in Jerusalem. They have a different song than their generation.

These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins.

Third, they lived celibate lives. The evangelists could not live in a normal married state. This is only for a few and only for those under special duress. Unmarried people can devote themselves more fully to the Lord (1 Corinthians 7:1-7).

These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes.

Fourth, they followed the Lamb where He goes.

These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb.

Fifth, they are the "firstfruits" to God and to the Lamb. The term "firstfruits" may indicate that the 144,000 will precede others of a great harvest who become believers just before the Second Coming (Zechariah 12:10). This is an earnest of the triumph of the Second Coming.

And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.

Sixth, they did not deceive in their communication. The 144,000 did not deceive with their mouth. As God sees them, they were without fault before God's presence [throne]. They had nothing to hide. They were who they were.

The New Testament uses the Greek word translated "without fault" for sacrificial animals that do not have defect. These witnesses had no soul taints or unconfessed sins.

Principle

God wants us to sell out to Him and His plan for this world.

Application

John Wesley said, "Give me a hundred men who love nothing but God and hate nothing but sin, and I will save the whole world for Christ." Jesus said, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19).

Revelation 14:6-13

"Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting

gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth – to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people – saying with a loud voice, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water." And another angel followed, saying, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, "he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. "And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name." Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.'" "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them"

A new section begins with verse six – the angelic announcements of judgment (vv. 6-20).

Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth – to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people –

John describes a new vision of an angel with a message as "the eternal gospel." He was to preach this message to everyone who "who dwell on the earth." This is a gospel of judgment, not salvation (v.7). It is the good news that God's purposes in the world are finally coming to fulfillment. God will now discharge the pending judgment against the world dictator.

saying with a loud voice, "Fear God and give glory to Him,

The phrase "fear God" indicates that people must respect God for who He is. Most people have little conception of the greatness of His person. Fear carries the idea of awe. We must first gain an awe of God if we are going to respect His work.

The only way to glorify God is to accept the principle of grace. Grace means that God does the work. If God does the work, then He gets the glory. If we do the work then we get the glory. God made every provision we need to execute the Christian way of life in Christ. If we accept and believe that, we glorify God.

Mankind usurped God's glory; now God retrieves His glory with mankind in time and on earth.

for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.

An announcement of imminent judgment warns people about the object of worship. This is a communiqué of doom.

And another angel followed, saying, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication."

A second angel announced the fall of Babylon because she made the nations adulterate the truth of God's message. "Babylon" is a figurative reference to the Revived Roman Empire (1 Peter 5:13). We will see this in more detail in chapters 17 and 18. Babylon refers to religious internationalism. God destroyed this system the first time in Genesis when He broke down one language into many languages. This was an attempt at one world government. However, God broke that system of one world government into many governments (chapter 11). Religious internationalism of the future United Nations will fall.

The repetition of the words "is fallen" is for emphasis. This is a point of great climax in God's economy. The fall of Babylon is certain.

To "drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication" is a figure for imbibing God's wrath. The nations receive God's wrath because they allowed themselves to be seduced into false

worship (v, 10). Those who imbibe Babylon's evil system will fall to that decision. If they ally themselves with this system, they commit spiritual fornication. This will be a difficult decision for many for this prostitute [international religion] is very attractive to the world. Her "wine" will intoxicate those who drink it.

Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand,

A third angel warns of worshipping the world dictator, the head of the Revived Roman Empire. The decision point as to whether they worship the beast is their acceptance or rejection of his mark on their forehead or hand. This will be their fatal choice.

"he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.

Those who follow the "beast" will suffer "fire and brimstone." God will not dilute His wrath. It will come in full measure.

"And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name."

This judgment is eternal (Matthew 25:46). No one will have any rest. This torment is not temporary. The phrase "forever and ever" is a very strong phrase for eternity.

Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

John repeatedly calls attention to "patience." Tribulation believers are to suffer patiently through severe persecution (13:10). To do so, they need to hold remain faithful to Jesus (2:13).

Those who "keep" the commandments of God [apply the promises of the Word of God], can endure trial. The word "keep" means to guard. This is a military term. Stay on guard to the Word of God like a soldier standing on watch against the enemy.

Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.'"

A special promise of a state of blessedness comes to those who die "in the Lord." The "blessed" state here is a special promise to those who die in the Tribulation.

"Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them."

Death is a blessed relief from persecution.

Principle

There is a right way to live and there is a right way to die.

Application

The right way to handle our problems is to put them in the Lord's hands by faith. He is much more capable of handling our problems than we are. We say, "Please clobber my enemies right now. I do not have patience with this any more." God's timing is always perfect.

"Cast your burden on the Lord, And He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved" (Psalm 55:2).

"...casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7).

We can sometimes handle the charge of the mosquito but rarely the charge of the elephant. That is because we trust in ourselves rather than God. We need to leave the timing to God. In this way, we can rest under severe pressure.

"Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord" (Romans 12:19).

"But those who wait on the Lord Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31).

The right way to die is to die in the Lord. The wrong way to die is to die without the Lord (John 8:24).

Revelation 14:14-20

"Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, 'Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.' So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped. Then another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire, and he cried with a loud cry to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, 'Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe.' So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trampled outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses' bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlong"

The remainder of this chapter presents the judgment of the Son of Man.

Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle.

Man has been at bat but this judgment is the time when God comes to bat. Christ holds the right to all judgment (John 5:27).

The word "crown" is the victor's crown. He has right to this harvest. Jesus is about to win the victory. He will win the victory by a sharp, severe sickle of judgment. He will harvest His fields thoroughly. This is a vision of the Lord Jesus coming in power and great glory.

And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, 'Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the

time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe."

The phrase "fully ripe" carries a bad connotation. Literally, it means to become dry, withered. This harvest is so ripe that it withered.

So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped.

The Son of Man's judgment is swift and immediate.

Then another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.

Another angel comes with another ominous announcement. This is the final harvest judgment.

And another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire, and he cried with a loud cry to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, "Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe."

This is not a repetition of the previous verses. This is yet another occasion for judgment, the judgment of "the clusters of the vine." Scriptures often use the vine as a figure for Israel (Isaiah 5; Psalm 80). This is the judgment of apostate Israel. Israel is full of atheism today. They reject their own Scriptures.

So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.

This judgment comes to fulfillment in chapter 19. This is the time when armies of the world swarm over Israel. True Israel will flee to the wilderness. Apostate Israel will enter Armageddon.

"Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God" (Revelation 19:15).

And the winepress was trampled outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses' bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs.

People in the first century tramped the grapes so that the juice would flow to a lower vat. In this way, they force the juice out. God will force out

judgment in the battle of Armageddon. Six hundred furlongs is about 200 miles, the length of Palestine. There will be a blood bath in the suburbs of Jerusalem that flows throughout the length of Israel.

Principle

Jesus will ultimately triumph over the forces of this world.

Application

We have not seen the last war yet. Saddam Hussein said that he was fighting the war to end all wars in the Gulf conflict. However, the Battle of Armageddon is the war to end all wars. These are the plain, bald facts of prophecy.

Beyond these bloody scenes is a day of rejoicing, a day of victory.

Revelation 15:1-4

"Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete. And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God. They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: "Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints! Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, For Your judgments have been manifested"

In chapter fifteen, we come to more details of God's judgment on the world. Chapter fifteen prepares us for the pouring out of the bowl judgments in chapter sixteen. God's wrath is building to a grand climax.

Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete.

The Holy Spirit gives another "sign" of the judgment of the future world dictator and his religious system.

The seven angels of this chapter are different from the angels of the preceding chapter. This last series of seven plagues completes the Tribulation period. God's wrath has been building for centuries. In the Tribulation, He unleashes His wrath. In the bowl judgments, He concludes His judgment on the world.

And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God.

The martyrs who conquered the beast stand by a "sea of glass" with harps of God. In preparation for the pouring out of the seven bowl judgments, the people of God enter into worship.

The beast and his tribe do not surface until the middle of the Tribulation. This means that those who gained victory over the beast must have done that some time after the middle of the Tribulation. These believers have already been martyred and sing a song in heaven.

They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying:

In this verse, we have the lyrics of a song the Tribulation martyrs sing in heaven. The "song of Moses" and "of the Lamb" praises God for His works, truth, justice, name [character], and holiness. These characteristics are His glory.

Great and marvelous are Your works,

God's works are great in extent and inspire awe in the minds of the saints. Here men forget their problems and puny goals and throw themselves into the awe of God. They see the entire history of the world coming to a conclusion in the judgments unfolding before their eyes. They see the glory of God exhibited as never before. Their little plans for life do not matter anymore. Self-importance fades into God-centered orientation.

Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints!

Worship is to acknowledge God's person and His work. We cannot worship the Lord until we know something about His person and work. We cannot love a man or woman until we know them.

Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy.

God will fully vindicate justice on the earth by the Second Coming of Christ. This is why He deserves glory from His creatures. They sing a song to the omnipotence and justice of God. He is the God of time and eternity. Everything God does, He does with forethought. There are no mishaps with Him. He does not operate on luck but on His sovereignty. His glory is beyond calculation but He put us on earth to glorify His name.

For all nations shall come and worship before You, For Your judgments have been manifested

"All" of the nations coming to worship is an anticipation of the Millennium. This is when Jesus publicly assumes His right as King of the World. During the Kingdom, all nations will fall down in worship before the Messiah. Jesus assuming His position as King happens after the seventh bowl judgment.

No one will say in that day, "Look at man and what man accomplished." They will say, "Look at God's plan for creation. It came to fulfillment just as He promised."

Principle

Things are not always what they appear to be in God's economy.

Application

God now answers the prayer, "How long, Oh Lord, how long?" God brings all apparent injustices into right relationship.

At times, what appears to be a loss is really a victory. The martyrs of the above verses appear to lose to the beast, but they come back in great victory. God works in different ways than man. Things are not always what they appear to be. The beast thought that he got rid of his enemies but they only came back with their sovereign Lord.

God expects Christians to take a stand for what they believe. Put your confidence in the promises of God. Everything else in life is frail and fallible. We cannot improve upon the promises of God. Trust God to take you through your situation even though it may appear that you face great injustice. It takes maturity to worship fully. We cannot do this until we thoroughly know His person and work. That means that we must know the Word of God to worship at the highest level.

Do you have the eyes and ears of worship? Do you take note of God's greatness? When you stand before the Rocky Mountains, do you worship?

Revelation 15:5-8

"After these things I looked, and behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened. And out of the temple came the seven angels having the seven plagues, clothed in pure bright linen, and having their chests girded with golden bands. Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives forever and ever. The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power, and no one was able to enter the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed"

Chapter fifteen introduces chapter sixteen [the administration of the bowl judgments].

After these things I looked,

The words "these things" refer to the sign of the sea of glass [vv. 1-4]. An interval of time occurred between this sign of the temple and the sign of the sea of glass. The first sign is a celebration of the saints. This sign indicates the source of the bowl judgments - God Himself.

and behold,

John sees something dramatic. the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened.

An archetype of the Tent of the testimony (Exodus 25:9,40) opens in heaven. The word for "temple" is the term for the inner holy place, the Holy of Holies. Remember the point of the tabernacle and temple was to present a Christology for us to see.

All the furniture and functions of the temple were a testimony to Christ.

And out of the temple came the seven angels having the seven plagues,

God is about to unleash the terrible seven plague judgments. The source of these seven plagues is God Himself. God used every possible means to reach people for Christ but they rejected Him. The angels come from the presence of God acting on His behalf to execute final justice in the world.

clothed in pure bright linen, and having their chests girded with golden bands.

The clothes of these angels indicate that the bowl judgments are an expression of the righteousness of God. There is nothing unfair or unjust in God's judgments.

Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls

The bowl judgments will bring glory to God. These bowls are "full" of God's wrath. These judgments are no feeble attempts at wrath. They are ominous signs. Nothing will pacify the fear of God's wrath. Each bowl judgment is an execution of a verdict against one world religion.

full of the wrath of God who lives forever and ever.

The word "full" means full to the brim. The last seven judgments will accomplish God's justice in the world. This judgment comes from the eternal One.

The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power,

"Smoke" often represents the presence of God (Exodus 19:9,18; Isaiah 6:1-4). God's presence exposes sin and injustice. God will execute His judgments from His omnipotence.

and no one was able to enter the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed

God temporarily closes the temple. No one can enter the temple until the angels complete their work. Everything stops in heaven until the seven bowl judgments finish. All activity ceases until God completes His justice. No repentance is possible at this point.

Principle

God's righteousness will ultimately triumph over iniquity.

Application

God's glory is at stake in the ultimate triumph of His righteousness. One of the great purposes of the Tribulation is to demonstrate the righteous plan of God for the world. He will demonstrate that Satan is a liar, the father of lies. God has no option but to judge those who do not come to Christ for they are completely culpable.

"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened" (Romans 1:18-21).

"But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who 'will render to each one according to his deeds:' eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness – indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God" (Romans 2:5-11).

Revelation 16:1-11

Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth." So the first went and poured out his bowl upon the earth, and a foul and loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. Then the second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it became blood as of a dead man; and every living creature in the sea died. Then the third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood. And I heard the angel of the waters saying: "You are righteous, O Lord, The One who is and who was and who is to be, Because You have judged these things. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, And You have given them blood to drink. For it is their just due." And I heard another from the altar saying, "Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments." Then the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and power was given to him to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God who has power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory. Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain. They blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds

The seventh seal holds the seven trumpets. The seventh trumpet embraces the seven bowls. Chapter 16 begins the outpouring of the bowls of God's final wrath. The events of the Tribulation are coming quickly to a close in rapid machinegun like fashion.

Chapters 12-14 were parenthetical. Chapter 15 introduces the bowl judgments beginning at chapter 16, which is an expansion of the seventh trumpet.

Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth."

There is much similarity and yet striking differences between the trumpet judgments and the bowl judgments. The seven bowls are an expansion of the seventh trumpet judgment.

So the first went and poured out his bowl upon the earth, and a foul and loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image.

The first bowl judgment causes sores on those who worshiped the beast (13:17,18; 14:9-11). This is a throwback to the ulcer-like sores of Egypt (Exodus 9:9-11). The words "foul" and "loathsome" indicate the extent of sickness these sores caused. Those who received the mark of the beast will receive more than they first realized.

Then the second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it became blood as of a dead man; and every living creature in the sea died.

The second bowl judgment destroys every living creature in the sea. The sea is like a dead man floating in blood. The idiom is one of death.

Then the third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood.

The third bowl judgment expands to the fresh water of the earth--the drinking water. There may be water from wells, but none from rivers or springs.

And I heard the angel of the waters saying:

The third angel who has jurisdiction over fresh water applauds these judgments.

"You are righteous, O Lord, The One who is and who was and who is to be, Because You have judged these things.

God is "righteous" for sending these judgments. God is eternal; therefore, nothing slips by Him. His plan will in due course come to pass.

For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, And You have given them blood to drink. For it is their just due.

This judgment is God's response to killing the "saints and prophets." They shed the blood of the

saints and prophets so they will drink blood. The punishment matches the crime. They were thirsty for the blood of the saints, so God gives them blood to drink. What goes around, comes around, so to speak. God always makes the punishment fit the crime. It is about time their judgment has come. God will vindicate Himself in time on earth.

And I heard another from the altar saying, "Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments."

Another voice from the altar vindicates God's justice. No one in hell will accuse God of being unfair.

Then the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and power was given to him to scorch men with fire.

There will be a worldwide judgment of fire. Nothing will protect people from these rays.

And men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God who has power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory.

Although these rebels know the source of this scorching heat judgment, they become even more hardened against God. The more people harden themselves against God, the more difficult it is for them to respond to God (Ephesians 4:17-19; Hebrews 3:7-19). They know that God can sovereignly turn this heat on or off, yet they will not soften their hearts.

One would think that with all these severe judgments, people would turn to God. But some people are so perverse that they will not turn to God no matter what happens to them. These people even "blaspheme" God in their duress. No one will repent in Hell. This manifests man's congenital hatred of God. We cannot educate people into loving God. Loving God comes through a changed heart. We cannot say, "Pig, I want you to be a sheep. I will teach you how." A pig needs to change the pig's heart.

Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain.

The fifth bowl of darkness (Exodus 10:21-23) exacts judgment against the throne of the beast.

This is an assault by God against the authority and world rule of the dictator of the Revived Roman Empire. This foreshadows their eternal darkness.

They blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds.

These people remain intransigent and refuse to repent (2:21; 9:21; 16:9). Just as it was during the plagues of Egypt, unbelievers of the Tribulation period remain unmoved by God. They completely rebel against God's authority over their lives, but the bowl judgments squash this revolt against God. They even go a step further in blaspheming God (v.9). As long as we minimize sin and do not come complete awareness of the immensity of God's character, we will fail to understand God's plan for the universe.

Principle

God is too wise to make a mistake and too good to do wrong.

Application

What goes around, comes around. One day, God will make right all wrongs.

God never takes petty vengeance in this world. He sends judgment on the world from time to time, but never in full force and consistency. There are instances of divine intervention such as Noah's flood. But generally, we live in the day of the hushed heaven. Murderers go free. Men violate women. Humans do as they please.

"We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one" (1 John 5:19).

One day all this will come to a shocking, sudden end. Justice will prevail. God will straighten out all wrongs.

"...Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Genesis 18:25).

God is always on the level and fair. We sometimes think that God is not fair, but that is because we do not possess all the facts. God always operates according to His perfect character. God demonstrated His true character by the cross. He cannot tolerate any sin in any amount. That is what sent Jesus to the cross. If we reject the cross, God has no alternative but to send us to Hell. He

must be consistent with His character. He has no alternative.

Revelation 16:12-16

"Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared. And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. "Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame." And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon"

God's patience has now run out and He pours out His wrath against the world.

"Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared.

The sixth bowl judgment prepares the 1800 mile long river Euphrates for the kings from the Orient who will engage in the battle of Armageddon. Euphrates is a water boundary between the Roman Empire and the East. The armies of the East will be massive in number so the waters of the Euphrates need to be dry for their advance (Isaiah 11:15). Two hundred million soldiers will gather for war at Armageddon (9:16). By comparison, the allied army under Eisenhower only numbered five million. All these armies will converge on Palestine to exterminate the Jews.

And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.

Verses 13-16 give us a commentary on verse 12. Demon activity (13-14) follows God's activity (15-16). Verses 13-16 are a commentary on the sixth bowl judgment.

The next verse identifies the "unclean spirits" of this verse. They are demons coming from the dragon (Satan, 12:9). The head of the Revived Roman Empire (the beast) and the religious head of the Empire (the false prophet) are demon possessed.

This is the first time Revelation uses the term "false prophet." Diabolical forces give these leaders supernatural power. Demon possession is the force behind the convergence of the armies of the nations of the world in Palestine.

For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

These demons perform miracles before the kings of the earth to influence them to do battle in that "great day of God Almighty." They perform supernatural signs by diabolical power. Demons can perform miracles.

Satan will establish world government (13:2) by his power. He will gather all the armies of the world to do battle. This battle will continue up to the coming of Christ. There will be house-to-house fighting in Jerusalem on the day Christ comes back to claim his crown (Zechariah 14:1-3). The Greek emphatically makes the point that this battle is a day of God's final victory. The Greek word "battle" is literally the word war, a campaign, not a single battle (Ezekiel 38; Daniel 11:40-45; Zechariah 14:1-3; Joel 3:1-17).

Behold,

The word "behold" calls attention to the importance of the following statement.

I am coming as a thief.

In the midst of these events, Jesus speaks. He warns us about His coming. He will come like a "thief." A thief comes when no one expects him. He does not send an engraved invitation. He does not say, "Tomorrow morning, about two a.m., I will break into your house and steal everything I can." There is a need to be prepared - for his coming will be unexpected.

Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.

A parenthesis warns believers that they need to prepare themselves for this climactic event. People need to carry their clothes with them during this period because they may wind up running through the streets naked.

Jesus promises a special blessing to those who heed His warning. Two characteristics are important for that time: 1) They are to "watch." This word means to stay awake or alert in expectation of His coming. They are to guard the moment. 2) They are to "keep their garments" ready to wear at any time. They are to stay prepared for His coming.

And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon.

The "they" who do the gathering of the armies here are the demons of verse thirteen. They will fight the war to end all wars in the Valley of Megiddo. This is the place where we get the word "Armageddon." Many battles in the Old Testament were fought there.

Principle

We must keep the Boy Scout motto: be prepared.

Application

Just as future Tribulation saints must prepare themselves for the Second Coming, Christians of our day must prepare themselves for the Rapture.

"And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts" (Romans 13:11-14).

Revelation 16:17-21

"Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came

out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, "It is done!" And there were noises and thundering and lightning; and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth. Now the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath. Then every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And great hail from heaven fell upon men, each hailstone about the weight of a talent. Men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, since that plague was exceedingly great"

This passage deals with the seventh and final bowl judgment. The seventh bowl judgment is a series of judgments. This is the most grave and unprecedented judgment of the entire Tribulation. John repeats the word for "great" in the Greek seven times in this chapter.

Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, "It is done!"

The seventh angel poured out his bowl upon the atmospheric heavens. Atmospheric heavens are the abode of Satan and his demons (Ephesians 2:2).

The word "loud" is the Greek word great. At the finish of the seventh bowl, a voice declares that this is the final act of God's judgment. This judgment is the finish of Satan and his demons. The words "is done" means that it finished at one point in the past with the result abiding permanently. God not only finishes His judgment, but the result continues in this case into eternity.

And there were noises and thundering and lightning; and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth.

The last bowl judgment brings unprecedented natural disturbances. These disturbances reduce the shrines of men to shambles. The earth is the most stable thing we know. When the earth

shakes, we have no point of orientation. There is no where to flee. This "great" earthquake is a terrifying experience.

Now the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath.

Verses 19-20 show the enormity of the devastating earthquake of verse 18.

The earthquake of the previous verse shakes Jerusalem (the great city, 11:8) so hard that the city divides into three parts. Other cities also shake including Babylon, the city that launched the times of the Gentiles. The fall of these cities is the end of the times of the Gentiles.

Then every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.

The earthquake has worldwide impact. The topography of the world changes dramatically. Some islands sink into the ocean and some mountains fall into great crevasses of the ground. God brings the whole world to final accountability.

And great hail from heaven fell upon men, each hailstone about the weight of a talent.

A "talent" is about 132 pounds. Imagine 132-pound hail falling from the sky! Hail that heavy would go through the roof of your house. That hailstorm will cause great havoc and will cause men to blaspheme god.

Men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, since that plague was exceedingly great.

Here is another use of the term "great" with the qualifying term "exceedingly" before it. This judgment is so great that God calls it a "plague." This hailstorm will crumble houses, businesses and the monuments of men. Everything crumbles except the rebellious heart of man.

This is the end of the Tribulation chronologically in the book of Revelation. The next two chapters will expound the fall of Babylon (meaning globalism, one world government and one world religion, 14:8). Those two chapters do not advance the Tribulation chronologically. This brings us chronologically to the next event in God's

program, the Second Coming of Christ (chapter 19).

Principle

The mills of God grind exceedingly slow, but they grind exceedingly sure.

Application

There has never been a time when man has not had an opportunity to get right with God. Every person has had a chance to receive Christ.

Man must give account to God as the Final Judge. God will assault the citadel of man's heart by collapsing the world around him.

Revelation 17:1-4

"Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, 'Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, 'with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication.' So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication"

The next two chapters do not advance the book of Revelation chronologically. They take an excursion into Babylonianism.

Chapters 17 and 18 take us to the fall of Babylon (14:8; 16:19). The Bible makes 280 references to Babylon. The events of these two chapters probably fall at the end of the Great Tribulation. Chronologically, chapter 19 follows chapter 16.

Chapter 17 is the religious fall of Babylon and chapter 18 is the political fall of Babylon. First, we come to the destruction of religious Babylon. Babylon is the fountain of ecumenical religion that is the antithesis of true Christianity.

The first chapter then deals with the fall of worldwide ecumenical religion, a super-church

inclusive of all cults and religions. The beast uses ecumenical religion to rise to power and then overthrows it later to suit his convenience.

Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, 'Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters,

One of the seven-bowl-judgment angels requests John to observe the judgment of the great harlot. A whore is someone considered sexually promiscuous. The great harlot is promiscuous with the truth of the Word of God. A whore offers sexual satisfaction outside of marriage. Apostate religion offers religious satisfaction outside the principles of God's Word. It calls itself Christian and yet consorts with godless systems of belief (James 4:4).

The phrase "sits on many waters" indicates the harlot's authority to rule. She dominates the world religiously. John later interprets the "many waters" where the great harlot sits. People from all over the world will buy into her religion (v.15). This whore reigns over a world wide religion at this point, which dominates the one-world government.

"with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication."

The great harlot symbolizes world religion. The "kings of the earth" and "the inhabitants of the earth" "committed fornication" with her; that is, they became part of her world-wide religious system. In the beginning of the Tribulation, religion will have great power over governments. The great whore is very attractive. International religion is very attractive to many people.

The "wine" of the harlot's fornication is her Babylonian doctrines of syncretism, internationalism and a single world order. She will assault any system of belief that holds to a mutually exclusive doctrine. Everyone must conform to a politically correct [or religiously correct, if you prefer] viewpoint. Christians will not be able to claim that Jesus is the only way to heaven without persecution (John 14:6; Acts 4:12).

The inhabitants of the earth become "drunk" with these doctrines. They give themselves over to this

worldwide ecumenical religion. Drunkenness with this system of belief deludes them.

"For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thessalonians 2:7).

So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

The angel carried John by a vision into the desert where he saw the great harlot. Blasphemous names covered her body.

The whore sat on a beast with seven heads and 10 horns (13:1). This is the beast of the Revived Roman Empire of a 10 nation confederacy of Europe and the centre of world government. The whore who sits on the beast probably means that world religion has the dominant position over world government for the first half of the Tribulation. World government will eventually put down world religion (vv. 17,18).

The "seven heads" are seven governments and refer to the most important heads of state in the Revived Roman Empire. The 10 horns are 10 kings who reign simultaneously (17:12).

The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls,

The great harlot dressed in religious paraphernalia similar to religions of our day. World religion is very wealthy in the Tribulation. Wealth attracts

many people. A world religion is a glamorous thought.

having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication.

World religion's cup contains "abominations" and "filthiness." These are not moral matters but truth issues. Her false ideas are the ideas of world religion. She takes a little from each religion in the world and molds them into one religious idea.

Principle

In the Tribulation, there will be a worldwide closed shop in religion.

Application

Ecumenical religion has certain glamour (17:4) to many people in the world. They love religion for religion's sake. Religion dazzles and blinds them to the truth. Religion impresses them.

Babylonianism is a counterfeit religion of universal oneness. This is the mother of religious apostasy. This system plagued Israel of the Old Testament and it plagues the church of the New Testament. There is great temptation even among evangelicals today to move toward one church. This is a temptation to build a monument to human pride as in the tower of Babel. Man by man will produce something that will save the world. This is a rebellious thought against God. It is a sad commentary on evangelicals of today that they have a desire to return to Babylonianism.

The Bible has very little good to say about religion per se. Religion feeds self-approbation and self-righteousness. Religion is always antagonistic to God's provisions in Christ. Religion always goes autonomous from God's grace and feeds ego lust. Religion will dominate your soul if you let it. But one-world religion in itself is the great whore. It is a perversion of what God did in Christ. It places emphasis on man and man's efforts rather than God and His accomplishments in Christ.

Revelation 17:5-6

"And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. I saw the woman, drunk

with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement"

And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

Babylon is in Iraq about 50 miles south of Baghdad on the south side of the Euphrates River.

The Bible refers to Babylon 280 times. Generally, the Bible views Babylon as the source of false religion. This system of thought finds its way throughout the Bible. It sets forth a rival international religious kingdom to the Kingdom of Christ.

The tower of Babel was the first attempt at international religion (Genesis 10,11). Nimrod founded Babylon. He hunted human souls.

"Cush begot Nimrod; he began to be a mighty one on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord; therefore it is said, 'Like Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord.' And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel [Babylon], Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar" (Genesis 10:8).

According to extra-biblical accounts, Nimrod's wife [Semiramis] established the secret religious rites of the Babylonian mysteries. Semiramis supposedly gave birth to a son by miraculous conception. She gave him the name Tammuz. This religion accepted both mother and child as gods, and attempted to fake salvation (Genesis 3:15). Tammuz was purportedly killed by a wild animal and then raised from the dead, a fake of Christ's resurrection. Babylonians view Tammuz as their savior. The later worship of Baal was connected to the veneration of Tammuz.

The religious system of Babylon had many secrets (mysteries) into which they initiated their followers. These rites included male and female prostitution, which worshipped the mother and child. This religion spread throughout the then-known world [Greece, Egypt, Italy, Phoenicia, Israel, India, Asia Minor and Europe]. This is why Revelation calls her "the Mother of Harlots" (17:5).

When the Persians conquered Babylon in 539 BC, they dissuaded the practice of the mystery religions. In time, these Babylonian cults moved to Pergamum (2:12-17). Eventually these mystery religions paganized Christianity. We see this manifested in much of the ritual that is in many churches today.

Chief priests of the Babylonian cult wore crowns in the shape of a fish head in honor of the fish god. These crowns carried the words "Keeper of the Bridge." This was a symbol of the bridge between Satan and man. Roman emperors later adopted the title Pontifex Maximus, which means "Major Keeper of the Bridge." The bishop of Rome took this title as well. Roman Catholics call the pope pontiff today [which word derives from Pontifex].

Genesis 11:3-4 shows the rebellion of Nimrod and his people against God. God ordered the peoples of earth to divide by races and geography (Genesis 9,10) but Nimrod had a better idea. He wanted to establish an international religion and government so he built a ziggurat. A ziggurat is a huge sacred tower made of dried brick for worshipping heathen deities. Astrology, the zodiac and the mother-child cult were the center of their worship. This was an attempt by humanity to resolve its own problems by religion apart from a transcendent God. Babylon became the major progenitor of idolatry throughout the then-known world.

"And they said, 'Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth'" (Genesis 11:4).

Consequently, God judged Babylon by dividing them into nations and languages. The name Babel itself means confusion. Mankind has the proclivity to seek autonomy from God. Its primary means for this is the confusion of internationalism. God will again judge internationalism during the Tribulation period [chapters 17 & 18].

The Persians under Cyrus the Mede conquered Babylon. Later the Greeks under Alexander the Great conquered the Medo-Persians and Babylon fell to the West. Both the Persians and the Greeks made Babylon their capitol.

In Isaiah 36 and 37, God delivers Hezekiah, King of Judah from Sennacherib King of Assyria. Later Hezekiah lapses in faith so Isaiah prophesies (38,39) that the King of Assyria will carry off his treasures and people to Assyria. This was a prophecy of the Babylonian captivity. Nebuchadnezzar fulfilled this prophecy 100 years later by invading Judah and destroying the city of Jerusalem and the temple. No king of Israel has sat on the throne since. Israel is now in the Times of the Gentiles.

The Babylonian Empire of Nebuchadnezzar [600 BC] is the context for the prophecies of the book of Daniel. Daniel is the Revelation of the Old Testament. Daniel 2 speaks of the "Times of the Gentiles."

The prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel condemn Babylonian religion (Jeremiah 7:18; 44:17-19,25; Ezekiel 8:14).

Bacchus or Baal is another name for Tammuz. Astarte or Cybele was the mother who bears the keys to Babylonian religion. Julius Caesar, the emperor of the Roman Empire, became the high priest of this Babylonian cult thinking. That is why his crown bore the name "Pontifex Maximus." Today the pope wears a title taken from "Pontifex Maximus" which is ironically the title for the fish god, Dagon.

The word Babylon stands for more than a city. It represents a system of religion and politics. When we think of finance in North America, we think of Wall Street or Bay Street [in Canada]. These streets represent financial institutions. Babylon depicts a future apostate single-world religion and government in Revelation 17 and 18.

This verse calls the great whore the "mother of harlots." Other religions will follow her lead into eclecticism, syncretism and latitudinarianism. She is the mother of harlots in the sense that many other religions will follow her into a one world religion.

I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement.

This harlot hates the saints so she martyrs them. Apostate religion is never neutral toward biblical Christianity. She knows nothing of the mutually

exclusive truth of the Word of God. All she will accept is latitudinarianism, syncretism or eclecticism. One world religion will violate mutually exclusive ideas. She is unsparing toward them to the extent that she becomes drunk with the idea of killing Christians.

John's utter shock at one world religion was due to the idea that Christianity would become so apostate in the last days. The power of persecution in ecumenical religion staggered even the apostle John.

Principle

Biblically, mutually exclusive tolerance is no virtue.

Application

We can see three characteristics of Babylonianism:

1. Babylonianism as a world religion will be characterized by eclecticism [no one system of truth is right; no single truth contains an integral unity].
2. Another characteristic of this system is syncretism [merging of all religions into one]. In this view, every truth is so true that any other truth must be false. There is a least common denominator to truth and no one truth is the key. There is a grand synthesis out there.
3. The third characteristic of Babylonianism is latitudinarianism [truth is not important; this is especially true where tolerance becomes the prominent idea for one's belief; modernists are latitudinarian in their beliefs].

As Chesterton said, "Tolerance is the virtue of people who do not believe anything."

Revelation 17:7-18

"But the angel said to me, "Why did you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns. The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is. "Here is the

mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits. "There are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come. And when he comes, he must continue a short time. "And the beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition. "The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast. "These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast. "These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful." Then he said to me, "The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues. "And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire. "For God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled. "And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth"

The angel first gives John the vision (vv1-6) and then the interpretation of the vision (7-18). The angel offered to explain the vision of the harlot and the beast that carried her. He explains the "beast" in verses 8-17 and the "woman" in verse 18.

But the angel said to me, "Why did you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns.

The vision of this harlot shocked John and evidently caused him great confusion. His mouth drops open as he sees these events unfold. He does not know what to make of all this. Then the angel explains that the beast is the autocrat of the Revived Roman Empire and the great whore represents one world religion.

"And the fourth kingdom [the Roman Empire] shall be as strong as iron,

inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything; and like iron that crushes, that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others. "Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with ceramic clay" (Daniel 2:40).

"After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns" (Daniel 7:7).

"The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition.

The beast will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go into perdition. The bottomless pit is the residence of Satan (11:7). Satan is the source of this beast. The essence of the idea of world government is satanic and demonic.

The words "was, and is not, and will ascend" are another indication of the revival of the Roman Empire (13:3). John writes in AD 96. The word "was" refers to the old Roman Empire. The words "is not" refer to the present situation that the Roman Empire has not existed since AD 476. The words "will ascend" refer to the Revived Roman Empire. The entire world will be in awe of this supernatural resurrection of the Roman Empire.

Ultimately the Revived Roman Empire will go into "perdition." The word "perdition" means destruction. This is an allusion to the defeat of the Revived Roman Empire by Jesus in His Second Coming.

And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

The universal system of government in the Tribulation will carry people away by its wonder. Unbelievers will stand in awe of the revival of the Roman Empire.

The word "written" indicates in the Greek that God wrote the names at a point in the past and they stand written. The Book of Life is a registry of members of the human race. God blots these names out of the book of physical life if a person does not become a Christian. This book is how it will look in eternity. It is a way of describing those who do not accept Christ as their Savior.

Christians will never have their names blotted out of the Book of Life (Luke 10:20; Hebrews 12:23; Philemon 4:3). Note other references to the Book of Life in Revelation (3:5; 13:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27.)

"Here is the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits.

If we are to understand this vision, it will call for "wisdom" (13:18); otherwise, we will misinterpret the vision.

The angel interprets the "seven heads" as "seven mountains." Many people interpret this as Rome, which people commonly call "the city of seven hills." These people infer that Rome will become the capital of the coming world empire. However, this passage is not dealing with a literal city or mountains but with kings (v.10, 12).

The great whore seated implies the establishment of her world religion. There will be an amalgamation of religion at all costs in the Tribulation.

"There are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come. And when he comes, he must continue a short time.

Five world governments ruled the world until the Roman Empire: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia and Greece. The Roman Empire is the sixth kingdom. That is the government expressed in the words "one is."

The king who "has not yet come" but when he comes "must continue a short time" refers to the Roman Empire marvelously supernaturally revived by Satan in the end time while the eighth beast [the Antichrist] is the final ruler of that empire.

The book of Daniel gives two separate object lessons of this truth (Daniel 2, 7). In Daniel 2, a great statue whose feet have ten toes representing

ten kings. In Chapter 7, four animals represent four kingdoms.

"And the beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition.

The eighth king, is the ruler of the Revived Roman Empire. He comes out of the seven kingdoms, the Revived Roman Empire. Jesus will destroy him and his kingdom at His Second Coming.

"The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast.

Clearly, the ten horns are ten concurrent kings, not ten successive kings. This is an alliance of kings who will support the final world dictator (v.13). These European nations will unite politically, militarily and economically. This is the final stage of internationalism or globalism.

"Thus he said: 'The fourth beast shall be A fourth kingdom on earth, Which shall be different from all other kingdoms, And shall devour the whole earth, Trample it and break it in pieces. The ten horns are ten kings Who shall arise from this kingdom. And another shall rise after them; He shall be different from the first ones, And shall subdue three kings'" (Daniel 7:23).

"These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast.

When the Antichrist assumes power, he will unite the world into one global power. They will have "one mind" or one purpose. He will dominate all the other nine kings and demand worship for himself (cf. Daniel 11:36-38; 2 Thessalonians 2:4; Revelation 13:8, 15). Universal world power has always been the aim of man from the tower of Babel to the present. This power is an allusion because they will make the major mistake by taking on the Lamb.

"These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful."

When Jesus comes back, He will come with the saints [the church]. These people along with the Tribulation saints are His "called, chosen, and faithful." This anticipates chapter 19 where Jesus defeats the dictator of the world government.

Jesus goes to war with the leader of the Revived Roman Empire and his world confederation. He defeats this confederation at His Coming.

"And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. "Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold – the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure" (Daniel 2:44-45).

Then he said to me, "The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues.

The angel now interprets the "waters" on which the woman sat. They are "people, multitudes, nations, and tongues [languages]." All the nations and people of the world will embrace one universal ecumenical religious system.

"And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire.

The beast will destroy world ecumenical religion toward the middle of the Tribulation (Daniel 9:27; Matthew 24:15). To this point in the Tribulation, the order is church-before-state [the whore sat on the beast]. Now the leader of the Revived Roman Empire destroys the whore and the order becomes state-before-church. A new world religion that worships the beast as the false messiah will come into place at that time. Apostate religion no longer dictates domestic or foreign policy but serves the

state. The fall of the harlot then is the destruction of worldwide ecumenical religion. The next chapter will describe the fall of economic and political Babylon in the Tribulation. The final form of Babylonianism is a combination of world government with world religion.

The beast and the ten kings' hatred of the woman imply that there is a distinction between political and religious Babylon and their two judgments.

"For God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled.

The oneness of world religion and world government will not tolerate anything but absolute submission to the Revived Roman Empire. God will use this rebellion of the beast to fulfill His purpose. He uses evil for His own purposes (Jeremiah 25:9-14).

God from eternity unfolds His plan precisely and magnificently so that there is no question as to who is in control of time and space. God sovereignly entwines His purposes with events of history.

"And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth

The angel gives a final interpretation of the harlot. He describes her as a "great city" that "reigns over the kings of the earth." This is a reference to international religious Babylonianism as the centre for world religion.

Babylon stands for more than a city; it stands for a system of religion in the present chapter and a system of politics in the next chapter.

Principle

The Christian can rest in the sovereign plan of a transcendent God to fulfill His purposes in time.

Application

Fake Christianity is always the worst enemy of true Christianity. Debauchery of Christianity confuses people more than outright rejection of Christianity. This religious system will announce itself as the answer to world peace and prosperity. Man will answer man's problems. There is no need of a transcendent God. This is spiritual adultery and a revival of the spirit of Babylon. It is a

manmade salvation. People seek security in manmade federations.

"All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. At the end of the twelve months he was walking about the royal palace of Babylon. The king spoke, saying, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?" (Daniel 4:28).

The spirit of Babylon always sways the masses. People make a panacea out of a super-church. This church is presently in the making. This church is a whore because she perverts mutually exclusive truth for syncretism of truth. This is to say no truth, except the truth of religion, as a great gob of different ideas is the truth.

God will bring these false systems into His purposes. He will show the evil of that system and demonstrate the truth as it is in Christ.

Revelation 18:1-3

"After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory. And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! "For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury"

Chapter 18 presents political Babylon. This is the judgment of international government, multinational organizations and financial institutions.

In the previous chapter, the coming world dictator overthrows the one world ecumenical movement. In this chapter, God overthrows the world dictator.

"After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory.

A different angel comes to John coming down from heaven with great authority. The glory of this angel was so great that it shed light on the earth.

And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird!

The angel's message is that Babylon the great has fallen. This is not the same fall of 17:16-17.

Babylon is a home for demons. The Devil has an extensive religious organization to oppose the truth. The repetition of the word "fallen" is there for emphasis. With great force, the angel announces that God finally defeats this demonic system. God finally demolishes false religious and political ideas that contend for men's minds.

"For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury"

All the nations of the world commit adultery with Babylon because she brings them great riches. They become intoxicated with her belief system of global economics. Apostate religion gains many converts from the political leaders of the world. Demonic religion gains these converts by appealing to their lust for power.

The word "merchant" means commerce, business, trade. A merchant is a person concerned with commerce. Super wealthy, transnational corporations make money their terminal value.

These multinational corporations use a certain kind of power to gain their riches. They use Babylonian "luxury" as their mode of appeal.

"Luxury" means unrestrained sensuality.

Unrestrained luxury and pleasure will influence the masses. Babylonianism is the philosophy of pleasure. That is why the Holy Spirit terms such as "whore" and "fornication" to describe this system.

It is not that luxury in itself is wrong but that it usurps the place of God (18:7; 1 Timothy 6:5-11,17-19).

Principle

God wants us to separate ourselves from religion and understand the true nature of Christianity – that God does the providing.

Application

God commands the believer in the church age to separate from apostate religion. Hell will be filled with religious do-gooders, people who thought that they were superior but they found themselves in hell.

"Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said:

"I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people." Therefore "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you." "I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty" (2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

Revelation 18:4-8

"And I heard another voice from heaven saying, 'Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. 'For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.

'Render to her just as she rendered to you, and repay her double according to her works; in the cup which she has mixed, mix double for her. 'In the measure that she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, in the same measure give her torment and sorrow; for she says in her heart, 'I sit as queen, and am no widow, and will not see sorrow.' 'Therefore her plagues will come in one day – death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her'"

Verses 4-8 are a call for believers in the Tribulation to separate themselves from the Babylonian global commercial system.

And I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues (Revelation 18:4).

Yet, another angel comes with another announcement warning the saints to leave Babylon. Judgment is near to this ideology. In the Tribulation, there will be closed shop in trade. If you do not buy the whole system, they shut you out.

"Come out" is an urgent imperative. "Come out now. Do not delay." When it comes to dealing with a system like this, decisiveness is crucial. Saints must decisively separate themselves from this system.

The voice from heaven gives two reasons saints should separate themselves from the Babylonian system: 1) "lest you share in her sins" and 2) "lest you receive of her plagues."

The word "share" means to be a partner with, fellowship with, connect with. Since believers fellowship with the Lord Jesus, they cannot have fellowship with a system that is fundamentally against what He is all about (2 Corinthians 6:14-18). The connection here is connection with the one world economic system of the Tribulation. Saints who do not separate themselves will take part in their judgment.

"For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities (Revelation 18:5).

The voice warns that God has come to the end of His patience. He will now judge governmental Babylon. God does not forget justice. It may seem that His wheels grind exceedingly slow, but they also grind exceedingly fine. God's ultimate judgment is inescapable. It is certain.

"Render to her just as she rendered to you, and repay her double according to her works; in the cup which she has mixed, mix double for her" (Revelation 18:6)

Babylon's judgment is commensurate with her evil. God will double His judgment against this system. What goes around eventually comes

around. The word "render" means to pay a debt. God will pay His debt to one world government; He will judge it once and for all.

"In the measure that she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, in the same measure give her torment and sorrow; for she says in her heart, 'I sit as queen, and am no widow, and will not see sorrow' (Revelation 18:7).

To the degree that Babylonian globalism wallows in wealth as a central and value, to that degree will be her torment and sorrow. This Babylonian system thinks that nothing will daunt her. These people believe that they are invincible. They are full of pride.

Global government and religion love to play the field. They do not commit themselves to one truth.

"Therefore her plagues will come in one day – death and mourning and famine," (Revelation 18:8).

The word "therefore" implies an inference. God draws the inference that people who think that they are invincible will receive special judgment. Pride always brings a fall. God brings a sudden, fatal economic downfall to internationalism.

The economic fabric of this system flies apart.

Judgment against this system will come in one fell swoop. They believe at one moment that they are invincible and the next moment the whole system comes to one great crash. The stock market of the entire world will utterly and finally collapse.

Principle

Separation from religion is fundamental to staying on track with truth. Wealth brings a false sense of security.

Application

The primary interpretation of this passage is to the Tribulation saints. However, the temptation to compromise one's conviction is something every generation must face (2 Corinthians 6:14-17; 1 John 2:15-17).

Revelation 18:9-10

"The kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her, when they see the smoke of her burning,

"standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come'"

It is apparent that the subject of chapter 18 is one of politics and business. Here we have a lament of the politicians.

"The kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her, when they see the smoke of her burning" (Revelation 18:9).

Political rulers of the world will lament for Babylon when her political and economic structures crumble. These business people will not mourn the loss of Babylon as much as they grieve their own personal losses.

The "fornication" of the kings refers to their belief in the Babylonian system of international religion and government, a belief system of materialism and humanism. People will hear world renowned business types crying aloud because their system of belief fell to the ground. Their whole political world will enter great dissonance. Their international economic worldview will go up in smoke.

"standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come' (Revelation 18:10).

The political rulers will stand back for fear of Babylon's torment. Words of woe and wailing will be heard all over the world – "Alas, alas." They have difficulty in believing that an international system such as Babylon could fall. That is why they repeat "Alas."

In contrast to the mourning of politicians, businessmen and sailors, heaven rejoices over her destruction because of the way she persecuted believers.

Principle

Our true values demonstrate themselves in duress.

Application

What we grieve often demonstrates our central value. If we go into great dissonance because we did not get that job or our business is not as successful as we think it should be, then that

betrays what we believe in the most. The Christians who can accept loss as God's sovereign will, are Christians who have their values straight.

Revelation 18:11-19

"And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore: "merchandise of gold and silver, precious stones and pearls, fine linen and purple, silk and scarlet, every kind of citron wood, every kind of object of ivory, every kind of object of most precious wood, bronze, iron, and marble; "and cinnamon and incense, fragrant oil and frankincense, wine and oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and bodies and souls of men. "The fruit that your soul longed for has gone from you, and all the things which are rich and splendid have gone from you, and you shall find them no more at all. "The merchants of these things, who became rich by her, will stand at a distance for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, "and saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city that was clothed in fine linen, purple, and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls! 'For in one hour such great riches came to nothing.' Every shipmaster, all who travel by ship, sailors, and as many as trade on the sea, stood at a distance "and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, 'What is like this great city?' "They threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and wailing, and saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city, in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her wealth! For in one hour she is made desolate!"

Now we turn to the grief of businessmen and women in verses 11-19.

"And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore" (Revelation 18:11).

Businessmen mourn over the collapse of this international system because the whole world

economy will fall with it. This is the loss of world-wide trade.

"merchandise of gold and silver, precious stones and pearls, fine linen and purple, silk and scarlet, every kind of citron wood, every kind of object of ivory, every kind of object of most precious wood, bronze, iron, and marble" (Revelation 18:12).

Businessmen grieve over twenty-nine items of wealth in verses 12-14. First, they mourn the loss of precious metals and stones. They also grieve over the loss of precious fabrics. They grieve over the loss of their furnishings business.

"and cinnamon and incense, fragrant oil and frankincense, wine and oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and bodies and souls of men" (Revelation 18:13).

They cry over the loss of perfumes, foods, beef industry, transportation industry and even over the loss of their employees! That is, those who sold their souls to the company store.

"The fruit that your soul longed for has gone from you, and all the things which are rich and splendid have gone from you, and you shall find them no more at all" (Revelation 18:14).

Souls that derive their central value from material things will find disappointment. Wealth will escape from them. Material things are transient and do not last in the soul. There will come a point when they will never find fulfillment in these things again because God will judge the whole thing.

"The merchants of these things, who became rich by her, will stand at a distance for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing" (Revelation 18:15).

Business people who earned their riches by the philosophy of internationalism will reject that philosophy in the end out of fear.

"and saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city that was clothed in fine linen, purple, and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls! (Revelation 18:6).

Apostate religion was good for business. Now that the great whore [international religion] has fallen and now that the international governmental

system has fallen, their business is ruined. Their profits slip through their fingers.

'For in one hour such great riches came to nothing.' Every shipmaster, all who travel by ship, sailors, and as many as trade on the sea, stood at a distance" (Revelation 18:17).

Captains of ships and sailors stand in shock over the fall of Babylon's world economy. The transportation industry comes to a halt.

"and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, 'What is like this great city?' (Revelation 18:18).

As people in the transportation industry watch the international economic system go up in smoke, they lament the vigorous business they had because of the strong world economy.

"They threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and wailing, and saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city, in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her wealth! For in one hour she is made desolate' (Revelation 18:19).

They do not grieve for the loss of Babylon as much as they mourn their own personal losses.

Principle

People who live for wrong purposes will eventually betray those false purposes.

Application

People who live for the wrong ends will betray their nation. True character lives beyond self and selfishness. Nations decay from within. As the people go, so does the nation.

People who completely abandon themselves to wealth disregard God who created wealth. Jesus warned against making wealth our god.

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; "but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:19-21).

Revelation 18:20-24

"Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her! Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, "Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore. "The sound of harpists, musicians, flutists, and trumpeters shall not be heard in you anymore. No craftsman of any craft shall be found in you anymore, and the sound of a millstone shall not be heard in you anymore. "The light of a lamp shall not shine in you anymore, and the voice of bridegroom and bride shall not be heard in you anymore. For your merchants were the great men of the earth, for by your sorcery all the nations were deceived. "And in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth"

The events of chapter 18 occur at the end of the Tribulation. We now come to the triumph of God in creation.

"Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her!" (Revelation 18:20).

God commands heaven to rejoice over the fall of the Babylonian international system. There is joy in this because this system is an evil system of intolerance of mutual exclusive truth (Acts 4:12). God will ultimately avenge His people. This is not vindictiveness but a desire that God executes justice. Note the contrast between the politicians and businessmen who grieve and lament and the saints who rejoice.

Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, "Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore" (Revelation 18:21).

A mighty angel takes a heavy stone and throws it into the sea to illustrate the destruction of the Babylonian system. The destruction of Babylon is so complete that no one will find any inkling of

this system anymore. It sinks like a millstone to the bottom of the sea (Jeremiah 51:61-64).

Seven times the phrase "no be found anymore" occurs in Revelation with minor differences. This indicates the finality of the defeat of Babylonianism.

"The sound of harpists, musicians, flutists, and trumpeters shall not be heard in you anymore. No craftsman of any craft shall be found in you anymore, and the sound of a millstone shall not be heard in you anymore" (Revelation 18:22).

Babylon, famous for her musicians, will not hear the sound of music anymore. The entertainment industry will not make its untold millions any more. Nor will craftsmen execute their trade any more.

We can see the extent and completeness of the fall of Babylon in the destruction of the entertainment industry, in skilled workers and even in the grinding of grain.

"The light of a lamp shall not shine in you anymore, and the voice of bridegroom and bride shall not be heard in you anymore" (Revelation 18:23).

Glittering lights will not shine in the Babylonian system any more. Nor will people celebrate weddings (Matthew 24:38).

For your merchants were the great men of the earth, for by your sorcery all the nations were deceived" (Revelation 18:23).

The reasons for the judgment of Babylon are that 1) she deceived the nations by sorcery and 2) martyred the saints (v. 24). In the Tribulation, businessmen are the "great men of the earth." Wealth impresses many today. That is why they carry such influence in the world.

The Greek word for "sorcery" is pharmakeia from which we get the English word "pharmacy." Businessmen deceived great numbers of people by "sorcery." In the first century people used drugs to deceive others. These business people evidently traffic in demonism and the occult.

"And in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth" (Revelation 18:24).

Babylon murdered both prophets and saints in her hunger for power (18:24). This reveals the true nature of international government and religion. History records tens of thousands of people killed by religion. Religion is a counterfeit gospel. God finally exposes the counterfeit for what it is and destroys it.

Principle

God will ultimately triumph over all false values.

Application

The destruction of the Babylonian system is the final blow to the times of the Gentiles (Luke 21:24). This is the triumph of God in time. The Babylonian system is a religious system combined with a material system.

Today many worship wealth. Wealth is their terminal value. They live for nothing higher. Money is their god. Do you have a proclivity to shack up with the religion/wealth belief system?

God will eventually restore the truth of things into their proper place in time and space.

Revelation 19:1-2

"After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God! "For true and righteous are His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her"

The first 10 verses of chapter 19 set forth heaven's song of triumph at God's sovereign will over Babylonianism. The marriage supper of the Lamb is the celebration event. This is the climax of Revelation.

After these things

The words "after this" indicate there is a change from the events of the destruction of Babylonianism in chapters 17 and 18. In 18:20, there is a command to rejoice over the fall of

Babylon. Here is the obedience to that command. Four groups respond to God's command to rejoice.

I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God!"

First, a great multitude in heaven sing a song of praise to God (vv. 1-3) because of the defeat of the Babylonian system. These people are probably the martyred dead of the Tribulation period.

What a striking contrast to the events of chapters 4-18! The worshippers of Babylonianism mourn the loss of their money and the worshippers of God rejoice over God's defeat of Babylonianism. God defeated the forces of evil and now the Tribulation will end.

The word "alleluia" [Greek; hallelujah in Hebrew] only occurs in the book of Revelation in the New Testament (19:1, 3-4, 6). "Hallelujah" occurs many times in the Old Testament especially in the Psalms. The word means to praise Yahweh, praise the Lord.

The saints praise God because of "salvation." It is all His work. Jesus paid for our sins. We did not have to do it. God gives us the power to carry out the Christian life. It is God who will bring us to glory. God does it all en toto; all to Him we owe. The only thing that we can contribute to our salvation is trust in what God did for us. We cannot take credit for any form of our salvation. This explains the "alleluia." These saints understand that everything they have is by the grace of God.

These saints also understood something of the "glory" of God. "Glory" is the manifestation of God's essence. They understood who and what God is in His work of bringing creation to a meaningful conclusion.

The third thing these saints recognized is that God is a person of "honor." Honor belongs to the noble, to Him that operates with distinction. The saints respect the integrity of God because He is true in His justice and faithfulness. They are free to give God applause. C. C. Colton said, "Applause is the spur of noble minds, the end and aim of weak ones."

These saints also recognize the "power" of God. The word for power here means inherent power.

They clearly understood God's ability to do whatever He chooses to do. He is omnipotent.

For true and righteous are His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her."

True worship centers on the character and actions of God. In this verse, we have an affirmation of God's truth and justice. God is not unfair or unjust. God ultimately avenges those who wrong His people.

The word "true" indicates that God is consistent in His character. Every decision of God is consistent with everything that He does. If God judges one person and then judges another, it is always perfectly consistent with His character. His "righteousness" is His character. God is absolutely fair. God is always consistent with Himself.

Principle

God is always fair.

Application

God judgements always accord with His character. The more we understand God's character, the more we understand His judgments.

Some people tend to make God out to be a spineless being without character. This is sloppy thinking in relation to God. In keeping with their own assumptions, they think that God must be tolerant and nice. They reject the idea of hell because their God has only one attribute - the attribute of love. However, God is a righteous being as well as love. He must be consistent with that righteousness.

Revelation 19:3

"Again they said, 'Alleluia! Her smoke rises up forever and ever!'"

The saints give a special "alleluia" for the eternal destruction of Babylon. The reason behind this "alleluia" is that God is just in His dealings. He defeated one world religion and one world government. All false religions will go. There will be no more cults or teachers of false doctrine. God will put down the high priest of religion, Satan

himself. All demons that run "religion" today will depart.

Jesus will completely remove all religion from the world. Then He will establish a perfect environment in the Millennium. In this, He will establish that humans must depend on God.

Principle

Only God can establish a perfect environment for humanity.

Application

Humans and human ingenuity can never establish this perfect environment. The history of the world proves this. Jesus will do what no other man could do—establish a perfect environment in the Millennium.

Because of Jesus' ability to establish a perfect environment, the saints specially affirm Him with "alleluia." It is remarkable that the word "hallelujah" does not occur in the New Testament until the book of Revelation. The word does not occur in Revelation until chapter nineteen, which deals with the Second Coming of Christ. The Second Coming of Christ is the event that defeats Babylonianism.

Revelation 19:4-7

"And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sat on the throne, saying, 'Amen! Alleluia!' Then a voice came from the throne, saying, 'Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!' And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thundering, saying, 'Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! 'Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready'"

And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sat on the throne, saying, "Amen! Alleluia!"

A second group—the 24 elders and the 4 living creatures gives praise for the defeat of Babylonianism (vv.4-5). They concur with the

previous group by affirming an "Amen" and "Alleluia." "Amen" means so be it, or it is true. They say in effect, "We believe it too!"

God sitting on the throne is a picture of His sovereign reign. No evil system such as that of Babylonianism will unseat God's sovereignty. There is no problem we might face that is out of God's control (Psalm 103:19).

Then a voice came from the throne, saying, "Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!"

A third praise comes from a voice from the throne. This may be an angel. He enjoins all servants of God to experience the awe of God. God wants people of all social and economic levels to stand in awe of Him. God does not honor human distinctions.

And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thundering, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!"

The fourth and final hallelujah sounds imposing like roaring waters and booming thunder. This anticipates the Second Coming of Christ and establishment of His Kingdom. The establishment of this Kingdom is the answer to the prayer "Your kingdom come on earth, as it is in heaven."

The word "Omnipotent" occurs eight times in Revelation (in 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:15; 21:22). When under great duress, Christians need to get a good grasp of God's omnipotence and His ability to control any circumstance. The "Lord God" here is the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory,

The voice commands three things: 1) We are to be "glad." This is the normal word for joy. 2) The second word "rejoice" means to exult. This is overt rejoicing. We are to make known to others our joy. 3) We are then to "give Him glory." When God does the doing, He receives the glory.

Principle

We need to put priority on the things of greatest value.

Application

Christians are to rejoice in the Lord, exult in that to others and give God the glory. Many Christians seek happiness in success, status symbols and wealth. Others seek happiness in friends, social life and loved ones. Still, others find fulfillment in sex and pleasures. None of these things is wrong in themselves but when we make them the main purpose of our lives, they become wrong in God's economy. God's purpose for our lives is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. If we put anything in place of that, we commit idolatry.

True joy comes from knowing God on a personal basis. Some people think that they will find joy in being single again. "Marriage is such a miserable institution. I wish I were single again." Others think that they will find happiness in being married. "Oh, if I could find romance, then I would be happy." Both assumptions are wrong. It is always greener on the other side of the fence.

We can enjoy these things better if we put priority on the thing of greatest value—the glory of God our first priority. Only then can we have success and enjoy it. Otherwise, success will make us miserable.

Revelation 19:7-9

"Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." "And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!' "And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God" for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready."

Marriage is a good description of the relationship between believers and God or between the church and God. The marriage ceremony of the first century was very different from marriages of today. There were four phases to the ceremony: 1) the betrothal was a contract more binding than our engagement. The betrothal included terms of the marriage agreed upon by the parents. This is a legal arrangement confirmed by a dowry. 2) In the

time between betrothal and the wedding-feast the groom paid a dowry to the bride's father if this had not been done previously (Genesis 29:20; 34:12). 3) A wedding procession through the streets of the town would bring the wedding to a climax (Matthew 25:1-3). The bride prepared herself for this event. The groom then went to her house to escort her to his house (Matthew 9:15). 4) Finally, the wedding feast which included the marriage supper lasts seven days.

"For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:2).

The church is the bride of Christ. Christ, as the bridegroom will come for his bride at the rapture. Jesus paid the dowry with the blood He shed on the cross. The church should prepare herself for the marriage supper of the Lamb.

The wife makes herself ready by entering into union with Christ by faith. Then Jesus comes at the rapture and takes his bride to the wedding feast. The friends of the groom are the Old Testament saints. The friends of the bride are the Tribulation saints. They wait outside the groom's house until the groom arrives with His bride. The wedding supper may be the Millennium.

It usually takes a bride a long time to get ready for her wedding. It takes months in some cases. The church has been preparing herself ever since Pentecost for the wedding with the Lamb.

And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

The words "was granted" make it clear that God gives the church the privilege to come to the Marriage supper. It is a special grant of God's grace. The result of this grant is that the bride received imputed righteousness.

The church dressed in "fine linen" indicates that the church stands in forensic [judicial] righteousness before God. By Jesus' death for our sins, we stand before God as righteous as Jesus is righteous but there is more in this passage. The words "righteous acts" [plural] indicate that the

saints worked righteous deeds through God's power. Jesus purchased our wedding gown for us.

This is the 14th outbreak of praise to God in Revelation (in 4:8, 11; 5:9-10, 12-13; 7:10, 12; 11:16-18; 15:3-4; 16:5-7; 19:1-4, 6-8).

Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'"

An angel again commands John to write down a message to the called guests of the marriage supper about a special blessing. The command to write implies an important communication from God (14:13; 21:5). This is one of seven blessing in Revelation. This blessing has to do with the marriage supper of the Lamb that takes place on earth. The word "blessed" means inner prosperity of soul.

We will eat in heaven. Jesus ate after He rose from the dead. He ate with His resurrection body. We will eat with our resurrection bodies.

Weddings have two categories of guests – the guests of the groom and the guests of the bride (John 3:27-29). The Groom is Christ and the bride is the church. The marriage takes place after the preparation of the bride. The friends of the Groom are the Old Testament saints. The friends of the bride are the Tribulation saints (Matthew 25:1-13).

And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God."

The comment about this beatitude being a blessing as "true sayings of God" is assurance of this truth coming from God, which is tantamount to a promise. This phrase reinforces the certainty of God's promise that He will keep His Word.

Principle

Christians will go the wedding feast of the Lamb as Jesus' bride.

Application

Jesus invites us as His bride to come to the wedding-feast. What a joy to be His bride and enjoy intimate fellowship with Him! The angel places such importance on this event that he says, "These are the true words of God."

The church has been preparing herself for a wedding for centuries, even since the day of Pentecost. One of these days she will go to her

wedding feast in heaven. It will take place after the rapture of the church. Most of the bride is already over there and they are waiting for the rest of us to come to the wedding. The wedding will not take place until we are all there. The Groom, not the bride, will be the center of attraction in this wedding.

Revelation 19:10

"And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy"

Now we see John's response to the announcement of the marriage supper of the Lamb. After observing the four worshipping groups, John makes a serious blunder by falling at the feet of the angel to worship him. The angel rebukes him for this. He urged John to worship God alone.

An angel is simply a "fellow servant" with John (Corinthians 2:18; cf. Revelation 22:8). Worshipping an angel confuses the message and the messenger. There is a tendency among many people to worship the communicator rather than the content of the communication. The purpose of the Bible is to focus our attention on God, not the person who communicates the Bible. Some Christians idolize certain Christian leaders. This is exceedingly dangerous. On the other hand, God wants us to honor the communicator.

"And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves" (1 Thessalonians 5:12).

The angel makes the point that "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." The very essence or life of prophecy is to glorify Jesus (1:2, 9; 12:17; Luke 24:25-27). Jesus is the object of praise.

Principle

Jesus is the heart and soul of prophecy.

Application

The Old Testament prophesies the first coming of Christ as well as His Second Coming. We can

place the many pieces of the jigsaw puzzle of the prophecy of the Old Testament together to identify the Messiah clearly.

We must give credit where credit is due. The purpose of prophecy is to testify to the greatness of Jesus throughout the Bible. The purpose of prophecy then is to glorify Jesus. Prophecy is not primarily concerned with giving us God's program for the last days. It is more concerned with a person, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the central celebrity in God's economy.

Revelation 19:11

"Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war"

In 19:11-21, we come to the climax of the book of Revelation -- the Second Coming of Christ. In verses 11-13, we have the rider on the white horse.

Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse.

The Second Coming of Christ is not the same as the Rapture of the church. In the rapture, Jesus comes in to the clouds (1 Thessalonians 4:17). In the Second Coming, He comes to terra firma itself. There is nothing in chapter nineteen about the translation of living believers to heaven. To the contrary, the saints of the Tribulation remain on earth when Christ comes back.

The rider on the white horse in this passage is not the same as the rider on the white horse in 6:2. The rider in chapter 6 is the ruler of the Revived Roman Empire. The rider in this verse comes from heaven.

The idea of a rider on a white horse in the first century was a victorious conqueror. Triumphant Roman Generals rode on white horses into the city of Rome coming back from war. As the General came into Rome on the Via Sacra [a main street of Rome], wagons filled with booty and captives tramping on foot preceded him (2 Corinthians 2:14; Colossians 2:15). His army, friends and relatives followed him. This was a march of triumph on a white horse from the Forum to the Temple of Jupiter on Capitoline Hill. Jesus in our passage marches against the ruler of the Revived Roman Empire and his cohorts.

And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.

This sentence calls the rider on the white horse "Faithful and True." The reason for this is that Jesus makes judgment and makes war "in righteousness." He is faithful because He will fulfill His promise to return and deal with evil in the world. Everything He does is done in perfect justice. They will find no perversion of justice in Him.

A "faithful" person is someone on whom we can rely (1:5). We can count on Jesus because He is true to His word and character. He will flawlessly fulfill His promises. We can trust Him absolutely to be fair. He is fair because He always must be true to Himself.

Jesus is also "true." He is genuine, not false (John 14:6; Ephesians 4:21). No one will find any falsehood of any kind in Him. He is true to His word. Many people promise peace but Jesus delivers on His promises. Jesus is true because He is the truth, the absolute truth. He is utmost veracity. It is impossible for Him to lie. He can never go back on a promise.

Jesus will judge and make war with the armies of the world ready for war on the plains of Megiddo. When Jesus comes as judge, no one will bribe Him. He will know all the facts. He will overlook no detail in His judgment because He is omniscient. He will infallibly, "in righteousness" mete out verdicts (Isaiah 11:1-5).

"For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end,

Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this" (Isaiah 9:6-7).

"I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the

living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom..." (2 Timothy 4:1).

Jesus will also "make war." His war will end all wars.

Principle

God is faithful and fair.

Application

God is always free to relate to a believer no matter how bad he might be. God is never free to fellowship with an unbeliever because he does not accept the demands of His character met at the cross. Jesus' death on the cross is the only resolution to the sin problem.

A person who rejects Christ and His work on the cross, violates the standards God holds for Himself. If a person does not accept the judgment of Jesus for his sins, he must bear the judgment himself in eternal hell. God always stays consistent with His righteousness and judgment. He must comply with the standards of His own being.

Sin brought pain into the world. God, in order to be consistent with Himself, must punish sin. His immutability demands that He be absolutely consistent with Himself. God never changes. God's relation to us is a faithful relationship. He always loves us the infinite love. He can never change that.

We have difficulty in accepting this because we are so fickle. We all have a tendency to live our lives toward other people based on their attitude toward us. God knew from eternity every sin that we would ever commit; yet, He still loves us.

The fact that Christians are still alive demonstrates His faithful love to us. Each of us deserves to be in our plot six feet under. We have been unfaithful to Him but no matter what we do, He continues to love us because He is faithful to His own love for us. No matter how we fail, He persists and insists on loving us.

"God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:9).

"If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself" (2 Titus 2:13).

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

God's faithfulness to us may demonstrate itself in disciplining us (Hebrews 12:6-11). He may demote us or even kill us. If He does, He does it for our good. He never changes His attitude toward us. Although we face duress and pain, God always designs suffering for our blessing.

Revelation 19:12-16

"His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS"

His eyes were like a flame of fire,

Jesus judges with piercing, penetrating insight into the reality of the situation (1:14). People cannot hide from Jesus' examination of their soul. They cannot camouflage themselves behind some facade. Jesus looks right through the facades into the truth of the matter. He will see through the sham, hypocrisy, make believe and phoniness. No one will fool Him.

and on His head were many crowns.

Jesus wears "many crowns." The Greek word here is not the term for the victor's crown but the diadem, the crown of sovereignty. This is the crown of a king. Jesus will win this war and become the universal sovereign over the world. He wears a crown for every nation in the world. He has full authority to do what He pleases.

He had a name written that no one knew except Himself.

Jesus' greatness is inexpressible and begs description.

He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.

The robe [outer garment] dipped in blood here is the blood of His enemies. He will defeat His enemies once for all. This is not the palaver of "peace and brotherhood for all" that some people preach today. Jesus will shed more blood than anyone before Him has.

Jesus' name in this context is "The Word of God." A "word" expresses a thought in the mind. The definite article "the" points to the Word as noteworthy from other words. Jesus manifests God. He is the revealer in the Trinity (John 1:1-18).

And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.

Jesus will come with His "armies in heaven." These armies are armies of angels (Mark 8:23; 13:27; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8) and the church (2 Thessalonians 1:7, 10). Jesus will come with His angels.

"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory" (Matthew 25:31).

"...and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels..." (2 Thessalonians 1:7).

Jesus will come with His saints.

"When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory." (Corinthians 3:4).

"Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, 'Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him'" (Jude 14-15).

Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations.

The word "sword" in this verse is the long sword [sometimes used as a spear]. Roman soldiers used

this sword to pierce their foes. This sword comes out of the mouth of the Lord Jesus. Jesus uses the Word of God to defeat His enemies. Most of us have experienced the cutting edge of the Word of God in our lives (Hebrews 4:12,13). Jesus' words of judgment will kill the soldiers gathered at Armageddon.

And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron.

Jesus will rule the world in the Millennium (chapter 20). Jesus will rule the world with an iron scepter (Psalm 2:9; Revelation 2:27). He will abide no anarchy or unfairness.

The word "rule" means to shepherd. The nature of Jesus' rule will be like a shepherd. A shepherd leads His sheep to water and green fields. A shepherd also uses his crook to discipline sheep and retrieve sheep from trouble.

The phrase "rod of iron" indicates that His rule will be unyielding. Normally, shepherds worked with a wooden crook. The power of this crook will be poles apart from that of a shepherd in a field.

He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

When Jesus comes, He will come with "the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." His judgment is a dreadful judgment. His judgment is like someone in a winepress vat crushing grapes with his feet so the crushed grapes produce juice.

And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS

Jesus openly displays His title (Philippians 2:9-11). The Greek definite article [the] does not occur before either title thus emphasizing His qualities of authority and deity. These titles were partly on His robe and partly on His thigh and extended from His robe down to His thigh. No one will break His rule because He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Principle

God's Word powerfully penetrates our souls.

Application

The Word of God can quicken our consciences. God makes us aware that He can see into our

souls. The Word of God convicts us of our sin. The Word of God "cuts to the heart."

"For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account" (Hebrews 4:12).

Revelation 19:17-21

"Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, "Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great." And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh"

Now we come to the destruction of the armies of the world at the last great battle. This is the war to end all wars. This war will end civilization as we know it. The battle of Armageddon follows the second Coming of Christ. The battle begins before He comes. When He comes, He will end the war by military prowess.

Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, "Come and gather together for the supper of the great God,

An angel calls for vultures to come to have a great feast of soldiers supplied by God. This is a

slaughter of the armies of the world, the Battle of Armageddon in the land of Palestine (Ezekiel 38,39; Joel 2; Daniel 11; Isaiah 24).

The "supper of the great God" is very different from the marriage supper of the Lamb (19:9). The supper of God is the destruction of the armies of the world on earth. The marriage supper of the Lamb is a celebration of the saints in heaven.

"that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great"

The plentiful menu for vultures consists of flesh of kings, captains, mighty men, horses and their riders, and finally all sorts of people.

And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.

The ruler of the Revived Roman Empire will build up his troops to fight against the army of Christ. This is "the battle on the great day of God Almighty" (19:14, 19-21). Two million soldiers gather together to make war with the Lamb.

Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image.

In the battle, Christ captures the ruler of the Revived Roman Empire and his false prophet. This signals the final defeat of Satan and his program for earth.

These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.

Jesus throws both the ruler of the Revived Roman Empire and the false prophet alive into the fiery lake of burning brimstone [sulfur]. Up to this time in history, no one is in the lake of fire. They were in Sheol [Hades]. This fiery lake is a place prepared for the Devil and his demons (Matthew 25:41). Homo sapiens will not occupy that lake until later (20:14-15).

And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on

the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh

Jesus kills the remaining armies with His sword. This is a picture of Jesus as a Mighty Warrior, not the normal depiction of Him by the media or even evangelicals themselves.

Principle

God consistently holds in tension His justice and His love.

Application

The same Bible that depicts God as love also demonstrates His righteousness, justice and truth. God is a God of grace but that grace has run its course for world history. At this point in history [chapter 19], there is no more grace. God gave abundant opportunities for mankind to accept His grace. Human beings in obstinacy refused God's grace. God's longsuffering finally comes to an end. "Pay day some day" has finally come. God now enters the final judicial phrase of His sovereignty over earth.

The book of Revelation presents the plain, bald facts of the Bible. To keep these things from people is to be unfaithful to reality and to God's Word.

Revelation 20:1-3

"Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while"

Chapter 20 presents the millennial reign of Christ on Earth. Structurally, this is the third main section of the book of Revelation (1:19). The first section presented the past, the person of Christ (chapter 1). The next two chapters set forth the present (the church). Chapters 3 to 22 develop the future: the Tribulation period, Millennial reign of Christ and the eternal state.

Now we come to the millennial [1000 years] reign of Christ (chapter 20).

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

The "then" indicates a sequence: the defeat of the ruler of the Revived Roman Empire and his false prophet (chapter 19) and is followed by the second coming of Christ. An angel descends from heaven holding the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. This "chain" indicates rigorous restraint.

The angel possessing a "key" to the bottomless pit indicates that he has authority over the bottomless pit, the place for fallen angels [demons]. This is the same place Peter calls "pits of darkness" [tartaros, 2 Peter 2:4,5; Jude 6-7].

He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years;

The angel seized Satan and bound him for a 1000 years. The words "thousand years" occur six times in this chapter. Many passages both in the Old and New Testaments tell of a coming Kingdom but only Revelation 20 tells us how long that Kingdom will last.

Notice the four titles of Satan: the dragon (12:3), that serpent of old (12:9), Devil (2:10; 12:9) and Satan (2:9, 2:13, 3:9, 12:9). Revelation makes it perfectly clear that it is Satan who will get his comeuppance.

and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished.

The angel casts Satan into the "bottomless pit." This angel limits his sphere of operations to a specific locale – a hell for angels.

The purpose of the binding of Satan is that he would not deceive the nations any more until the thousand years were finished (20:8,10). Satan was cast out of heaven during the Tribulation. He then deceived the earth (12:9, 13, 15, 17; 13:4). God limits and diminishes his power of deceiving the nations by putting a seal on him.

Satan cannot be bound today otherwise he would have to have a very long chain in order to do what he does!! Some claim that this securing of Satan is when Jesus bound him at the cross. However, the natural language of these verses will not allow this interpretation. Clearly, the angel will bind Satan for a specific period of 1,000 years for the specific purpose of not deceiving "nations" anymore (John 8:44; 2 Corinthians 11:3; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12; Revelation 12:9).

Jesus did disarm the power of Satan at the cross (Colossians 2:15; cf. Luke 11:21,22) but he is still today the prince of the powers of the air (Ephesians 2:2). The binding at the cross was only true for those who place their trust in Jesus' forgiveness by the cross. Here, however, the binding has to do with "nations" (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12). This binding does not occur at the cross but at the end of the Tribulation and following the second coming of Christ. This clearly relates to the events of chapter 19.

But after these things he must be released for a little while

Satan will make a final stand of rebellion at the end of the Millennium. This clearly shows that the final defeat of Satan did not occur at the cross. Jesus defeated Satan and the sin issue in principle at the cross but Satan is still active today. At the beginning of the Millennium, the angel will bind Satan so that he is not free to influence the nations of the world. God will allow his release for a short period at the end of the Millennium.

We blame many things on the devil but people in the Millennium will not be able to do that because he will be bound. People then will live in a perfect environment and still they will commit sin. There will be perfect government, perfect health, perfect climate and even formerly wild animals like lions will be tame. There will be perfect justice.

Adam and Eve had a perfect environment in the Garden of Eden. A perfect environment will not keep man from sinning. This is the great hope of governments today. If they can create the proper environment then man will be kind to man. This is a delusion. Even under the perfect environment of the millennium, people will not choose God.

In God's economy, He "must" release Satan for a short time. It is a logical necessity that He must

release Satan. It is in God's divine appointment (20:7-9).

Principle

A perfect environment will not solve humanity's problems; only personal trust in the person and work of Christ will change a person's heart.

Application

Satan is in the business of deception. Throughout history he propagated the lie that mankind by its own efforts can provide the perfect environment. This never succeeded nor will it ever succeed. Communism was an attempt to provide a social environment whereby people would be equal. However, no amount of government can create perfect people. People cannot reach their ultimate potential by their own efforts.

The one thing we learn from the millennium is that a perfect environment is not the solution to mankind's problems. People will fail even under the perfect environment of the millennial reign of Christ. A perfect society is one of the greatest deceptions of Satan. He loves to put this in the minds of national leaders. His deception in the Tribulation was that internationalism is the panacea for mankind.

Satan is on the loose today. He is out to deceive. Only faith in the Word of God will enable us to resist him today.

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world" (1 Peter 5:8).

Satan is not bound today; he is free to roam about "seeking whom he may devour" [literally, gulp down]. However, Satan's power cannot control us if we operate by faith in the promises of God.

Satan's main deception involves the Word of God. He wants to destroy its credibility. If he can do that, he can destroy the credibility of God.

"But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the

image of God, should shine on them" (2 Corinthians 4:3).

Satan deceives us about the true values of life. He instills values of power lust, sex lust and greed. These things are the polar opposite of faith in Christ as the One who provides everything we need.

Revelation 20:4-6

"And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years"

We come now to the resurrection and reward of the saints. Two groups of saints will enter the kingdom: 1) those that God resurrected before the Tribulation and Tribulation martyrs and 2) those that come out of the Tribulation physically alive.

And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them.

John sees certain people sitting on thrones have the privilege to judge in a vision. He does not give their identity. Other Scriptures tell us that saints will judge the world.

"Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints? Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters?" (1 Corinthians 6:1).

Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the

word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands.

A second group who will reign is the martyrs of the Tribulation. The word "beheaded" means smitten with an axe. The guillotine was just one form of Roman punishment. They probably detached Paul's head from his body.

The word "for" in "for their witness to Jesus" and "for the word of God" means for the sake of, on account of, because of. The reason they were beheaded was for the sake of the gospel.

And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

The martyred dead of the Tribulation will come back to life and reign with Christ for a thousand years on earth. During this time, the wolf and the lamb will feed together. The lion will eat straw like an ox. There will be world peace and no more war. Nations will beat their swords into ploughs and spears into pruning hooks.

The earth will know no curse as it does now. The ground will produce its crop abundantly. People one hundred years old will be very young (Isaiah 65:20). Isaiah goes on to say that some will sin and that will affect their life span. Jesus will rule with a rod of iron to control injustices due to sin. That is how righteousness prevails in the Millennium. Justice will triumph.

But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished.

The rest of the dead will not come to life until the end of the Millennium. This is the resurrection of the lost of all ages (20:11-15). This resurrection will not occur until after the Millennium (v.11).

This is the first resurrection.

The New Testament uses the word "resurrection" 40 times. It always refers to physical, bodily resurrection except in Luke 2:34.

The "first resurrection" is not the first chronological resurrection because Christ was the first to rise from the dead. "Many" rose from the dead when Christ rose (Matthew 27:52-53).

The "first" resurrection is in contrast to the "last" resurrection (20:12-13). The word "first" carries the idea of "before." All the righteous dead are raised

before the resurrection of the wicked dead at the end of the 1000 years.

The resurrection of the righteous comes in phases (1 Corinthians 15:23). Christ rose first, then the "many," then the church, then the Tribulation saints and finally the Old Testament saints (Isaiah 26:19-21; Ezekiel 37:12-14; Daniel 12:2-3).

Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection.

Those who participate in the "first resurrection" are "blessed and holy." All the righteous dead will rise before the Millennium. This is a bodily resurrection. They are "holy" because they have reached the point of ultimate sanctification.

Over such the second death has no power,

The "second death" [eternal death] has no authority over those in the first resurrection. Their blessing is that they will be priests of God and Christ and will reign with Christ for a 1,000 years.

The "second death" refers to those eternally consigned to the Lake of Fire following the second resurrection (v.14). Death means separation. Jesus took the believer's spiritual death upon Himself at the cross so there is no eternal separation of the believer from God.

"...who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness – by whose stripes you were healed" (1 Peter 2:24).

but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years

Those who participate in the first resurrection [believers] will become "priests of God and of Christ" and they "shall reign with Him a thousand years." This is the worship responsibility in the Millennium.

The normal life span will cover the entire duration of the Millennium. A child will die 100 years of age (Isaiah 65:20). There will be no shortened life span because of sickness or old age except for those who rebel against Jesus' kingdom authority (Isaiah 11:4; 65:20b).

Principle

God will raise all saints in the first resurrection.

Application

The first resurrection is for the just and the second resurrection is for the unjust.

"Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth – those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation" (John 5:28).

Revelation 20 separates the two resurrections by 1,000 years. There is a sequence to the first resurrection. God will raise the saints by a certain order.

"But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power" (1 Corinthians 15:23-24).

The word "order" means troop, company, battalion and rank. Each resurrection will occur by their company. The picture is an army marching by ranks, one company following another. Each has a rank for resurrection. First, God will raise the church before the Tribulation. After the Tribulation, He raises the Tribulation saints and Old Testament saints.

Old Testament saints, the Lord Jesus, the church and Millennial saints all participate in the first resurrection. The first resurrection is for the Lord Jesus and all believers.

Revelation 20:7-8

"Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea"

Revelation 20:7-10 brings us to the final fate of Satan.

Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison

When the Millennium ends, God will release Satan from his prison for a short time. This will not

happen until God finishes His purpose for the Millennium.

and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea.

When Satan comes out of his 1,000-year imprisonment, he again deceives the nations. The nations once more come together to battle with armies as numerous as "the sand of the sea." John calls this world-wide conglomerate and revolt of nations "Gog and Magog." This is the Devil's last stand.

How is it possible that such worldwide rebellion can occur against Christ's millennial reign? Survivors of the Tribulation will enter the Millennium without their resurrection bodies. They enter the Millennium with their natural bodies and sin capacities. Although they are believers, children born to them during the Millennium may not be. These non-Christian children will revolt against Christ at the end of the Millennium.

If this is the case, why does John use the names "God and Magog?" In Ezekiel, Gog was the ruler of Magog the people. "Magog" is the name for nations to the north of Israel who came from Japheth's descendants (Genesis 10:2). These names may be equivalent to "Sodom and Gomorrah." Sodom and Gomorrah stood for debauchery. God and Magog stand for rebellion against God.

The war of Revelation 20 is not the same war as that of Ezekiel 38-39 where Gog and Magog come from the north. The Ezekiel battle only involves a few nations of the earth. The battle in our passage involves nations from the "four corners of the earth."

Principle

People, by their own efforts, cannot change their behaviour.

Application

It is clear that man is inveterately evil. Even in a perfect environment, he will revert to sin and evil. Satan will resume his reprehensible activities at the end of the Millennium. Rebels in the Millennium will follow Satan and march against the kingdom of Christ.

It is also clear that human beings even under the most advantageous state of affairs will plunge themselves into sin if left to their own preferences. This shows the righteousness of God's judgment on mankind. A perfect environment will not help. Mankind is always gullible. People in a perfect environment are just as susceptible to sin as they always were.

Only personal regeneration can truly change a person. Neither time nor a perfect environment will change people, only new life in Christ will do that. People are inherently sinful. They fail even without the devil's help for the devil has not deceived them for 1,000 years.

People feel that they do not need God. "I have enough education. I am progressing so that I will come to the point of perfection." Rebellion in the Millennium proves that idea a lie. The basic philosophy of mankind is autonomy from God. We call this "humanism." Mankind is god.

The devil will hoodwink us. He will make us think we are going north when we are going south. He will make you think that you are good enough to go to Heaven when you are going to Hell. Good non-Christians are more easily deceived than evil non-Christians are. It is always more difficult to reach religious rather than non-religious people. Satan wants us to think that everything but the death of Christ will get us to Heaven.

Revelation 20:9-10

"They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever"

They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city.

The armies of the world surround God's army [camp] throughout Palestine. God's army encamps in the beloved city, Jerusalem.

And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.

God immediately destroys the armies of the world with one fell swoop by fire. This is the final defeat of the Devil and his troops.

The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are.

After the defeat of Satan's armies, God throws him into the lake of fire. He was unable to deceive the nations during the Millennium. This is the doom of the devil. He joins the ruler of the Revived Roman Empire and his prophet in the lake of fire (19:20).

The devil does not want us to read the book of Revelation because it describes his final end. As we look at life now it looks as if the devil is triumphant but the last book of the Bible tells of the doom of the devil. He constantly peddles the propaganda that no one can understand the last book of the Bible because this book gives hope to those who feel hopeless about life.

And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Satan's punishment along with the beast and false prophet is eternal, not temporal. There will never be any relief to this torment. There is no implication of annihilation in this passage. The fire in the lake of fire has no end. This is so ominous that most people cannot even bear thinking about it.

Principle

There is payday some day.

Application

The fact of eternal judgment means God cannot bear sin. An absolute God cannot stomach sin to the slightest degree. Vance Havner said there is a "Pay day some day." There is no second chance beyond this point. There is no promotion from Hell to Heaven. The state we find ourselves at the Great White Throne judgment is the state we will find ourselves for eternity.

Everyone must make his or her decision for Christ. We can date a person for years and never marry him. We can date Jesus for years and never make our decision to embrace Him as our Savior.

Revelation 20:11-12

"Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books"

This section of Scripture presents the Great White Throne Judgment. This is a judgment against non-Christians only.

This occurs immediately before God ushers believers into the eternal state. This is indeed a solemn and sad scene.

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it,

The Great White Throne judgment, occurring just after the Millennium, is the final judgment of the lost of all ages by Jesus Christ. No believer will stand before this throne. Everyone who rejected Jesus Christ will give an account for his or her rebellion against God's will. Thus this is a "great" judgment in contrast to the other preceding judgments. This is also a "white" judgment, the insignia of God's purity and righteousness.

from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away.

The whole universe will flee away from the awesome Judge on the Great White Throne. They cannot tolerate the stark glory of God.

God will destroy the entire universe as we know it (Hebrews 12:25-27; 2 Peter 3:7-12). No one but believers will inhabit the new heaven and earth. God will replace the entire present order of the cosmos after the Great White Throne Judgment. This new order will suit those who believed while on earth.

And there was found no place for them.

In chapter twenty-one, God institutes a new heaven and earth. The present heaven and earth will disappear (Matthew 24:35; Mark 13:31; Luke 16:17; 21:33; 2 Peter 3:10-13).

And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God,

The "dead standing before God" refers to the second resurrection of all non-believers. All those who rejected God's plan of salvation throughout history will stand before God's Great White Throne. These people are dead both physically and spiritually that is, eternally. Death puts everyone on the same plane, the "small and great." Both the President and the garbage collector will face eternal death.

The first resurrection is pre-millennial and the second resurrection is post-millennial.

and books were opened.

God opens a number of books including the "Book of Life." Status will not influence this judgment because Jesus will judge the great as well as the small. First, God opens books other than the Book of Life. This is a book of works.

These people stand on their inadequate works and not on the work of Christ on the cross. The Bible will be one of the books opened at this judgment.

And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life.

The "Book of Life" is the record of those who received eternal life at some point in time. These are believers (3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:15; 21:27).

And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.

God's final judgment will be according to the evidence – works. The word "works" means deeds whether good or bad. The issue at the Great White Throne Judgment is the degree of punishment.

We are justified by faith but judged according to (not by) our works. God's final judgment vindicates God's righteousness. The evidential test to decide their eternal state is their works. People's deeds reveal what their heart is like. It shows what their true beliefs are. When people stand on their works, they expose themselves to the perfect and absolute righteousness of God.

Principle

God wipes away the sinful record of the Christian.

Application

Jesus takes away the sinful record of the believer. The government keeps a record of every crime a criminal commits. God wipes the slate of the Christian clean because Jesus paid for our sins.

Every shady situation, every dishonesty, God knows them all. There is no way to evade God's judgment apart from the gospel of God's grace.

Revelation 20:13-14

"The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death"

When non-believers die before the Great White Throne Judgment, they go to Sheol [Old Testament] or Hades [New Testament]. These are temporary hells, a holding place until the final judgment. At the final judgment, God will raise non-believers out of these temporary hells to be judged at the Great White Throne. Then He will cast them into the permanent lake of fire.

The ideas of "giving up the dead" and "delivering up the dead" has to do with restoring physical bodies to their spirits. Their physical bodies long died but their spirits were in Hades. Although the sea swallowed up a person hundreds of years ago, God will restore that body to judgment in hell.

And they were judged, each one according to his works.

God judges people according to their good deeds. God will not judge on circumstantial evidence. He will not be fooled by trumped-up charges. God uses what they thought was religious and righteous against them. It is righteousness independent of God's righteousness.

Eternal life is a gift. We cannot earn it nor deserve it. It is God's gift to us.

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire.

God casts the temporary hell [Hades] into a permanent hell. The lake of fire is the same idea as Jesus' term "Gehenna." God throws both death and Hades into the permanent and eternal lake of fire.

This is the second death.

The lake of fire is the "second death." Death means separation. Physical death is the separation of the physical body from the immaterial part of man. Spiritual death is the separation of the believer from God. Eternal death is the separation of an individual from God eternally.

Principle

Those who are born once will die twice; those who are born twice will die once.

Application

M. R. DeHaan said, "They that are born but once will have to die twice, and they who have been born twice will die but once." God permanently assigns people to eternal death because they rejected the death of Christ for their sins. This is the "Second Death."

If a person accepts the death of Jesus as a substitute for our sins, then God will accept him or her eternally. Jesus took our hell that He might give us His Heaven. If we believe that Jesus took away our sins on the cross, He will give us eternal life.

Revelation 20:15

"And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire"

The word "found" indicates that God makes a careful search of accounts of the Book of Life. After this careful search, He consigns anyone not in this book to the lake of fire.

Anyone not found to have received Christ as his or her personal Savior and thus not written in the Book of Life will be cast into the lake of fire forever. The moment we receive Christ as our Savior, God writes our name in the Book of Life. No one can erase our name out of that Book.

God puts everyone into a roll book of physical life. When people die, He removes them from that

book. God opens another book, the Book of Life, only to show that no one standing at the Great White Throne Judgment has his or her name in it. Rejection of Christ places them at this judgment.

It is not the absence of good works for which God casts a person into the Lake of Fire. It is the absence of the "name" that sends a person into the lake of fire. God will write no one's names into the Book of Life on that day.

The Great White Throne is not a trial. There is no determination to be made at this judgment. All the facts are already in. God accumulated all the evidence. He will ask only one question - "Have you believed in Jesus' death on the cross as adequate to take away your sins?" Either our name is already in the Book or Life or it is not. The Great White Throne judgment is simply a proclamation of those who have not believed in Jesus' death as the only way of salvation.

Principle

The reality of eternal damnation should motivate us to share Christ with our friends.

Application

Understanding of the lake of fire is crucial for effective motivation for witnessing. God does not condemn people based on their sins but because they reject Christ as their Savior.

The lake of fire takes place after the Millennium. Only the unsaved will stand at the Great White Throne Judgment. The purpose of this judgment is not to determine who is a believer. Rather, this judgment is against those who stand on their own works instead of the work of Christ on the cross. The result of this judgment is eternal separation from God.

Revelation 21:1

"Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea"

The book of Revelation now turns to its final subject - the eternal state. 21:1-22:6.

With the words "I saw", we catch the idea that John sees a new vision. The Millennium ends in chapter 20 and now John sees a new heaven and

new Earth created (Isaiah 65:17; 66:22; 2 Peter 3:10-13).

This is not a renovation of the old earth but a new Earth entirely. The word "new" implies that this is a totally new [stellar] heaven and Earth, not a renovation of those elements. The former elements "passed away." The new heaven is not the abode of God but a new stellar heaven and new Earth. The word "new" carries the idea of new in quality in contrast to this present Earth.

John gives little specific detail about the uniqueness of this new creation. He provides no distinguishing features. This may be because there is no existing vocabulary to describe it.

God will completely destroy the present heaven and earth (2 Peter 3:13) because of the sin problem. After He does this, He will create the new heaven and a new earth. The new Earth will be different from the present Earth.

The new heaven and Earth have no sea. Water covers most of the present Earth yet in that day there will be no sea. The only additional features that John gives about the new heaven and Earth is that there will be no sun or moon.

It is possible the reason John does not give any details about this new creation is that there are no analogies that he could use to describe it under our system of creation. I do not know what will happen to those who love to ski or fish on the weekend! This is bad news for those who love the sea or fishing. Even though there will be no sea, there will be a river in the eternal state (22:1-2).

The new creation is not the same as the Millennium because there will be a sea in the Millennium (Psalm 72:8; Isaiah 11:9, 11; Ezekiel 47:8-20; 48:28; Zechariah 9:10; 14:8).

Principle

God will provide an inscrutable place for believers.

Application

The present Earth and its heavens are marked for obliteration. God has marked the present heaven and Earth for the trash heap (20:11; Matthew 24:35). The most constant thing we know is the Earth. The biggest thing we know is the cosmos. Both are headed for destruction (Isaiah 65:17; 66:22; 2 Peter 3:13).

God will provide something better for the believer. The Christian has a "new" heaven and Earth where the curse of this present Earth is not found.

Revelation 21:2

"Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband"

John also enlightens us about the New Jerusalem (vv. 2-8). Some expositors believe that since the New Jerusalem "comes down out of heaven" that the city was in existence before the creation of the new heavens and the new earth, that it existed during the Millennium (John 14:2), that this was the satellite residence of resurrected saints who ruled during the Millennium. If this is true, there is no direct evidence of it. They can come to this conclusion only by inference.

This "holy city" proceeds from the presence of God Himself and is a brand new city.

The New Jerusalem will be adorned as a bride dressed for her wedding. This is probably the saints of all the ages dressed for their Husband, Jesus Christ. The real focus of eternity is not the glamour of its surroundings but the person of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. The glamour of the Lord Jesus Christ will transcend any other glamour.

Principle

Christians have a wonderful future.

Application

It is great to know we have a wonderful future. We will live in a city specially prepared by God for us. One day you and I will move to a new city, the New Jerusalem.

A bride adorns herself for her husband. She wants to please her husband. Are you preparing yourself to meet the Lord Jesus? Are we an asset or a liability to Christ? May God enable us to be an asset.

Revelation 21:3

"And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God

Himself will be with them and be their God"

We hear a "loud voice from heaven" for the last time. The loud voice announces that the "tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people." God will be personally present with His people.

The word "tabernacle" means dwelling place. Believers will have intimate fellowship with God on an ongoing basis. The tabernacle of the Old Testament only typified the Shekinah glory of the Lord Jesus. The tabernacle of eternity is His very presence. We will see Him in His glory. He will not carry the humiliation of the cross.

Saints will have God's presence with them in this new creation. A new intimacy will exist between God and His people because sin will not be an issue in the relationship. God will have a new immediate presence with His people. Old Testament saints had to depend on the tabernacle to experience the presence of God. In the Eternal State, we will constantly experience God's presence.

Principle

In eternity, we will continuously experience the presence of God

Application

The Lord "tabernacled" [pitched His tent] among us (John 1:14). He became a man and lived in a human body for thirty-three and a half years. People of the first century were graced by His bodily presence. In heaven, Jesus will grace us with His full presence. Jesus will carry no humiliation of His earthly presence.

In eternity, God Himself will be present with us, no vice-president, no CEO, but God Himself.

Revelation 21:4

"And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away"

There will be no more crying in Heaven. There will not even be one tear [singular]. No one will cry in Heaven. We cry when we experience pain.

We cry in regret. There will be crying in Hell (Matthew 25:30).

"So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory' 'O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?'" (1 Corinthians 15:54-55).

That ominous fear of death will be gone. There will not be any funeral homes in Heaven. We will not experience sorrow or grief in Heaven. We will watch no hearse go down the streets of glory because Jesus defeated death.

All of us have faced many varieties of sorrows. Look at just the grief of your own life. Has one of your parents died yet? Have you lost a child? Jesus was a man of sorrows.

"He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him" (Isaiah 53:3).

Pain of any category will not exist in this new creation. All the problems of this present life will pass away. All mental pain will disappear. We will not need Anacin.

The words "have passed away" indicate that we will never deal with these things again.

Principle

God will completely transform us from our present attitudes and orientation.

Application

We'll notice striking differences when we get to Heaven. God will wipe away each and every tear. No one will cry. God will take out His handkerchief and personally deal with our sorrow. None of us can get through this life without tears. God keeps a record of our tears.

"You number my wanderings; Put my tears into Your bottle; Are they not in Your book?" (Psalm 56:8).

We sing the hymn, "Does Jesus Care?" He sure does. He wants to take our burdens (1 Peter 5:7). In Heaven, He will take away every burden for all eternity.

Death does not daunt the Christian. Paul greeted death with anticipation. Death in Paul's mind was "gain" [success].

"For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better" (Philippians 1:21-23).

When we attend a funeral, our Christian loved one is not in that casket. They are long gone. All that remains is a shell. They go instantaneously into the presence of the Lord. There is a massive difference between the funeral of a Christian and a non-Christian. We do not grieve for them; we grieve for ourselves because we will miss them. We will not experience sorrow in Heaven. There will be no broken hearts there.

"We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:8).

Death is a reality for all of us unless God should rapture us. We need to make sure that we have an eternal life policy. Are you ready?

Revelation 21:5-6

"Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful." I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts"

The One who sat on the throne emphasizes that He will "make all things new." In the eternal state, there will be a perpetual state of newness. Everything will always be fresh. The New Heavens and Earth will be a radical change from what we experience now.

Yet another time, John receives instruction to write down specifics of his vision. The reason he is to write these things on paper is that "these words are true and faithful." God has perfect veracity in everything He says [true]. He never goes back on a promise [faithful]. God puts His guarantee on what He promises.

The One on the throne assures John that this is "done." This prophecy is as sure as if it has happened already. The Lord Jesus personally guarantees the believer's eternal standing in heaven. The phrase "is done" in the Greek means that it stands accomplished. We have the guarantee of the eternal state and that guarantee stands forever.

The One on the throne now identifies Himself as "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End." This is the Lord Jesus Christ (1:8; 22:12,13). The Alpha is the first letter and the Omega is last in the Greek alphabet. From stem to stern, Jesus encompasses everything. On the authority of who He is, the Eternal One guarantees the eternal state for us. The terms "Beginning and the End" also convey this same truth.

Jesus offers that He will give the fountain of the water of life without charge to anyone who "thirsts."

"Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; And you who have no money, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk Without money and without price" (Isaiah 55:1)

"Jesus answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, "but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life." (John 4:13).

And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst." (John 6:35).

Principle

Each of us must face the solemn truth of where we will spend eternity.

Application

We will meet Jesus face to face one day. There is no escape from this. Either we will stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ as Christians or before the Great White Throne as non-Christians. If we accept the finished work of Christ for our sins, we will spend eternity with Him.

Jesus offers eternal life free for anyone who chooses to accept Him as Savior. He does not charge anything for admittance into Heaven.

Revelation 21:7

"He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son"

The overcomer here is the Christian who will "inherit all things." God will be his God and the overcomer will be God's "son." There is a special relationship between God and His people in the eternal state.

Our relationship to God does not depend on how good we are. It depends solely on the work of Christ on the cross. From the moment we accept Jesus' death to take away our sin, God becomes our God.

This relationship began in time and will continue into eternity (Galatians 4:1-7). We make one decision to receive Christ in time and that lasts for eternity (John 5:24).

Principle

Christians have an inheritance awaiting them in eternity.

Application

People who believe in Christ have an inheritance. They will inherit "all things."

"So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified" (Acts 20:32).

"...to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me." (Acts 26:18).

"The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together" (Romans 8:16).

"...giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light" (Colossians 1:12).

"...that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:7).

"...to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you...." (1 Peter 1:4).

Revelation 21:8

"But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death"

Now we come to a menacing verse.

"But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars

In contrast to Christians who have an eternally right standing with God, we now turn to those who have no standing with God. These others will have part "in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone."

We see eight characteristics of the non-Christian. First, the "cowardly" are those who are spineless. They cave into their fears rather than trust God to save them eternally. They live in stark fear of death. It is cowardly not to receive Jesus as your Savior.

"Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Hebrews 2:14-15).

The "unbelieving" are those who do not place personal faith in the finished work of Christ for their salvation (John 3:16-18). This is the issue that results in judgement. These people may not be dishonest or sex perverts; they simply reject the cross as the only way of salvation.

"He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18).

The word "abominable" means polluted. Pollution here carries a wide meaning. Non-Christians are polluted with sin. Some people have the character of "murderers," and disdain human life. Meanwhile, the "sexually immoral" undervalue virtue (Hebrews 13:4).

The "sorcerers" give themselves to pagan cults. The Greek term is pharmakia, carries the idea of cultists who operate with drugs. These people practice witchcraft, spiritism and demonism. "Idolatry" will be rampant in the Tribulation.

The last category of those cast into the Lake of Fire is "all liars." God will cast the deceitful and hypocrites into a Christless, Godless eternity.

People without any of the above characteristics will experience eternity in heaven. All Christians will experience ultimate sanctification. They will live without sin before God forever. They will never exhibit any of these eight characteristics in eternity.

shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone,

The lost must die a second death after their physical death – the death of eternal separation from God. The word "part" means allotment.

which is the second death.

The Second Death is eternal separation from God (20:14). We die once when our physical life ceases to operate (Hebrews 9:27). We die a second time when we enter a Christless eternity. A Christian will never die a second death (John 5:24).

Principle

Good works do not qualify us for Heaven nor do bad works keep us from Heaven.

Application

Bad works do not bar us from Heaven. That would be salvation by works. This verse describes those who do not know God. Good works cannot earn us eternal life. A spiritual birth is necessary for eternal life [regeneration].

"And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation" (Hebrews 9:27-28).

Revelation 21:9-11

"Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, 'Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife.' And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal"

The Holy Spirit describes the New Jerusalem from 21:9 through 22:9.

Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, 'Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife.'

One of the angels who poured out one of the seven bowl judgments shows John the New Jerusalem as the bride of the Lamb. We take note of the bride for her beauty.

And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,

The angel carried John to a high mountain where he saw a new vision of Jerusalem transporting the glory of God. This is a picture of the eternal Jerusalem in the eternal state.

having the glory of God.

God's very presence filled this city (21:23; 22:5). The city possesses a derivative glory from God. The glory of the city of Jerusalem reflects the variegated glory of God's attributes (2 Corinthians 4:6). The glory of God reflects God's multicolored character.

The word "having" indicates that we possess the glory of God. We have His glory because He is

there! Glory is the radiance of His being. Believers experience the glory of God by grace.

The idea of the glory of God overwhelms the senses. God's glory transcends our ability to comprehend fully. The best is yet ahead.

Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.

The jasper stone is opaque, not clear. It is light green. Stones give off no light of their own; they simply reflect another light. Believers simply reflect the glory of God.

"...that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world..." (Philippians 2:15).

Principle

God's designed man to reflect His glory.

Application

The believer has no glory but the glory of God. The believer in himself is destitute of glory. We receive our glory from our God. We reflect the glory of God. Our purpose for eternity will be to shine out the glory of God in our lives. The best is yet ahead for the believer.

Revelation 21:12-21

"Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west. Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And he who talked with me had a gold reed to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. The city is laid out as a square; its length is as great as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs. Its length, breadth, and height are equal. Then he measured its wall: one hundred and forty-four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel.

The construction of its wall was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, the fifth sardonyx, the sixth sardius, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. The twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass" "Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:

John saw a gigantic city surrounded by a high wall with 12 gates with an angel at each gate. A wall both excludes and includes. This wall cuts off the glory of God from any outside intruder. This wall guards God's glory. Each gate carried the name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel. Twelve angel sentries stood at each gate.

three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west.

Three gates stood on each of the four sides of the city (21:16). This is not the same as the earthly Millennial Jerusalem (Ezekiel 48:31-34).

Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

The twelve foundations of the city of the New Jerusalem carried the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. Both Israel and the church will be in the New Jerusalem. The names of Israel's twelve tribes are on the gates (21:12).

And he who talked with me had a gold reed to measure the city, its gates, and its wall.

The angel measures the city, the gates and wall with a gold measuring rod [10 feet long].

The city is laid out as a square; its length is as great as its breadth.

The city was the same distance by length as well as its breadth.

And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs.

The city is 1,367 miles high as well as in its breadth and length. The description here could depict a pyramid or a cube.

Its length, breadth, and height are equal.

The base of the city was 5468 miles in circumference not including its height.

Then he measured its wall: one hundred and forty-four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel.

The city wall is 216 feet high. The phrase "according to the measure of a man" simply means that the angel from heaven uses human standards of measurement.

The construction of its wall was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass.

The wall of New Jerusalem was made of blue jasper stone and the city of pure gold like clear glass. The constant mention of transparency calls for contemplation on the conduction of the glory of God. Gold is precious because it does not lay open in fields. What is precious to us is common in Heaven.

The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald,

God decorated the twelve foundations of the wall with twelve stones. Jasper is blue in color. Sapphire was pure blue and comparable to a diamond in hardness. Chalcedony is blue plus other colors such as purple and yellow. The emerald is bright green. the fifth sardonyx, the sixth sardius, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst.

The sardonyx is bluish white. The color of sardius is ruby-red or amber. The sardius stone and jasper reflected the glory of God in chapter four (4:3). The chrysolite is gold [the modern chrysolite stone

is pale green]. The eighth stone, beryl, is transparent sea green. The topaz is transparent yellow-green. The chrysoprase is green mixed with yellow. The jacinth is violet or red mixed with yellow. The amethyst is purple in color.

The combination of these colors provides an arrangement of beauty to the city. The aesthetics of the city will strike the eye with an arresting spectrum of beauty. These aesthetics reflect God's beauty.

The twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl.

The twelve gates were twelve single pearls. This is the verse where we get the term "pearly gates." Each of these gates has a pearl large enough to make an entrance out of it.

And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

The city streets were pure gold like transparent glass. This is obviously a city a great splendor.

The Bible does not have a great deal to say about the details of the eternal state because it is unfathomable to earthly minds. It is impossible to describe in our current vocabulary. We have no vocabulary for eternity. The description of eternity is limited by language. Our eternal home will be an exceedingly valuable place (1 Peter 1:3-5, 7-18; 2:11).

Principle

Heaven is a select place for a select people.

Application

What a privilege to have reservations in Heaven! We have a great future as children of God. We have made our down payment on our home in Heaven. Not just anyone can get a reservation there. It is a city exclusively reserved for God's own.

Just because we walk into a garage that does not make us a car. Just because we walk into a chicken coop, that does not make us a chicken. Walking into a church does not make us a Christian. The only way we will make it to Heaven is to embrace Jesus the Lord as the One who paid for our sins by His death on the cross.

There will be a great many more people in Heaven than the people in this city. Heaven will include everyone who has ever come to the Messiah/Christ. The only way we can go to a perfect place is to be perfect. We cannot be perfect in ourselves. Only Jesus can declare us to be as righteous as Jesus is righteous.

Revelation 21:22-23

"But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light"

Now the angel leads John into the city of New Jerusalem itself. He notices streets paved with pure gold like transparent glass (21:21). He sees that there is no temple in this city.

But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

There will be no temple in the New Jerusalem because the immediate presence of God Almighty and of the Lamb will be its temple. God's presence is not limited by temple walls. There is no need for a temple if we have the eternal presence of God with us.

The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it.

There is no need for light from the sun or moon because the glory of God will illuminate the New Jerusalem.

The Lamb is its light.

The Lamb will light the city. There is no sacrifice in this temple because the Lamb is its light (John 1:7-9; 3:19; 8:12; 12:35). Heaven is Christ centered. He will be the center of attraction for all eternity.

Principle

We should make the Lord Jesus Christ the center of our lives.

Application

Is Jesus the central figure of your life? If He is, we are in good practice for eternity - for that will be our main occupation in the eternal state. The fellowship that we experience in Heaven will far

surpass the fellowship known on earth. Our worship will be perfect there.

"And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence"
(Colossians 1:18).

Revelation 21:24-27

"And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there). And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. but there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life"

And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it.

The word "nations" means gentiles, so the New Jerusalem will have saints of all dispensations. The gentile nations of the world will live by the standards of God for the first time.

Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there).

The gates of New Jerusalem will never be shut nor will there ever be night there. There will be nothing but perpetual day. Gates protected ancient cities from attack especially at night. The glory of God's presence will never be eclipsed.

And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it.

Nations will come into this city with all of their valuables and honors. God has a plan for Gentiles as well as Jews.

But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie,

There will be nothing of the fall in Heaven. It will have a perfect environment of perfect righteousness. There will be no liars in Heaven (Numbers 23:19; Psalm 58:3). People talk about white lies and black lies but to God, a lie is a lie.

"Therefore, putting away lying, 'Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,' for we are members of one another'" (Ephesians 4:25).

"Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds...." (Colossians 3:9).

"...in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began..." (Titus 1:2).

but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

Only those who have their names written in the Lamb's book of life will be allowed to enter New Jerusalem. Jesus is the only one who can put your name into this book. He puts your name into His book the moment you accept His death for your sins. This has nothing to do with having our name in the church register.

Principle

Jesus puts our names in a registry the moment we become Christians.

Application

Jesus puts our names in a book the moment we receive Him as our Savior.

"Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20).

"And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life" (Philippians 4:3).

"But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel" (Hebrews 12:22).

In the eternal state, the throne of God is our source of vitality.

Application

God is the source of life in eternity. God will give us abundant life in the eternal state.

Revelation 22:2

"In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations"

In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month.

The river flows down the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river was "the tree of life."

This tree bore crops of fruit each month. There will be twelve harvests a year there. The Greek says "according to each month." Each month produces its proper fruit. Just as today, different seasons produce different kinds of produce. The tree here represents the eternal state. Contrast the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden. This is similar to the trees in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:9,16,17). This tree abundantly produces fruit for life.

The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

The leaves of the tree will heal the nations. The word "healing" carries the idea of giving health. The tree secures health to the nations. There is no sickness in the eternal state so the leaves of the tree supply the physical well-being of those in the eternal state. Eating of these trees assures us of continued immortality. Everyone will have perfect health in eternity.

Principle

We will eat in Heaven.

Application

In the Old Testament, angels ate when Abraham entertained them. Jesus ate after He rose from the dead. We will eat at the Marriage Supper of the

Lamb. Evidently, there will be no need to eat in Heaven; eating will mainly be a social function. We will have a social life in Heaven. The main person with whom we will socialize is God Himself and the Lamb.

Revelation 22:3

"And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him"

And there shall be no more curse,

There is no curse at all in Heaven. After Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, God placed a curse on them and on the earth (Genesis 3:14,17; Galatians 3:10,13). The word "curse" here is an intensive word. It denotes an accursed thing. God placed a ban on the person cursed from His presence.

but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it,

John now turns to the throne of God and of the Lamb. The throne is now the center of God's presence replacing the temple. The throne of God will be in this city and the saints will serve Him.

God's throne indicates that He will sovereignly rule. There will be perfect government in the eternal state. There will be no courts or jails there.

and His servants shall serve Him.

The word "serve" is for priestly service. This service means to worship, to serve God. Our service will never diminish or decline. While service here is imperfect, our service there will be pure. We mar our service here with the flesh, with false motives and with pride. We often use service to get ahead or be famous. But our service there will be without fault.

Principle

God will remove the curse of the Garden of Eden forever.

Application

There will be no curse in the New Jerusalem. There will be no hospitals in this city, nor will there be any police stations or funeral homes. The basic structure of this city will be different from

any that preceded it. Neither will there be a Devil or a sin capacity. There will be no accompanying train of pain there.

"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body" (Romans 8:18-23).

God will create a new unspoiled universe and earth. Until then, this earth will be filled with corruption, deceit and immorality. Scars will cover the face of the earth as long as there is sin and humans will continue to live for themselves. Pride will be a problem until Jesus comes back.

Weeds grow faster than grass. It is difficult to persuade things to grow in our day but in the eternal state that will not be a problem.

Fellowship in Heaven will exceed fellowship here on earth. Fellowship here is imperfect because of our capacity for sin. Other people see our imperfections just as clearly as we can see theirs. These deficiencies hinder our fellowship here. But our fellowship there will be free from flaws.

All those who operate under the law are under a curse.

"Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree")...." (Galatians 3:13).

Jesus is the one who heals us for eternity. He forgives our sins for eternity when we believe that He died on the cross for our sins.

"...who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness – by whose stripes you were healed" (1 Peter 2:24).

Revelation 22:4-5

"They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever"

They shall see His face,

The saints will have freedom to be in the presence of God. They will have immediate admission to God's glory. We will see the Lamb face to face (22:3). That will be a joy! After all our service for Him, we will meet Him face to face.

"For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6).

and His name shall be on their foreheads.

God's name on our forehead means that we belong to God. It will be quite evident publicly that we belong to God.

Presently Christians are sealed by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30). God seals us until the day we go to be with Him. The seal today is invisible but the seal in that day will be apparent for all to see.

There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light.

John again repeats that there will be no night in the New Jerusalem. The light of God's presence is all they need (21:23,25).

And they shall reign forever and ever.

There will be no end to the reign of the saints in the eternal state (Daniel 7:18,27). This is another indication that this is the eternal state.

Principle

Heaven transcends any earthly reference points.

Application

None of can comprehend how wonderful Heaven is. It will transcend all of our expectations.

"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18).

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:17).

We will experience nothing of the pain we face here. As the hymn says, "It will be worth it all when we see Jesus."

The idea of Heaven boggles the mind. Every person who belongs to God should take interest in the subject for one day we will move there and since we are going to move to a new location, we should research that community to find out as much as we can about it. Our home in Heaven will exceed our wildest dreams. If this earth is a beautiful place even under the curse, what will Heaven be like?

Revelation 22:6-7

Then he said to me, "These words are faithful and true." And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place. 'Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book'"

The conclusion and epilogue of the book of Revelation begins at verse 6. Assurance is the theme.

Then he said to me, "These words are faithful and true."

At the conclusion of the book of Revelation, John receives ratification of the certainty of Christ's coming – "These words are faithful and true." God is not in the business of bewildering believers. He is in the business of faithfully keeping His promises. He makes sure that John knows that His

promises of prophecy have God's own veracity to back them. God's promises always depend on God's character.

God Himself guarantees that we can believe the words of the book of Revelation. God's Word depends on God's character. God never goes back on His Word.

And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place.

We should translate the words "must shortly take place" as "must quickly come to pass." John is dealing with future events here.

"Behold, I am coming quickly!"

"Behold" is a term intended to grab our attention. "Give this your undivided attention!"

When Jesus comes, it will be quick (1:7; 22:12,20). The Greek word for "quickly" means soon. Jesus will give no warning when He comes. He will come suddenly. It will be unexpected. That is why we need to be alert to His coming.

The phrase "I am coming quickly" occurs three times in the conclusion to Revelation.

Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."

God gives a special blessing for those who keep "the words of the prophecy of this book." More promises of blessing occur in this book than any other book of the Bible (1:3). This is the sixth declaration of blessing in Revelation. The seventh, and last blessing is in verse 14.

If we read, study and apply the book of Revelation to our lives, God assures us that He will bless us by it.

The word "keeps" means to guard, protect, pay attention or give heed. We are to guard God's Word by applying it to our lives.

Principle

We should be on the alert for the rapture.

Application

We should regard the coming of Christ as imminent. The rapture can occur at any time. We should be on the alert to His coming. The imminent coming of Christ means that there are no

signs that need fulfilling before He comes. When He comes, it will be speedy and swift.

Revelation 22:8-10

"Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. Then he said to me, "See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God." And he said to me, "Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand"

Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things.

John again falls down to worship an angel and again the angel rebukes him for this (19:10).

Then he said to me, "See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God."

You would have thought that John would have learned his lesson the first time.

And he said to me, "Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand.

The angel gives a specific command not to "seal the words of the prophecy of this book." This means that we can understand the book of Revelation. "John, make sure you preach the prophecies of this book." God wants the book of Revelation to be an open book for all to understand. Revelation is no abstruse, esoteric book that is beyond the ability of people to understand. There is nothing nebulous about it. Believers must live in the light of Jesus' coming. They cannot do that if Revelation is confusing to them.

Principle

God wants us to understand the book of Revelation.

Application

The book of Revelation is not incomprehensible. It is an open book whereby believers can read and find hope for the future.

Revelation 22:11

"He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still"

How can a just God encourage someone who is unjust to continue to be unjust? The idea is that if people do not respond to the prophecy of the book of Revelation, then they are mired in negative desire and have no hope beyond this. For those who go make positive changes, they look forward to the coming of Christ. God can say no more. We must make our decision. There comes a point when God gives us up to ourselves.

As we are when we die, so shall we be forever. If we die without Christ, we will be without Christ forever. If I die a Christian, I will be a Christian in eternity. There is no second chance. There is no possibility of becoming a Christian after we die.

There is no purgatory where God will purge our sins. This is a solemn fact we must all face. Once we cross the line there is no going back. We only have this life to make our decision for Christ. We must make that decision this side of the grave. We can only come to Christ in time, not eternity. There is not a line in the Bible that gives us hope beyond the grave if we do not make our decision for Christ while we are alive.

Principle

If we reject the truth of the Bible, there is no other truth to which we can turn.

Application

If we reject the Bible, God has nothing more to say to us. God's truth has no middle ground. The issue of salvation is black or white. Salvation is mutually exclusive. There are only two classes of men: the saved and the lost.

This is a terrible truth on one hand and a blessed situation on the other. As God finds us when Christ comes back, so shall we ever be into eternity.

Revelation 22:12

"And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work"

The conclusion of Revelation runs from 22:6 through 22:21. John now turns to applications to the churches.

When Jesus comes during the Rapture (verse 7), He will come with rewards for the church. Immediately after the Rapture, He will evaluate believers according to their works and reward them at the judgement seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10-11). This evaluation at the judgement seat of Christ is a judgement of works (1 Corinthians 3:1f).

Principle

Jesus will reward Christians according to the standard of their works.

Application

When we stand before the Lord our works will either be "wood, hay or stubble" or they will have lasting impact as do "gold, silver and precious stones" (1 Corinthians 3:1f). God will be fair to the Christian.

God will allow no trumped up evidence. There will be no circumstantial evidence. He will evaluate every last Christian who has ever lived in absolute fairness, including you and me. We will receive nothing we did not earn. We will receive rewards for everything we did for His glory.

"And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just" (Luke 14:14).

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad [worthless]" (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Revelation 22:13

"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last"

Jesus describes Himself with three pairs of titles. All three sets of titles affirm the same thing: that Jesus is eternal (1:4, 8, 17; 2:8; 21:6). The assertion of His eternity means that we can count on Him fulfilling His promise. He will deliver on what He promises. Jesus consummates and concludes all things. He is God almighty.

Jesus is God's last word to us.

"God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they" (Hebrews 1:1-4).

Principle

God will be true to His promises.

Application

We can count on Jesus to be true to Himself. He will deliver on His promises. We have a title to eternity because of Christ. We know that when we arrive in Heaven, God will welcome us.

Revelation 22:14

"Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city"

Blessed are those who do His commandments,

The word "blessed" occurs 50 times in the New Testament, seven of those occurrences in the book of Revelation.

This verse presents the last of the seven beatitudes of Revelation (1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7).

Those who "do His commandments" are "blessed." As believers, we have the right to the "tree of life" and to "enter through the gates into the city."

The phrase "do His commandments" in some manuscripts reads "who wash their robes." We qualify for heaven by the shed blood of Christ. Because of that, we have the right to enter New Jerusalem.

that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.

Christians are blessed because they have the hope of eternal life. They are sure they are going to Heaven. Those without Christ have no hope. Their future is bleak, dark hopelessness.

Principle

Christians have the guarantee of a bright future.

Application

People who perceive that they have no eternal future are miserable. They search for happiness in activity and things. They will spend any energy to fill the void in their lives. They never achieve happiness. It is a will-of-the-wisp hope that they cannot attain.

Sometimes people may get the breaks in life for a time but then some sickness or surgery or problem with children comes their way. Their happiness disappears like the wind. That happiness is temporary. People listen to the news today and they hear nothing but rape, crime, evil, rebellion, death. They live in misery. Where is their hope?

Jesus does not give happiness but blessedness. Christians have a bright future. They will meet the One they love one day. They have an endless, bright, quality future.

Revelation 22:15

"But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie"

In contrast to those who receive rewards from Christ are those who remain on the "outside." Those without Christ are like "dogs." Dogs in the first century were not domestic animals as they are in our day. They were scavengers who ate garbage. Many were wild. Generally, they were hated creatures. The people of this verse are bestial who live like dogs. They know little more than what they taste, feel, hear, see and smell. They cannot see eternal things.

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1).

Faith gives sight to eternal things. It reaches out to the future and brings it into the present.

Notice the nasty crowd here. They are described as those who practice sorcery (9:21; 18:23; 21:8) and the sexually immoral, murderers, idolaters and those who love and practice a lie. These practices typify the lost. Those that do not accept the shed blood of Christ for them do not have that right.

"Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

Principle

Not everyone is going to Heaven.

Application

Those without Christ are dog-like people. The dog of the first century was no pet. He was a scavenger who invaded garbage dumps. God depicts the non-Christian as someone who lives on garbage. They are an unsavory crowd because they do not have God in their lives.

The wonder of the gospel is that it can turn people who live on garbage into people who possess eternal life. Will you accept the fact that Jesus paid for your sins on the cross and that you can do nothing about your salvation except believe that Jesus gives us eternal life for free? You do that by faith (Romans 4:5; 5:1).

Revelation 22:16-17

"I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star." And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' And let him who

thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely"

"I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches.

Jesus personally revealed the book of Revelation to give an eternal guarantee to the churches.

I am the Root and the Offspring of David,

Jesus states His claim to the throne of David with the phrase "Root and the Offspring of David." The Davidic Covenant promised that someone in the line of David would inherit David's throne over Israel (2 Samuel 7; Matthew 1:1; cf. Isaiah 11:1, 10,11; Revelation 5:5).

the Bright and Morning Star."

Jesus also describes Himself as "the Bright and Morning Star." Christ's coming is like a morning star. A morning star announces a new day. His coming is a brilliant new era (2 Peter 1:19).

And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!"

The Holy Spirit joins the bride to encourage the coming of Christ. This is a special joint invitation by both God and believers to become Christians. Three times the word "come" occurs in this verse.

"And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: "of sin, because they do not believe in Me; "of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; "of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged" (John 16:8-11).

And let him who hears say, "Come!"

The person who listens to the message of Revelation will say "Come!" to the Lord Jesus.

And let him who thirsts come.

Notice the words "thirsts" and "desires." These are words of our will. Those who have a taste for salvation by Christ, are to "come." The word "come" occurs three times in this verse (Isaiah 11:28).

"Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; And you who have no money, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine

and milk Without money and without price" (Isaiah 55:1).

Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.

Those who thirst need to "take of the water of life freely." Eternal life is free (John 7:37-39).

This verse is an invitation to the church of all ages.

Principle

Eternal life is free of charge.

Application

God gives us eternal life free of charge. Notice in Ephesians that salvation is by grace through faith. We receive grace by faith, not works.

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Ephesians 2:8,9).

Paul declares in Romans that not only is salvation not by works but we must stop working in order for God to impute righteousness to us.

"But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works...." (Romans 4:5,6).

Have you been making attempts at pleasing God by your works? In order for you to become a Christian, you must stop relying on your good works. Good works follows salvation. It is not a part of it. If a person truly comes to God, he will demonstrate his salvation by works. The only way we can come to God is by faith.

"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ...." (Romans 5:1)

Will you make that decision right now? Here are the factors of becoming a Christian: 1) Recognize that you stand in need of salvation because you sinned against an absolutely holy God. 2) Understand that only Jesus can pay for your sins by His death on the cross. 3) Personally rely [put faith in] on His death for your sins to give you eternal life.

Revelation 22:18-19

"For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book"

John gives a final warning for those who might tamper with this prophecy.

On the one hand, God promises a blessing to those who read this prophecy but on the other hand, to those who reject the revelation of this book, He gives a double warning. God gives a warning to those who would undermine the Word of God. He warns of special judgment to those who do so.

There will be strong delusion in the future. We need God's Word to know what we believe.

"For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thessalonians 2:7-12).

The first warning is a warning to those who take away the words of this prophecy. If they do this, God will take away their "part in the Book of Life, from the holy city and from the things which are written in this book." To tamper with the Word of God is to reject God Himself. When someone rejects any part of the book of Revelation, God will take away his part from the Book of Life.

If we tamper with God's book, He will tamper with our book! The word "book" is tree or wood in the Greek. God will not give these people the opportunity to become Christians. The Word of God is our only source for understanding the nature of salvation. This is a terrible penalty. This passage does not teach that a Christian can become lost at some point. The issue here is that those who play with God's Word as non-Christians cannot become Christians.

Principle

God gives strong warnings against tampering with the Word of God.

Application

God will weed out those who play with His Word. God gives strong warnings against tampering with the Word of God. We dare not add to or subtract from the Word of God. Both are grave issues with God. In Genesis 3, chapter 3, Eve made the mistake of adding the phrase "nor touch it" to God's warning about eating from the Tree of Knowledge. By making the commandment seem stricter than it really was, she betrayed her suspicions about God and His goodness. Insulting His majesty this way was the first step on her road away from God.

"You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you" (Deuteronomy 4:2).

"Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it" (Deuteronomy 12:32).

There is a great contrast between the lot of the lost and that of the believer.

"Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near" (Revelation 1:3).

Revelation 22:20

"He who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming quickly.' Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"

Verses 20 and 21 are the benediction to the book of Revelation.

This verse sets forth the third announcement of the Second Coming of Christ (22:7,12). This is the last thing that Jesus ever said in the Word of God. He made this statement about 60 years after His resurrection.

Jesus gives the final of three words of assurance in the epilogue that He will come quickly. The word "surely" means yes. Jesus confirms His coming. He gives assurance about the future. He will keep His promises. This is the last promise of the Bible.

"Quickly" does not mean immediately. It means he will come suddenly, without warning.

The word "amen" means so be it, "I believe it." John responds to this word of assurance with an "Amen." He echoes Christ's promise.

When Jesus comes it will put an end to suffering and sorrow. This is the last prayer of the Bible. "Take us to Heaven, Lord."

Principle

Jesus will be faithful to His promise to come back again and take us to Heaven.

Application

Jesus will keep His word to come and take us to Heaven. He will keep His promise. He never goes back on His word.

No sign needs to be fulfilled before He comes. The Rapture is a timeless, signless event. Can you honestly pray the prayer that Jesus would come soon? Do you anticipate seeing Him, meeting Him? He may come momentarily.

Revelation 22:21

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen"

God's final word in Scripture is a word of grace. This is the salutation of the book. Only the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ will keep us through it all. We should add our "amen" to this as well.

The exhortation of grace to Christians stands in stark contrast to those without Christ.

Principle

Each of us needs to be aware of our need for God's sustaining grace.

Application

We have the promise of God's sustaining grace through anything we might face in life. Whether it be adversity or ecstasy, God promises that His grace will always be there for us.

Jesus may come momentarily. No signs need to be fulfilled before His coming. The rapture is a signless, timeless event. He could come at any moment.

May Jesus come today. Oh, what a blessed day!!

Jesus promised a special blessing to those who study the book of Revelation. I am sure He did that for you in this study.
