

An intricate, black and white decorative border surrounds the text. It features a central oval frame with a repeating pattern of leaves and berries. The outer edge is highly detailed with scrollwork, floral motifs, and a ribbon-like element with small rectangular cutouts.

The Book
of
Revelation
Explained

Volume 1

Carl R. Borders

The Book of
Revelation Explained

Volume 1

Chapters 1-3

Earl R. Borders

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INTRODUCTION

It is with a sense of great satisfaction, yet great humility, that I present you with Volume I of *The Book of Revelation Explained*. The work that you are now holding is the result of literally years of labor. The enemy has fought at every turn to prevent these truths from being presented in written form. Yet, we can say with the Apostle Paul, "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57). Though it has been a long and arduous process, the Lord has given us victory.

It is our intention to provide several volumes, which when completed, will encompass the entirety of the Book of Revelation. However, we did not want to withhold presenting what was ready until the entire set of volumes was complete, as this may take several more years. Therefore, we felt we should publish and make available each volume as it was prepared.

For a number of years I have had a tremendous burden to see the church provided with an up-to-date book dealing with the truths of the Revelation. These are the truths that the Lord has given us in this particular period of the Gospel Day, and they are the truths that need to be heralded in order for the Lord to accomplish the work that He desires in this age. It was my hope that brethren who are much more capable than I am would step forward and fill this great need. However, years have passed and this has not occurred. Thus, feeling the burden in a greater way, I have undertaken to address that great need.

The only way that this mammoth undertaking has been possible is because of the many dedicated laborers that have assisted in this process. First, I would like to recognize the late Pastor Emerson A. Wilson as one who presented these truths to me as a young man coming out of sectism. Without his faithfulness to herald these truths in both preached and written form, I would possibly never have received the understanding of truth that I have today. Also, I want to acknowledge Pastor Roger L. Decker. Without his support and coordination of workers, this work would have been virtually impossible. I also appreciate his stance concerning the precious truths contained within this book.

Also, I want to express my appreciation to those who spent tireless hours working on the manuscripts to enable them to be presented to you in an intelligible form. Brother Lloyd T. (Tom) Fowler who typed the original manuscripts, Sister Sheri Strelecky who had the unenviable chore of editing this book, and a host of typists and proofreaders much too numerous to mention, but the Lord shall reward each one for the great efforts they expended.

It is my prayer that this book will be instrumental in enabling you to receive enlightenment concerning the precious truths of the Revelation. So, without further adieu, I humbly and prayerfully present for your edification, *The Book of Revelation Explained, Volume I*.

Yours in Christ,
Brother Earl R. Borders
Newark, Ohio, June 2002

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The Time Delineation of the Revelation

There are seven series in the Revelation. They carry us from the morning-time portion of the Gospel Day to the evening time or the seventh-seal period of time. The Revelation retraces the Gospel Day seven times. It does this by taking us (through the vehicle of these series) through the seven periods that comprise the Gospel Day. It portrays the Spirit of God working through the seven periods of the Gospel Day, carrying the truth into all the earth (Revelation 5:6; 1:20). The seven letters to the seven churches in Asia describe the predominant spiritual condition working during each period of time.

A.D. 33 A.D. 270 A.D. 530 A.D. 1530 A.D. 1730 A.D. 1880 A.D. 1930

Prophetic Age							
Seven Series	Ephesus	Smyrna	Pergamos	Thyatira	Sardis	Philadelphia	Laodicea
1	C. 2				C. 3		
2	C. 6	(Chapter 1 is an introduction to Series One)				C. 7	C. 8:1-2
3	C. 8:2-13	(Chapters 4 & 5 are an introduction to Series Two)			C. 9		C. 10
4		C. 11					
5	C. 12	C. 13				C. 14 C. 15 C. 16 C. 17 C. 18 C. 19	
6	C. 20						
7	C. 21:1-8					C. 21:9-16	C. 22

Chapter One

An Introduction to the Revelation

Part One – Revelation 1:1-3

The Introductory Verses 1

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The Introductory Verses

Revelation 1:1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John:

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

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

Divine Truth Comes Through a Divine Source

As you examine these introductory verses to this vital, yet often misconstrued, portion of Scripture, you must be mindful that this is **"the Revelation of Jesus Christ."** A revelation of divine truth must come by **"Jesus Christ."** It is not something that one can merely study and attain. Sad to say, the religious masses are, as the Apostle Paul declared in 2 Timothy 3:7, "Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." It is God's desire that we come to a knowledge of truth. The Apostle Paul taught this in 1 Timothy 2:4, when he said, "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." Truth does not come through human means, only through divine revelation.

The Prophet Isaiah, in prophesying of this Gospel Day, saw the truth when he penned Isaiah 29:11-14: "And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed: And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned. Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men: Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid."

This divine pronouncement, which has prophetic fulfillment in this Gospel Day, reveals that truth is hid from the wise and the prudent because of the condition of their hearts. The Prophet declared in verse 13 that they were far from God. To receive an understanding of truth, the state of one's mind is not so vital, whether learned or unlearned, but rather the condition of one's heart is what is important. You can see that this prophetic utterance has fulfillment in this Christian dispensation because Jesus quoted it in Matthew 15:7-9: "Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

Isaiah taught in Isaiah 29:14 who would not be the recipients of truth. In contrast Jesus said in Matthew 11:25, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent [who, then, may receive these truths if those who are literate, scholarly, and educated cannot deduce them by their means and their studies?], and hast revealed them unto babes." Who are these babes? The Apostle Paul used this terminology in 1 Corinthians 3:1, when he said, "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ." The Apostle Peter also used this term in his writings. He wrote in 1 Peter 2:2, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." Both of these Apostles employed the term *babes*, which gives us insight to the spiritual condition of those people.

First Peter 1:23 states, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God" These *babes* are those who have entered into the new birth. The Apostle Paul stated that they are "in Christ." These Scriptures show the spiritual state one must be in to receive truth. One must be "born again" and "in Christ," as Jesus said in John 15:4: "Abide in me, and I in you." This is necessary because truth is divine and only comes through a divine

source. Luke 24:45 says, "Then opened he [Christ] their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures." The Patriarch Job portrayed this truth as well when he penned the words of Elihu, the only comforter to whom God laid no charge, in Job 32:8, which reads, "But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding." Elihu acknowledged the same truth mentioned in **Revelation 1:1**. He said, "The Almighty giveth them understanding," and our Scripture text declares it is "**the Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave.**" Both of these Scripture passages speak of truth as a property given.

Therefore, as you commence to study the Revelation, you must "examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith" (2 Corinthians 13:5). First, you need to make certain you have experienced the new birth; secondly, make sure that your heart is currently right and that you are indeed still in Christ; and thirdly, realize that you must put forth effort. Second Timothy 2:15 says to "study to shew thyself approved unto God." Ephesians 1:17-18 states: "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." If you receive a revelation of truth, it will be because God has given unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation. For what purpose? So that "the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know." As we commence, may God help you to examine your heart and lean heavily upon Christ and His Agent (the Holy Spirit) to bring understanding to you.

The Burden of the Revelation

In the opening words of this book, we see the burden of this writing revealed. **Revelation 1:1** begins, "**The Revelation of Jesus Christ . . .**" The word "**Revelation**" is translated from the original Greek word *apokalupsis*, which means "an uncovering." The word *apokalupsis* is composed of two parts: *apo*, which means "away from" and *kalupsis*, which means "a hiding or a veiling." Therefore, *apokalupsis* means "an un hiding, the taking away of a veil, a revealing." This is important to understand, as many believe that the Revelation cannot be understood and that it is a hidden, sealed book.

Much of this confusion comes because of a very similar Greek word *apocrypha*, which means "that which is hidden." However, this word appears nowhere in the Scriptures in relation to the word "**Revelation.**" Everywhere the word "**Revelation**" is used in the King James Version, the original word is *apokalupsis* and means "a revealing." How foolish it would be to try to interpret it as *hidden*; yet that is how false religion tries to portray it.

In Galatians 1:12 we read the Apostle Paul's words: "For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." Again, the opening phrase of **Revelation 1:1** says, "**The Revelation of Jesus Christ . . .**" This is the same phrase Paul used. Let us consider what this would mean if the word meant "hidden." Paul would have been saying, "I don't know what I was taught or received." Paul wrote in Galatians 2:2, "And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles . . ." When Paul said, "I went up by revelation," does that mean that he did not know where he went? When he said, ". . . and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach," does that mean that he did not know what he communicated or what he preached? No, the Scripture does not mean that. The clear meaning of the word "**Revelation**" is "to unveil or to reveal."

Again, in Galatians 1:12 the Apostle Paul said, "For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." This verse shows that he received something. Consider Romans 16:25-26 where the word *revelation* is also found. It reads: "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery [not the hiding of something hid], which was kept secret since the world began, But now [in this New Testament dispensation] is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith."

I trust you can see a clear picture of the burden of the Book of Revelation. It was not given to be hid. Otherwise, it would not have been given at all. Before John received it, it was already hidden, so it is a tactic of the enemy to declare that it is hidden. The reason for giving it was to reveal. Some would say that it is a sealed book, but it is sealed only to those whose hearts are as Isaiah described in Isaiah 29:13: "Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me . . ."

When John received the closing portions of the Revelation, he was plainly admonished in Revelation 22:10, "Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand." The Amplified Version of this text states, "And he

[further] told me, Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book *and* make no secret of them; for the time when things are brought to a crisis *and* the period of their fulfillment is near." I trust you can plainly see that the burden of the Revelation is to reveal that which was kept secret since the world began. God's desire is that the Revelation be made manifest (Romans 16:26). Notice that it also says "*of Jesus Christ.*" John 14:6 tells us Jesus Christ is "truth." This book is an unveiling or the giving of an understanding of truth.

The opening words of our Scripture text clear up a common misconception. It is not the revelation of Saint John the Divine, but it is "**the Revelation of Jesus Christ.**" Revelation (or an understanding of truth) is a divine property, and ownership (or propriety) has not been relinquished to any man. Ownership implies control and management. God can give to whom He desires, withhold from whom He desires, and add, withdraw, and govern as He desires.

Romans 9:15 says, "For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." Matthew 25:28-29 tells us: "Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath." The underlying principle in both of these passages is that divine properties remain divinely owned even when entrusted to stewards. To receive that which is divine, you must look to the Divine Source, Jesus Christ. **Revelation 1:1** states, ". . . which God gave unto him [Jesus Christ]"

Truth is given. Thank God for all that education can do to enhance one's natural abilities, but truth is still supernatural; God must give it. The verse is actually saying, ". . . which God gave unto Jesus Christ" Christ stated in John 12:49, "For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak." Only as one walks in obedience and reverence to the Father can he receive a dispensation of God's Word. This also portrays the beautiful harmony and unity of the Triune Godhead emulated in the body of Christ.

Why was the Revelation given? As previously mentioned, the burden of the Revelation was to reveal. **Verse 1** says "**to shew**"; verse 11 declares, "What thou seest"; then John wrote in verse 12, "I saw." The Lord wanted John to see some things, and the Revelation was preserved throughout the annals of time because God desired that His people see these things. The Revelation was penned to show to "**his servants,**" which is plural, not singular. In other words, it was not just for John, but for "**his servants.**" Scripturally, who is this audience to whom Jesus wants to reveal these truths? In Romans 6:22 Paul identified these servants: "But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God" The servants of God are people who are free from sin. Therefore, the Revelation, or the unveiling of truth, is for all who are free from sin.

The time scope of the Revelation is alluded to in **Revelation 1:1**, which says, ". . . things which must shortly come to pass." This is a time delineation that, in and of itself, is rather obscure; but let us lay, as Isaiah 28:10 says, "precept upon precept; line upon line." Other verses also focus on the time. **Revelation 1:3** says, ". . . for the time is at hand." Revelation 1:19 gives a clear scope of the Revelation, stating, "Write the things thou hast seen [past tense], and the things which are [present tense], and the things which shall be hereafter [future tense]." **Verses 1** and **3** reveal a portion of this truth. **Verse 3** tells us that "**the time is at hand,**" which blends a present and a future tense together; whereas **verse 1** deals with future tense (but not in the way false teachers teach today of a distant future). John wrote that it "**must shortly come to pass.**" Verse 19 shows the true time frame for these apocalyptic writings.

One ancient manuscript best describes the scope of the Revelation in its full title, which reads, "*The General History of the Christian Church, From Her Birth to Her Final Triumphant State in Heaven, Chiefly Deduced From the Apocalypse of Saint John the Apostle.*" This book is a running, prophetic history portraying the church from her inception, through this time world in this Gospel Day, the opposing forces she faces, and her triumphs.

When the Apostle John received the Revelation (approximately A.D. 96), the Gospel Day had already been operating for sixty-three years (since A.D. 33). Therefore, some of these scenes were things that had already taken place, some were taking place as a present tense reality, and others would take place in other portions of the Gospel Day.

Symbolic Language

The nature of the Revelation language is expressed in **verse 1**, which says that "**he sent and signified it.**" The Greek word for "**signified**" is *semaino*, which means "expressing by signs, to make known, to give a sign." *Webster's New World Dictionary* states that a *sign* is "a mark or a symbol having a specific meaning." The word *sign* comes from the

Latin word *signum*, and the original Anglo-Saxon word means "token." A token is something serving as a symbol. Thus, the word "**signified**" means "made known by symbol and figure." The Apostle John used the same word in his Gospel account in John 12:33, which says, "This he said, signifying what death he should die." Symbolic language is not novel to the Book of Revelation; it was used throughout the Scriptures. Remember that the Bible was designed to convey spiritual truth; therefore, spiritual language was used.

The Scriptures teach by association: they take something natural and understandable and parallel it to a mystery to teach a spiritual truth. Jesus repeatedly employed this method of teaching. In Matthew 5:13 He told His disciples, "Ye are the salt of the earth." In verse 14 He declared, "Ye are the light of the world." Obviously, this was a figure of speech. If they were literally salt, they would have been changed as Lot's wife was; however, this was not what Jesus was referring to. When Lot's wife became a pillar of salt, she lost her life (read Genesis 19:26).

Matthew 7:17-19 reads: "Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." When Jesus classed all humanity as either a good tree or a corrupt tree, He was speaking in figurative, or symbolic, language. In verse 15 Jesus used the animal kingdom to portray the parallel between nature and religious attributes. These figures are closer to those used in the Revelation, so take particular note as you read these and you will gain insight into the nature of the Revelation's language.

Matthew 7:15 states, "Beware of false prophets [also mentioned in Revelation 16:13], which come to you in sheep's clothing [comparable to Revelation 13:11, which says 'like a lamb'], but inwardly they are ravening wolves." Jesus was not speaking of literal sheep or literal wolves, but of men who are false prophets. He used figurative speech to denote their natures. Acts 20:29 declares, "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock." The writer was speaking of men who would have no regard for the flock (or the church), contrary to Acts 20:28, which says, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God"

People who have a wolf-like nature are hungry, ravenous, and greedy. Isaiah saw this when he wrote, "Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter" (Isaiah 56:11). As you can see, throughout the Scriptures, symbolic speech is employed. In Matthew 23:33 Jesus said, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" I want you to see that literalism is completely out of the picture! Jesus was not talking to snakes crawling around on the ground. Do snakes go to hell? No! He used this language to portray the nature of those men.

Genesis 3:1 portrays a literal snake. It says, "Now the serpent was more subtil [undercover or sly] than any beast of the field" In Matthew 23:33 Jesus depicted the sly, underhanded nature of the religious leaders of His day. In Matthew 23:29 He said, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" The scribes, Pharisees, and hypocrites whom He was addressing were religious individuals who were sly. Mark 12:13 reads, "And they send unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, to catch him in his words." Also, Luke 11:53-54 says: "And as he said these things unto them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to urge him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things: Laying wait [just as a serpent or a snake does] for him, and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him." Jesus used the figure of the serpent poised to strike to represent the nature of the scribes and Pharisees.

Matthew 25:32-33 tells us: "And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left." Here all humanity was described as sheep and goats. Should a literal view of this Scripture be taken, where would that leave mankind? If Jesus meant literal sheep and goats, all that would be gathered on the great Judgment Day would be sheep and goats. Luke 13:31-32 says: ". . . Get thee out, and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee. And he said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox" Was Herod literally a fox? Certainly not! Jesus was alluding to the crafty, scheming nature of that politician.

When you read of the beast that spoke as a dragon in Revelation 13:11, remember that Scripture is dealing in figures which represent spiritual truths. Literal beasts do not speak. If this were not the nature of the Revelation, then the Bible would be contradictory. Consider Revelation 9:1, which says, ". . . I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth." However, Isaiah 40:26 declares, "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth." How can both verses be true literally? They cannot, but false religion teaches both Scriptures in the literal sense. This

is the reason the world is sealed in unbelief and the masses say the Bible contradicts itself. Therefore, we need to rightly divide the Word of Truth.

Again, 2 Timothy 2:15 admonishes, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Many are dividing the Word of God, but not *rightly*. This is the reason we need to lay precept on precept and line upon line. We must take this view to make the Scriptures harmonious and compatible.

The Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:32, "If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus . . ." These are the same type of beasts that Jude spoke of in Jude 10, which states, "But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts . . ." Also, the same truth is portrayed in Revelation 13:1, which tells us, "And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea . . ." The language of the Revelation uses that which is natural as a symbol to depict that which is spiritual. The Scriptures plainly prove that literalizing has no place in understanding the Revelation. Its language is indeed symbolic.

God's Agent of Truth

Who is the agent of the Revelation? **Revelation 1:1** tells us that "**he sent and signified it by his angel.**" This is the agent through which John received the Revelation, but what does this "**angel**" represent? The Greek word for "**angel**" is *aggelos*, which means "a messenger, minister, or pastor." You may wonder, "How do you know this is not a reference to celestial beings?" Revelation 1:20 says, "The seven stars are the angels [*aggelos*, or messengers] of the seven churches [the Greek says 'congregations'] . . ."

Each of the seven letters in Revelation, Chapters 2 and 3, was penned to "the angel." The Apostle Peter wrote in 1 Peter 1:12, "Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into." The clear implication is that angels are unable to comprehend the things of the Holy Ghost. Why? They are not creatures of choice, and they have no mortal body to contend with. They have never succumbed to sin or been subject to temptation, so they have no need of redemption. Therefore, they would not be the angels of the congregations spoken of in Revelation, Chapters 2 and 3.

Celestial angels cannot understand the saints' problems or burdens; therefore, they cannot give counsel. Also, they are not responsible for overseeing Church of God congregations. The "**angel**" spoken of in Revelation 1:1 represents a ministry. The Apostle Paul recognized this in Galatians 1:8-9: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." Paul was referring to a man preaching or acting as God's messenger to men when he mentioned "an angel from heaven."

In Galatians 4:14 Paul said, ". . . received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus." What did he do? Galatians 4:13 says that he "preached the Gospel." The Apostle Paul was not a celestial being, but he was a messenger. If you are not careful, the tradition of false teachings will cause you to have preconceived ideas concerning certain portions of truth. You may think that every mention of angels means celestial beings, when it may not mean that at all. Terms often have different applications in different settings of Scriptures.

You may think, "Are you sure that this angel of whom John spoke in Revelation 1:1 was not a celestial being?" His testimony, in Revelation 19:9, states, "And he saith unto me, Write . . ." Verse 10 says, "And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus." Also, consider Revelation 22:8-9: ". . . I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book."

The agent of the Revelation is a God-called, Holy Ghost-filled preacher. Revelation of God's truth is revealed through the Spirit, yet God uses human instrumentality to bring it to men. Romans 10:14 declares, "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" In Revelation 18:4 John said, "And I heard another voice from heaven [the Holy Ghost], saying, Come out of her, my people . . ." John never heard this voice until he first heard "another angel" (verse 1) "with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen" (verse 2). The ministry must first sound the Word before

the Spirit has anything to work on. So in **Revelation 1:1** John was introduced to a true, God-called ministry, and he relied heavily upon this "*angel*" to receive the message. God's people must recognize the true ministry today and realize they are God's agents of truth.

Again, **Revelation 1:3** says, ". . . *for the time is at hand.*" The Revelation is not for some future time, during a supposed tribulation period or some other time to come, but its commencement was imminent when it was written in A.D. 96. In reference to the time of the kingdom, Jesus said in Matthew 4:17, ". . . for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Also, in Mark 1:15 He said, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand." In Luke 16:16 Jesus declared, "The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is [not *will be*, but *is*] preached" When Jesus cried, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand," He was heralding its commencement. It is the same way in the Revelation. **Verse 3** does not say the time *will be* at hand, but it announces that the time for the revelation has begun.

Who was the author of the Revelation? **Verse 1** says it was given "**unto his servant John.**" This in itself would not clarify who the penman was, as there were many named John, but **verse 2** gives definite identification. Read the latter portion of **Revelation 1:1-2** together (in the King James Version as also the original Greek, these two verses are one sentence, a part of the whole): ". . . **unto his servant John** [the same John]: **Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.**" *John* identified himself as one "*who bare record.*" He referred to himself in this manner in both his Gospel account and in the epistles he wrote.

John 19:26 states, "When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!" John was there, and he beheld the Crucifixion. John 19:35 says, "And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe." "*Bare record*" is a phrase that John incorporated in his writings repeatedly. First John 5:7 tells us, "For there are three that bear record in heaven" Then, in 3 John 12 he wrote, ". . . and we also bear record; and ye know that our record is true." These phrases identify the John of the Revelation as the Apostle John, the beloved disciple who leaned on Jesus' breast and who was entrusted with His mother.

John was also entrusted to pen the Gospel account that bears his name as well as the three epistles of John. First John 1:1-2 states: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness"

The Revelation was shown to John, and he penned it faithfully as God revealed it to him. In **Revelation 1:2** when John wrote, "**Who bare record of the word of God,**" the sense is of the personified Word. John 1:1 reads, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." John 1:14 says, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us . . . full of grace and truth." Who was the Word? John 1:17 tells us that "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." Therefore, you can plainly see that the penman was the Apostle John. He was chosen because he was a faithful recorder of all the things he saw. The emphasis of 1 John 1:1-2 (which was written subsequently to the Revelation) was, "We have heard, seen, and looked upon it."

"What Thou Seest, Write in a Book"

With the exception of the seven letters, in scenes that John saw in a vision, God used the panorama of the skies to give John a vision. John said in Revelation 9:17, "And thus I saw . . . in the vision" John was commanded in Revelation 1:11, "What thou seest, write in a book . . ." Throughout the Book of Revelation, you can read phrases such as, "And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw . . ." (Revelation 1:12).

Read **Revelation 1:3** to see the manner of conveyance of the Revelation: "**Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein.**" Three active verbs are used here: "*readeth,*" "*hear,*" and "*keep.*" These words dispel a very prominent false doctrine that says you cannot know or understand the Revelation. How can you be blessed by reading something that you cannot understand? How can you hear without someone preaching to you? Again, Romans 10:14 says, "How shall they hear without a preacher?" How could the ministry preach what is not revealed or understood? How could you keep that which you do not know? The truth is, instead of a horrifying, grisly picture of literalism that causes nightmares, God has given the Revelation as a blessing to the church. Each saint can be blessed by an understanding of its truths. **Revelation 1:3** says, "**Blessed is he**" The Revelation is ordained to be a blessing to each saint personally as he reads it, hears it, and keeps its precious truths.

In Revelation 1:11 John was commissioned, "What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches . . ." He saw it, wrote it, and now we can read it today. The Lord told Habakkuk in Habakkuk 2:2-3: "Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run [each child of God is running a race, according to 1 Corinthians 9:24-26 and Hebrews 12:1] that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end [we are in the end (Hebrews 9:26)—the Gospel Day—and the tables or charts are for us] it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry."

Why were John and Habakkuk commanded to "write"? It was so that people today can see the vision as they saw it. When the Revelation is preached, pictorial charts are used so that God's people can have a clear understanding of truth by seeing it as John saw it.

We are enjoined to keep those things written therein. In John 14:15 Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." First John 5:3 instructs us to "keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." The Revelation reveals the love of God in that it shows the church how to overcome every opposing force. The Revelation exposes falsity so that people can repent and enjoy the truth.

The last phrase of **Revelation 1:3** says, "*For the time is at hand.*" The same phrase was employed in Matthew 4:17 in reference to the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus said, "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." When Jesus cried in Mark 1:15, ". . . the kingdom of God is at hand," it was a heralding of its commencement. So it is in the Revelation when John penned **verse 3**, "*For the time is* [present tense, not future] *at hand.*" It is a clarion call that the commencement was when these words were heralded.

Introduction to Some Dominant Truths of the Revelation

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

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

6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

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

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

The Number Seven Denotes Completeness

In **verse 4** John introduced the reader to a number dominant throughout the Scriptures: the number "**seven**." The ancient people regarded the number "**seven**" as the perfect number. It is as old as sacred record. It was first mentioned in Genesis 2:2, which says, "And on the seventh day God ended his work . . ." When God ended His work, it was perfect, or complete. Deuteronomy 32:4 declares, "He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he." The number "**seven**" denotes perfection or completeness and was repeatedly employed throughout the Scriptures. In Pharaoh's dream in Genesis 41:2, there were "seven well favored kine"; verse 3 says there were "seven other kine"; verse 5 says there were "seven ears of corn"; and verse 6 says there were "seven thin ears." In Exodus 12:15 when the Passover was instituted, it was commanded, "Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread." In the New Testament dispensation, God's people have been partakers of the Lamb (Jesus Christ), who is the Passover (1 Corinthians 5:7), throughout the seven periods that comprise this Gospel Day.

The number "**seven**" has been used as a type, or figure, throughout the Scriptures. Joshua 6:4 says, "And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams' horns: and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times . . ." Joshua 6:15 says, "And it came to pass on the seventh day . . . they compassed the city seven times." Many other places throughout the Old Testament could also be cited. In the New Testament, Jesus gave seven parables in Matthew, Chapter 13; in John's Gospel there are seven "I am's"; and in the Book of Revelation the number seven occurs fifty-four times. In Revelation 1:12 there are "seven golden candlesticks," and verse 16 mentions "seven stars." Revelation 4:5 talks about the "seven lamps." Revelation 5:1 mentions "seven seals," and verse 6 tells us of "seven horns and seven eyes." Revelation 10:3 speaks of "seven thunders." In Revelation 15:6-7 there are "seven angels," "seven plagues," and "seven golden vials." In **verse 4** of our Scripture text, "**the seven churches**" and "**the seven Spirits**" are mentioned. Since "**seven**" is such a predominant number throughout the Revelation, we must firmly establish the reason it was employed and what it represents.

John wrote in **verse 4** to "**the seven churches**." Yet, Ephesians 1:22-23 states: "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him [Christ] to be the head over all things to the church [singular; in Matthew 16:18 Jesus said, 'I will build my church'], Which is his body . . ." In Ephesians 4:4 we read, "There is one body . . ." The body is plainly declared to be the church; thus, there is only *one* church. When John mentioned "**seven churches**" in **verse 4**, he was using a figure to denote completeness.

The seventh day of Creation showed that God's work was completed. When seven days are done, a week is complete.

Joshua and Israel went around Jericho seven days and seven times on the seventh day, and then victory was complete. When the Passover was observed, after seven days its observance was complete. Whenever John spoke to the seven churches, he was addressing the complete church. The complete church did not live only in that era of time, but throughout this Christian dispensation.

When John addressed "**the seven churches which are in Asia**," if this only applied to those "**seven churches**," why did he pick those particular "**seven**" from a multitude of congregations? If the settings were merely localized, why did John mention "**the seven Spirits**"? Did each congregation have a different spirit? No! Again, Ephesians 4:4 says, "There is one body, and one Spirit . . ." There was a local congregation, but these writings were not divinely preserved throughout the annals of time merely for their local importance or historical value. Remember that the nature of the Revelation language is figurative. This is a prophetic picture.

These "**seven churches**" represent the complete church throughout the seven periods that comprise this Gospel Day. The "**seven Spirits**" mentioned in Revelation 5:6 as "the seven Spirits of God" are the Holy Spirit. There is only one Holy Spirit, not seven. "**Seven**" is a figure of the complete working of the Spirit of God. His working is not complete if it does not take in the entire Gospel Day, which is the Holy Ghost dispensation. It is a picture of the Spirit's work throughout the seven periods that comprise the Gospel Day.

Some teach that the Gospel Day is broken into four major epochs of time, and many gifted reformers and brethren have done so; but there is a closer picture in the Revelation. We have already seen that it is used much throughout the Bible, but let us look at why the number "**seven**" is so predominate in the Revelation. The Gospel Day is broken into seven periods, or days. Isaiah 30:26 says, "Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days . . ." Here, light is broken down into sevenfold, or seven days. The Revelation gives a more detailed picture of this Gospel Day and breaks it down into seven days so we can see the progression through each period of time.

Jesus taught in Matthew 24:37, "But as the days of Noe were . . ." Noah was told in Genesis 7:4, "For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain . . ." Noah had seven days to get everyone into the ark prior to the Flood, and there are seven periods of the Gospel Day in that people can get saved before the door of opportunity is shut. Genesis 7:16 says that "the LORD shut him in." Just as the door was shut in Noah's day (in Matthew 25:10 Jesus said, ". . . and they that were ready went in with him . . . and the door was shut"), the door will be shut at the end of time. Some may say, "I cannot see all of the Christian dispensation reduced to seven periods, and I cannot take the seven churches as figurative." In Galatians 4:22-29 the Apostle Paul reduced the Old Testament and the New Testament to two women: Hagar and Sarah. Galatians 4:24 says, "Which things are an allegory." The Emphatic Greek Diaglott (Interlineary Translation) says, "Which things is being adapted to another meaning."

John wrote of the preexistent and eternal God. **Revelation 1:4** says, ". . . from him which is, and which was, and which is to come." Why did he portray God here in this manner? The Revelation was received in approximately A.D. 96, and at that time in history the church had already been operable for sixty-three years. Therefore, some of what was portrayed in **Revelation 1:4** was already past tense. It was that which God had already done for them. Some was that which was presently taking place, and the rest was that which was to come.

The Revelation is broken down into seven series, which begins approximately at the beginning of the Gospel Day and goes down through the entirety of the Christian dispensation. The breakdown of that is as follows:

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| ◆ Chapter 1 is an introductory chapter | ◆ Series 3 begins with Chapter 8 |
| ◆ Series 1 begins with Chapter 2 | ◆ Series 4 begins with Chapter 11 |
| ◆ Chapters 4 and 5 are introductory chapters | ◆ Series 5 begins with Chapter 12 |
| ◆ Series 2 begins with Chapter 6 | ◆ Series 6 begins with Chapter 20 |
| | ◆ Series 7 begins with Chapter 21 |

Jesus—The Predominate Personality of the Revelation

In **Revelation 1:4** John presented a salutation: "**Grace be unto you, and peace**," teaching that these truths are so pointed that it will take "**grace**" to truly live them. If you do live these truths, you will have "**peace**." Also, here we have a picture of the Triune God and the sanction of the other members of the Godhead upon Christ's action. In **verse 4** when John wrote "**from him**," this is a reference to the Father. The "**seven Spirits**" in **verse 4** refers to the Holy Spirit. **Verse**

5 says "**and from Jesus Christ**," referring to the Son. There is a distinction. **Verse 4** says "**from him**," and **verse 5** says "**from Jesus Christ**." This speaks of two separate parties. This revelation occurred in the presence of the three: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Though this is an opening chapter, their presence is clearly seen in figures in Revelation, Chapters 4 and 5, and in Revelation 3:3-5.

This is not novel to the Revelation. The Trinity appeared in other special occurrences in Christ's ministry. They appeared at the commencement of His public ministry (the baptism by John). Matthew 3:16-17 says: "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven [the Father], saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." They appeared or worked in His resurrection. Romans 6:4 tells us, ". . . that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father . . ." Romans 1:4 tells us, ". . . according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." The Holy Spirit was the Agent God used in Christ's resurrection, showing again the unity of the Godhead.

The Trinity appeared in the Revelation as a witness. John wrote in 1 John 5:7-8: "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth . . ." In 2 Corinthians 13:1 we read, "In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established."

In **verse 5** John told why he alluded to the three when he wrote, ". . . **who is the faithful witness . . .**" Though he was speaking of Christ, he gave insight on his allusion to the other members of the Godhead. He was introducing us to the predominant personality of the Revelation: Jesus Christ. This message is a witness to you. If you accept it, you will receive grace to keep it; but if you refuse it, it will be a witness against you on the Day of Judgment. The same Word that will save you will also judge you. May God help you to realize the seriousness of the truths with which we are dealing.

John referred to Jesus again in **verse 5** as "**the first begotten of the dead**." Here in a figure, John was speaking of the Resurrection. Because of Christ's resurrection and His new life, He is now "the firstborn among many brethren" (Romans 8:29). He enabled us to be spiritually raised from the dead when He "**washed us from our sins in his own blood**" (**Revelation 1:5**) and resurrected us. Romans 6:4 tells us that enables us to "walk in newness of life."

John alluded to Christ in **Revelation 1:5** when he wrote, "**Unto him that loved us . . .**" He showed that Christ loved us by becoming one of "**the dead**." John 15:13 says, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Jesus showed that He had greater love in John 10:18 when He said, "No man taketh it [His life] from me, but I lay it down of myself." His selfless action on the Cross proved His supreme love. Who was it for? Notice the plurality in **Revelation 1:5**. It says that He "**loved us, and washed us**." The blood of Jesus was shed for "whosoever will" (Revelation 22:17). In the ultimate sense "God so loved the world" (John 3:16), but in a stricter sense our text speaks to an audience who has had that "manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us" (1 John 3:1). John was addressing those who have responded to the love of God and have been washed in the blood of the Lamb. That is the "**us**" this passage refers to. The pronoun "**us**" refers to the church of all ages, the complete church throughout the Gospel Day.

Let us next look at what it is that cleanses us. **Revelation 1:5** says, ". . . **his own blood**." This is not literal. There would not be enough **blood** to go around for it to be literally applied to all. This phrase is a figure. The Apostle Paul clarified it in Romans 3:25, saying that cleansing comes "through faith in his blood." The Revelation mentions the thought of Jesus' "**own blood**" in **verse 5**, because John was addressing the church down throughout the entirety of the Gospel Day, and the "**blood**" is where it all began. The "**blood**" purchased the church. Acts 20:28 says, ". . . the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." The Holy Spirit was the Agent who instituted the church on the Day of Pentecost.

John portrayed the glorious nature of the church in **verse 5**, saying that "**Jesus Christ . . . washed us from** [not in] **our sins**." Salvation is "**from**" sin. Matthew 1:21 says, "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save [the Greek word is *sozo*, which means 'forgive and deliver'] his people from [not in] their sins." These verses portray the sinless nature of the church. Ephesians 5:27 says, "That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

"And Hath Made Us Kings and Priests"

In **Revelation 1:4-5** John portrayed Christ's work and that which it wrought—salvation and the sinless church. Keep in mind that he was addressing a people who are blood-bought. The Revelation is not for those in nominal religion, those who are merely members or have their name on a roll book in a man-made institution. It is for those who have been washed from their sins. In **Revelation 1:6** John wrote, "**And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father . . .**" This verse begins with the conjunction "**And**," referring the reader back to the previous verse. The real work of salvation does not stop with remittance of sins, but raises one up to a position of victorious living.

Also, in **Revelation 1:6** John spoke of royalty, of reigning. In Romans 5:17 the Apostle Paul taught that "they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." This dispels the falsity being advocated by false religion of a future time when Christians would reign in a supposed "golden age." Romans clearly teaches that we "shall reign in [not after] life." Romans 8:37 tells us that "we are more than conquerors." In 2 Corinthians 2:14 the Apostle Paul wrote, "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ . . ."

According to Romans 3:25, when you have had "faith in his blood . . . for the remission of sins that are past," then you become cleansed. By receiving the Holy Ghost through the new birth, you become the temple of the Holy Ghost (1 Corinthians 6:19). Acts 1:8 says that "ye shall receive power." Power for what? Certainly for many things, but primarily for life. Romans 8:10 tells us that "the Spirit is life." He will give you power to conquer, power to triumph, power to reign, and power to be lifted up above common man to kingship. This is not a human work, but a divine work. Ephesians 2:8-9 states: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."

The thought of being "**kings**" and "**priests**" shows that God has established a new order. In the New Testament era, God's people, as "**kings**," are told in 1 Peter 2:9-10: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy."

Those who have obtained mercy are those who are now the people of God, and they comprise this royal priesthood. They reign, and they have victory. Throughout the Scriptures it is spoken of as a present tense availability. Zachariah's prophesy in Luke 1:74-75 tells us: "That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life." This is not referring to some utopian society, but we, as God's people, can have victory all the days of our lives.

In Titus 2:11-12 the Apostle Paul saw the same truth when he penned the words: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." This is the reason we are referred to as "**kings**." The songwriter declared, "I am reigning, sweetly reigning." Revelation 5:10 clarifies it even more: "And hast made [past tense] us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth." Who is spoken of as "us"? It is God's people. What time are we entrusted with? "The days of our life" (Luke 1:75). Where are those days spent? "On the earth" (Revelation 5:10).

People who are blood-bought, who have the Holy Ghost, and who are privileged to sit under truth are called "**kings**." We are "**kings**," and Christ is "KING OF KINGS" (Revelation 19:16). He has ascended to the throne of David (Acts 2:29-32) and is reigning as the King of kings. We are reigning by the power of life. Second Corinthians 5:21 teaches, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Ephesians 4:8 says that "he led captivity captive." This definitely portrays a transition from the old to the new. A new order was established. How do we know? Galatians 3:22 says, "But the scripture [the Old Testament] hath concluded all under sin . . ."

Hebrews 10:20 tells us that this is "a new and living way." It is a way of new life, a way of victorious living. John mentioned this because the very purpose of the Revelation, or the unveiling, is that men might be victorious. His burden in each period of time, as portrayed in the seven letters, was that we might be overcomers.

Survey the seven letters:

- ◆ Revelation 2:7—"To him that overcometh"
- ◆ Verse 11—"He that overcometh"
- ◆ Verse 17—"To him that overcometh"
- ◆ Verse 26—"he that overcometh"
- ◆ Revelation 3:5—"He that overcometh"
- ◆ Verse 12—"Him that overcometh"
- ◆ Verse 21—"To him that overcometh"

John employed the thought of "**kings**" to let us know he was addressing a victorious church. Ephesians 5:27 says, "That he might present it to himself a glorious church . . ." It is to let us know how people might be victorious in every age of this new economy, or New Testament.

The next indication that the Revelation is dealing with a new order is in **Revelation 1:6**, which declares, "**And hath made us kings and priests unto God . . .**" We "who were dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1) have been raised to kingship and royalty. Some teach that the old order will be reestablished, a priesthood anointed, and sacrifices given once again; however, this is not a reestablished Levitical order, but a New Testament order. John included himself in it when he said that He "**made us kings and priests.**"

Why did John introduce us to this truth? Under the old order, only the priest had the right of access to the service of God, but Isaiah caught a vision of our day and penned in Isaiah 61:6, "But ye shall be named the Priests of the LORD." Jeremiah also caught a glimpse and said in Jeremiah 31:34, "And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them . . ." Under the old economy, only the priest could go before the Lord—in service know the Lord and truly understand the things of God. Now, according to 1 Peter 2:9 we "are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood." There is a priesthood of all believers, and a child of God can officiate in the office of the priesthood. Hebrews 4:16 says that we can "come boldly unto the throne of grace." Hebrews 10:20 lets us know there is a new and living way into the service of God.

Why did the Apostle John bring up the thought of the priesthood of believers? Remember that the prophetic time frame of the Revelation is the seven periods of time that comprise this Gospel Day. Although God has had a victorious people in every age, there were periods when their victory came about because of their individual access to God (or individual priesthood), not because of the prevailing conditions of their day. There were times during this Gospel Day when the Bible was publicly chained to the pulpit. This was the period of history known as the Dark Ages. Nevertheless, there was a people who remained true and victorious because they had access to God. So it was in the era of part light and part darkness (the Protestant era). Zechariah 14:7 described it as "not day, nor night." Ezekiel 34:12 called it "the cloudy and dark day." During the Protestant era, people could not hold pure victory while listening to the teachings of men, but Revelation 6:9-10 shows that they availed themselves of their priestly privilege. Verse 10 says that "they cried." This is a figure of prayer as Psalm 39:12 and Psalm 61:1 reveals. These people used their access to God to hold their position of victory. This is the reason the figure of "**priests**" was used.

A Dual Application—The Second Coming of Christ and the Evening of the Gospel Day

Revelation 1:7 says, "**Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him . . .**" Here is a distinct contrast to **verses 5 and 6**, which portray the inception of the Gospel Day in a beautiful manner. **Verse 7** describes the consummation and the end of the earth. It is clear that this is the thought behind this contrast because **verse 8** declares, "**I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.**" This shows the scope of the Revelation, from the beginning of the Gospel Day to the end. **Verse 7** says that "**all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.**"

Let us examine a little closer other truths portrayed in these verses. **Verse 7** reads, "**Behold, he cometh with clouds.**" This text has a dual application. First, the obvious application is the Second Advent of Christ. Acts 1:9 declares, "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight." Verse 11 says, "Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."

In Matthew 26:64 Jesus told the high priest, "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power,

and coming in the clouds of heaven." This is a literal prophecy of the Second Advent, because Jesus said in John 14:19, "Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more." Jesus let the high priest know that the next time his eyes would behold Him, he would see Him coming in the clouds of Heaven. This verse dispels the false allusion of a supposed rapture, because **Revelation 1:7** says that "*every eye shall see him.*" Jesus made it plain in Matthew 24:26-27: "Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."

There will not be a secret stealing away of the church. Why must He steal that "which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28)? Also, there will not be multiple comings of Christ. The Apostle said in Hebrews 9:28 that He would "appear the second time without sin unto salvation." In relation to advents, nowhere in the Bible is anything past the Second Advent mentioned. **Revelation 1:7**, which has reference to the consummation, says, ". . . and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." The Apostle Paul, speaking of that day in 2 Corinthians 5:11, said, "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men."

Let us go deeper yet with the sword of truth. Many verses portray dual truths or have dual applications. **Revelation 1:7** also has symbolic connotations. It says, ". . . and they also which pierced him" This has to be figurative, because John 19:34 says, "But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forth-with came there out blood and water." Only one man literally pierced Him, but the Revelation says "*they*," which is plural. This is a figure of people. Blood and water came out when He was pierced. The people cried to Pilate prior to Christ's crucifixion in Matthew 27:25, saying, "His blood be on us, and on our children." Therefore, each man, woman, and child who consented to His death pierced Him. In an even broader sense, Isaiah 53:6 states, ". . . and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." We also are part of that number who pierced Him. His blood was shed for the remission of sins, and our sins were covered by His sacrifice (Hebrews 9:26).

The word "*they*" in **Revelation 1:7** has a figurative connotation, and there is also a spiritual application of this passage. This verse begins, "**Behold, he cometh with clouds . . .**" Revelation 14:14 says, "And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man" Jesus said in Matthew 24:30-31: ". . . and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." Here is a symbolic picture. On that day, His angels will not have the sound of a trumpet; His voice will be used, according to 1 Thessalonians 4:16. He shall not have to gather together His elect, for we shall be caught up (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

Revelation 1:10-11 reads: "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, Saying, I am Alpha and Omega" We can identify who this is by looking at two other Scriptures. He employed the same names in Revelation 22:13. He said again, "I am Alpha and Omega." Then He identified Himself clearly in verse 16 when He said "I Jesus." Therefore, the trumpet is the voice of Jesus. First Thessalonians 4:16 teaches the same truth. Matthew 24:31 speaks of the sound of a trumpet, or a voice. Words are the sound of a voice, so the sound of a trumpet is the words of Christ, or the Word of God, sounding out. The Apostle Paul used it this way to represent *words* in 1 Corinthians 14:8-9 when he wrote: "For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood" Isaiah 58:1 says, "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, [What kind of voice? What should the voice say?] and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins."

In Exodus 19:13 we read, ". . . when the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount." Here is a type of the Word of God being sounded. It was needful so the people could go up to the mount. In Moses' day they had to go up to Mount Sinai, and in our day we must come up to Mount Zion (Hebrews 12:18-23). In Matthew 24:31 the trumpet was sounded to gather His elect. Notice that He gathered them from "the four winds." Ephesians 4:14 says, "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine" The wind is false doctrine. The four winds (or as Revelation 7:1 says "the four winds of the earth") are the elements of man-made religion.

Revelation 1:7 says, ". . . and all kindreds of the earth" The "*earth*" in the Revelation symbolizes physical man. Jeremiah wrote in Jeremiah 22:29, "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD." Jeremiah was not speaking of the terrestrial earth. People are called earthen vessels in 2 Corinthians 4:7, and 2 Corinthians 5:1 lets us know we have an earthly house. The word "*earth*" denotes the physical man. When John wrote in Revelation 13:11, "I beheld another

beast coming up out of the earth," he merely meant "coming up out of the mind of physical, natural man." It was human origin as opposed to divine origin.

Let us look at the "**clouds**" mentioned in **Revelation 1:7**. Hebrews 12:1 tells us of "a cloud of witnesses." The "**clouds**" also denote the glory and the presence of God, according to Matthew 17:5. This is a picture of a people who are witnesses to the fact that you can reign above this earth, even as a cloud is above the earth, and have the glory and the presence of God in your life. Revelation 11:11 says the two witnesses "stood upon their feet," and verse 12 says "they ascended up to heaven in a cloud."

Let us tie it together. **Revelation 1:7** speaks symbolically of the evening time of this Gospel Day when God raises up a people (a cloud of witnesses) who respond to the sound of a trumpet (the message of truth, which the evening-time ministry has), who are gathered together from earthen systems of religion (the four winds, or the winds of false doctrine) and are brought to the mountain (Mount Zion, the Church of God), as Hebrews 12:22-23 states. **Revelation 1:7** says that "**all kindreds of the earth shall wail.**" Look where the word "**wail**" is employed in the Revelation. In Revelation 18:15 the merchants of Babylon were wailing when she was utterly burned with fire. In Matthew 13:42, when Jesus employed the term *wail*, He spoke of wailing in the furnace of fire, which is a figure of the Word. (Read Isaiah 31:9 and Jeremiah 23:29.)

Whether we view **Revelation 1:7** literally or symbolically, the point of the scope of the Revelation remains. John takes us from the morning time (**Revelation 1:5-6**) to the evening of this Gospel Day (**verse 7**). Some may question the prophetic time scheme of this verse, but the fact that "**the earth shall wail,**" as **verse 7** says, lets us know that it must be subsequent to the Protestant era, or a reference to the evening time (see Zechariah 14:7). Though it can be taught as a dual application, strictly adhering to context and harmony with other portions of the Revelation, the symbolic application is by far the strongest and most correct.

In **verse 8** the Lord used a new phrase. He said, "**I am Alpha and Omega.**" These are the first and the last characters of the Greek alphabet. He said it again in verse 11. This presents insight into the glorified nature of the speaker. The Lord was spoken of in three tenses in **verse 8**: "**which is and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.**" Here He was portrayed as the Lord, the Almighty to the church in all ages. Regardless of the circumstances or conditions of any age of the Gospel Day portrayed in this vision, the saints can still look to Him. He is still Lord! Regardless of what men or devils may say, He is still in control. As Hebrews 13:8 says, He is "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." If a child of God will exercise the office of a priest, have access to Him or through Him to the Father, he may "find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16) and face every obstacle with victory.

Necessary Conditions to See the Truth of the Revelation

Revelation 1:9 I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

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

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

12 And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks.

A Humble Steward

In **verse 9 "John"** referred to himself, which gives insight as to why he was chosen to receive the Revelation. It is good evidence of his character that he merely penned, "**I John, who also am your brother.**" Although "**John**" received a vision that is unparalleled in sacred history, he exhibited absolute humility. He did not try to exalt himself, nor the fact that he was the recipient of this beautiful and glorious message. In verse 1 he referred to himself as "his servant John"; in verse 4 he is simply "John," and in **verse 9** he is "**John . . . your brother.**" This is a good example of the Apostle Peter's words in 1 Peter 5:5, where he said to be "clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."

As far as credentials in Christendom were concerned, if one wanted to boast, the Apostle John (the beloved disciple) had reason to boast. "**John**" was one of the original twelve Apostles, personally chosen by Christ. He was the fourth disciple chosen and listed, according to Matthew 4:21-22 and 10:2. He was part of an inner circle that had special leadership qualities and had been accorded special insight. Many scholars feel that "**John**" was also a first cousin to Jesus, with Mary and Salome being sisters. Many times you can read of Peter, James, and "**John.**" (See Matthew 17:1 and Mark 13:3.)

It was "**John**" who leaned on Jesus' breast (John 13:25). Yet, despite all of this, he referred to himself humbly in his writings as "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (John 21:20). It was "**John**" who, when others fled, went with Jesus into the palace of the high priest (John 18:15). The Scripture said that he was "known unto the high priest." Also, he was the one entrusted with the care of Mary, the earthly mother of Jesus, and pronounced as her son (John 19:26-27). It was Peter and "**John,**" in Acts 3:1-9, who were present at the performance of the first miracle after the Day of Pentecost was fully come (Acts 2:1).

So, if an Apostle had personal, bonafide credentials and could have gotten lifted up, it was "**John.**" Yet, in the face of it all, he remained humble. That is the reason Christ entrusted so much to him. He knew "**John**" could receive it, or behold it, and not get lifted up in himself. "**John**" remembered his position, that he was the receiver not the author, and that he was entrusted with it. He was the steward, but not the proprietor. The mark of a truly great man is the more he is entrusted with and the more he receives, the more humble he becomes. Being humble places him in a position to receive more. The stewardship of many men has suddenly ceased because they, as King Saul of old, ceased to be little in their own sight (1 Samuel 15:17). The immutable law of the kingdom is mentioned in Matthew 23:12, which states, "He that shall humble himself shall be exalted." Therefore, in **Revelation 1:9** you can clearly see why "**John**" was the receiver of the Revelation. A vital portion of the biblical formula necessary for us to receive the Revelation is humility.

Next, let us look at a phrase that John employed, one that speaks volumes and destroys at least two strongholds of Babylonian teachers. John wrote in **Revelation 1:9**, "**. . . in tribulation, and in the kingdom . . .**" Here he innocently

portrayed a truth that false religion refuses to grasp: the "**tribulation**" and the "**kingdom**" are both present realities. False teachers who teach what is known as Dispensationalism believe that both of these will take place at some future time. However John, raised up as a divinely anointed witness, declared that in the morning time of the Gospel Day (in A.D. 96 when this was penned) he was already "**in tribulation, and in the kingdom.**" You cannot enter something that does not exist.

Those teachings of Dispensationalism that put this in the future are "doctrines of devils" (1 Timothy 4:1), robbing people of reality. This false doctrine postpones everything to a future date so that the enemy of souls might cause people to live their entire lives short of victory, duped by a damnable lie, to wake up in a lost eternity—sealed without hope. Jesus told the disciples in John 16:33, "In the world ye shall have tribulation." He prayed in John 17:15, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world . . ." He did not pray or teach that a rapture would take the church out of the world, or out of "**tribulation.**" He said, "Ye shall have tribulation." The "ye" Jesus spoke of were those people in A.D. 33. He let them know that they would have "**tribulation**" in their day. Why does God allow "**tribulation**" to come? So we can be overcomers. John 16:33 says to "be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." As He overcame, we are to overcome as well (Revelation 3:21).

Next, let us look at the thought of "**the kingdom.**" Colossians 1:13 says, "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." Lest some would try to distinguish between the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 4:17), the Kingdom of God (Mark 1:15), or the Kingdom of Christ, Ephesians 5:5 states it as "the kingdom of Christ and of God." This verse speaks of one and the selfsame kingdom. Let me clarify: there is only one "KING OF KINGS" (Revelation 19:16). When the Gospel is spoken of in Matthew 4:23 as "the gospel of the kingdom," it denotes singularity. If the Kingdom of God is one thing and the Kingdom of Heaven is something else, we would need another gospel to understand it. If that were so, where is that gospel? There is not another true gospel. The truth is that these are interchangeable terms for the same kingdom. They merely depict different, divine attributes. This is the reason various descriptions or names are employed. In **Revelation 1:9** John laid dispensational falsities to rest. He showed that the thrust of the Revelation is a panoramic view of "**the kingdom,**" the opposing forces that she faces (or the "**tribulation**" throughout the Gospel Day), and how she comes through it all as an overcomer.

Looking a little further in **verse 9**, we see the setting of the Revelation was on "**the isle that is called Patmos.**" John, as a leader of a supposed sect that was not receiving tolerant treatment from the Roman Emperor Domitian, was sentenced to be executed by being boiled in oil. However, just as the three Hebrew boys in Daniel 3:21-25 were spared (fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah 43:1-3), God took the heat out of the oil, and they were unable to execute John. This is a very vivid portrayal of the truth held forth in Job 1:10, which says, "Hast not thou made an hedge about him?" The ancient Syriac version renders it, "Thou has protected it with thy hand." What a picture of providential care that we need not fear what men or devils may try to do to us! Revelation 19:6 tells us, ". . . for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." He chooses that which comes our way.

John was a chosen vessel since he could not be killed. The Emperor Domitian banished him, as **Revelation 1:9** says, to the "**isle that is called Patmos.**" The "**Isle**" of "**Patmos**" was a barren, rocky, little island belonging to a group of islands called the Sporades. "**Patmos**" was ten miles long and five miles wide. It was crescent shaped, with the horns of the crescent pointing to the east, and it was forty miles off the coast of Asia Minor. Even the natural occurrences and geography can teach us lessons. We must ever be reminded that "every word of God is pure" (Proverbs 30:5). There is divine design and truth behind every word in the Scriptures. The Bible is the most condensed book in the world (John 21:25). Every word is significant. Needless to say, I cannot deal with every word, but there is truth there for you.

Note the setting: John was in exile. This is not unique to the Bible. Let us survey the Scriptures quickly. It was in exile that Jacob met God at Bethel (Genesis 28:16-19). While Moses was in exile, he met God at the burning bush (Exodus 3:1-6). It was in exile that Elijah heard the still, small voice (1 Kings 19:9-12). In exile Daniel saw a vision of "the Ancient of days," recorded in Daniel 7:9. There is something to be said of being alone and being in a position to receive truth. "**Patmos**" was a rocky island. The first thing necessary to receive truth is you must be cut off from the world and be on the Rock—Christ Jesus (1 Corinthians 10:4). Next, you must be barren; realize that you are empty and that He must fill you and teach you. If you ever see truth, He must show it to you. "**Patmos**" points to the east—the source of light—and you must be pointed to the east. You must *look* for light to receive it. John spent the remainder of the Emperor Domitian's reign on "**Patmos**"; he received and penned the Revelation in approximately A.D. 96. Then when Domitian died, John was recalled by the succeeding emperor, known as the Humane Nerva. He resettled in Ephesus, and

in approximately A.D. 100 wrote First, Second, and Third John, which chronologically are the last books of the Bible.

The Spirit of God Sheds Light on the Scriptures

Let us look at why John was on Patmos and why God's people go through many trials. **Revelation 1:9** says, ". . . for *the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.*" No doubt, John could not understand why he was banished to Patmos with so much work to do as the only living Apostle of the original twelve. I am sure he felt much weight and responsibility and could not understand why he was removed from the field of action. The trouble was, he was too busy to have seen the Revelation in the normal course of life. Thus, God in His wisdom pulled John away to give him the Revelation, just as He did the Apostle Paul when He placed him in cold, dark jail cells. Otherwise, we probably would not have all fourteen books of the Bible that are ascribed to Paul. Would we have that beautiful work of *Pilgrim's Progress* had John Bunyan not been confined to Bedford jail for ten years? Joseph said in Genesis 50:20, "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive."

Domitian thought to hinder the church and the truth by sending John to Patmos, but God used it to further the truth and to prove the Scriptures. Second Corinthians 13:8 says, "For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth." Be mindful of this when circumstances appear to turn against you: there is a providential hand guiding circumstances to further the truth.

John wrote in **Revelation 1:10**, "**I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day.**" Here is a vital truth. We must understand that all truth is spiritual truth. A revelation (or understanding) of truth only comes through the agency of "*the Spirit.*" John 17:17 says that "thy word is truth." Truth is housed in the Word, but it takes the Spirit to reveal it. The Apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians 3:6, "Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." It takes the Spirit of God to give life to the Scriptures. Yes, we must lay "line upon line" as Isaiah 28:10 says; however, Isaiah 34:16 declares, "Seek ye out of the book of the LORD, and read: no one of these shall fail, none shall want for her mate: for my mouth it hath commanded, and his spirit it hath gathered them."

It takes "*the Spirit*" to gather the verses together. For every dark saying in the Word of God that is hard to understand, the Spirit of God has another verse somewhere that will shed light upon the obscure passage. Another reason this is vital to understand is that truth is an element of "*the Spirit.*" He gathers it, receives it, and shows it (John 16:14). The reason John had to be "*in the Spirit*" was that the Spirit of God was showing John a panoramic vision in a complete overview. Various prophets throughout the Old Testament received portions of the same vision that John saw, and many saw more details on their particular portion than John saw, but he saw a general overview of it all. In his vision "*the Spirit*" gathered what had been shown down throughout the annals of time and revealed additional truths as well. We will see this more as we look at the Christ of the Revelation and other portions of the Revelation.

One reason many saints do not see more truth is because they are not as spiritual as they ought to be. John said, "**I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day.**" Do you think he just happened to wake up that morning in the Spirit? No, he was in the Spirit continually. Paul's admonition in Galatians 5:25 states, "If we live in the Spirit [are spiritually alive, or have spiritual life], let us also walk [progress, advance, move, or have more activity] in the Spirit." Many do not see much depth of truth because they are spiritually shallow. First Corinthians 2:10 says, ". . . for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." Today there seems to be general disdain for the deep things of God, but this is what holds a people steady, makes them solid, and produces a stalwart Church of God. To receive truth, you must dismiss temporal things. Revelation 4:2 says, "And immediately I was in the spirit . . ." Once John did that, he was able to "come up hither" (Revelation 4:1). Through "*the Spirit*" you can get lifted up to a position to see the truth. Revelation 21:10 mentions it again. John said, "And he carried me away in the spirit . . . and shewed me . . ."

Verse 10 gives insight to the agency of the Revelation—"the Spirit." Yes, God uses "his angel" (verse 1) and truth must come from "the word of God" (verse 2), but if "*the Spirit*" does not reveal truth to your heart so you may perceive it and understand it, you will still be in darkness. This is another vital portion of the biblical formula necessary to receive truth. The masses of religion are, as 2 Timothy 3:7 says, "Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." Why is this? They are "sensual, having not the Spirit" (Jude 19). May God help us ever to be dependent and lean heavily on the Spirit of God to receive truth, even as John did.

Seven Congregations Chosen

John said in **Revelation 1:10-11**: ". . . and heard behind me *a great voice, as of a trumpet, Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last . . .*" Here is a figure that we need to understand. This "*great voice*" and the figure of a "*trumpet*" are used throughout the Book of Revelation. The "*great voice*" was the voice of Christ. In **verse 11** Jesus said, "**I am Alpha and Omega,**" and Revelation 22:13-16 identifies this as Jesus. What is important to note is His "*voice as of a trumpet.*" Throughout the Revelation this figure is employed. Revelation 8:6 says, "And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets . . ." The "**trumpet**" is a picture of the voice of Christ, or the Word of God, being sounded out (we have already studied this in Revelation 1:7). When the "**great voice, as of a trumpet**" (**Revelation 1:10**) appears, he next speaks of the "**seven churches**" in **verse 11**. The "**trumpet**" represents the sounding of the Word of God throughout the seven church ages, or seven periods of the Gospel Day.

Let us consider these "*seven churches*" (the Greek says "*congregations*") spoken of in **verse 11**, which says, ". . . unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea." These congregations were not chosen randomly any more than the Old Testament tabernacle was randomly set up as a type. Just as God was very particular and meticulous in His choices of old, so He was in the choosing of these congregations. In choosing David, the son of Jesse, Samuel passed over seven sons (1 Samuel 16:10) before he found the one God had chosen. This was not only for the literal consequences, but because David was to serve as a type.

These congregations were chosen, just as the Psalmist David, for their character, nature, and heritage. Not only were they chosen for their spiritual qualities (or lack of them) to serve as symbols or figures, but they were also chosen for their geography. As we study each of these separately in the second chapter, we will see the significance of their spiritual condition and their geographical locality. (You will note a chart prior to Chapter 2, to which you can refer to see the geographical setting of these cities.) Some may say, "These were local letters to local congregations, and that is where you should leave them." The letters to Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, Colosse, and others were written to localities as well. Should we just leave them?

There is prophetic significance in Paul's words concerning the "mystery of iniquity" (2 Thessalonians 2:7). When he spoke of "that man of sin . . . the son of perdition" (verse 3), it is of prophetic importance. Read Paul's prophetic utterance in 1 Timothy 4:1, which says, ". . . in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils." The Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 3:1, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come." Also, the Apostle Peter said in 2 Peter 2:1-2: ". . . as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring [future tense] in damnable heresies . . . And many shall follow their pernicious ways." The point is clear that although they may be epistles localized to Thessalonica or Ephesus or to an individual such as Timothy, they cannot be taken strictly locally. The man of sin was not in Thessalonica.

There were prophetic elements to these Scriptures, and they have relevance to us yet today. So it is with these seven letters in Revelation. Certainly, there was a local aspect to these epistles, but that by no means negates the prophetic truths incorporated within them. Jesus did not arbitrarily pull seven congregations from the great number that there were in that day, but He lifted them by design, because those seven best served as figures. They are emblematic of the prophetic time scheme throughout the Gospel Day. As we go through these epistles in Chapter 2, there are a great many practical lessons to be learned. If you can clearly understand the prophetic aspect of these truths, then when a brother deals with them in a practical manner, you will know whereof he speaks and be able to grasp the message. However, if you have no prophetic point of reference, you will find it difficult to understand a practical application of something with which you are unfamiliar.

Revelation 1:12 says, "***And I turned to see the voice that spake with me.***" Here is the first scene in John's vision. John's words, "***And I turned . . .***" are a type of salvation. You must turn away from your former way and turn to the voice of Christ. This is a picture of repentance. Next, he said in **verse 12**, "***And I turned to see . . .***" We must bear in mind that this vision (Revelation 9:17) was something that he *saw*. What was the first scene that John saw? **Verse 12** tells us, "***I saw seven golden candlesticks.***" Here is a marvel. John said, "***I turned to see the voice . . . And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks.***" This was a vital scene, a vision that Christ wants seen. What were the "***seven golden candlesticks***"? Revelation 1:20 tells us, "And the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches." This reveals that the voice of Christ and the church are inseparable. Where the voice of Christ is, there is the true church;

and where the true church is, the voice of Christ is there. We have already found that "the seven churches" mentioned in verse 4 are symbolic of the church throughout the seven periods of the Gospel Day. Therefore, the mention of "**seven golden candlesticks**" tells us that there was a candlestick in each period of time.

Revelation 2:5 says, ". . . and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place . . ." This shows there was a pure people of God and at least some light in each period of time. During the Dark Ages, the prevailing condition was dark, but approximately sixty million martyrs gave their lives in that period of time. Were they in darkness? No, they had "the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:9). Though they were in the catacombs and caves and the world was enshrouded by darkness, God gave His people light. For 1,260 years, from A.D. 270 to A.D. 1530 (the totality of the dark day—Romanism), the woman (the church) was nourished by the Word and the Spirit, according to Revelation 12:14. With what is the church nourished? The Apostle Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:2, "Preach the word." Psalm 119:130 says, "The entrance of thy words giveth light." What those people had was meager, but it was light. God has been faithful to His people in every age.

The Lampstand—A Portrait of the Church

Let us look deeper at the "**seven golden candlesticks**" mentioned in **verse 12**. John employed the number "**seven**" to give a prophetic picture. "**Golden**" denotes purity. Their understanding was not as ours is today, but in every period of time there was a people who walked in all the light they had and were pure. Consider the thought of the "**candlestick**" and why it is employed. This is a portion of the vision that one of the prophets saw in Zechariah 4:2. It says, "And said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I have looked, and behold a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and the seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top thereof." Here Zechariah spoke of seven lamps and seven pipes.

Zechariah 4:12 speaks of golden oil. Now, candles do not use pipes or oil. The Interlinear Hebrew-English Bible uses the Hebrew word for *lampstand*. In **Revelation 1:12** the Greek word is also rendered *lampstand* by the Emphatic Greek Diaglott, as well as other Greek renderings. Zechariah, Chapter 4, is an intricate arrangement (we will study more of it in Revelation, Chapter 11, when I deal with the two olive trees). We need to focus mainly on this word *lampstand*. First, I want you to notice that John was a Hebrew; he was of Jewish stock, and so much of the imagery of the Revelation is an allusion back to the old Hebrew economy with which John was very familiar.

This was not foreign to the way Jesus spoke throughout the Scriptures. To fishermen, He spoke of fish and being fishers of men (Matthew 4:18-19). When Jesus spoke to lawyers, He spoke of the law (Luke 10:25-26). Since John was a Hebrew, he wrote the Revelation in Hebrew imagery. The lampstand is a figure of something with which every Hebrew was familiar—the menorah, or the lampstand, in the Hebrew temple. Exodus 25:31 teaches that the candlestick had one shaft that went up to the top as a lamp. Verse 32 tells us, "And six branches shall come out of the sides of it; three branches of the candlestick out of the one side, and three branches of the candlestick out of the other side." It had only one shaft, or one stand, but seven lamps. Verse 36 says that "all it shall be one beaten work of pure gold." Jesus said in Revelation 1:20 that the seven candlesticks are the seven churches, or the church through the seven periods of time. Even though there are seven lamps, Exodus 25:31 in the Interlinear Hebrew-English Bible says there is only one lampstand.

Exodus 25:36 says it was "one beaten work." How was the church produced? Isaiah 53:5 states, "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities . . ." He was beaten, or "smitten of God" (Isaiah 53:4), and "he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever" (Hebrews 10:12). What was it? Hebrews 9:26 tells us that it was "the sacrifice of himself." He "gave himself" for the church (Ephesians 5:25). By His sacrifice, by His blood, He purchased the Church of God (Acts 20:28). There is only one! He said in Matthew 16:18, "I will build my church."

Exodus 25:31 and Zechariah 4:2, speaking of the *lampstand*, denote the same picture John saw in **Revelation 1:12**. The singularity of it denotes the singularity of the church—"one beaten work." Exodus 25:36 uses the term "pure gold" denoting the purity of the church. Ephesians 5:27 tells us, ". . . not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." The purpose of the *lampstand* was to hold the lamp in place. Exodus 25:37 says, ". . . that they may give light . . ." This is a portrait of the church. Jesus said in Matthew 5:14, "Ye [verse 1 tells us He was speaking to His disciples] are the light of the world." Verse 15 says, "Neither do men light a candle [*lamp* in the Greek], and put it under a bushel [something man-made], but on a candlestick [*lampstand* in the Greek]; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house." The saints are the light, and the *lampstand* (the church) is that divine place God ordained to hold the lamps in place. The lamps are in a high, lifted up position above man-made things. Man-made

organizations smother the light; thus God put the church in an exalted position so that His people can give "light unto all" (Matthew 5:15).

Zechariah 4:2 says there are "seven pipes to the seven lamps," teaching that throughout all seven periods of the Gospel Day, the church has had light. It might have been limited in some eras, but she always had light in some measure. In each age the church consisted of people who stayed hooked in by the pipes to the "two olive trees" (Zechariah 4:3) and were maintained by "the golden oil" (Zechariah 4:12). Lamps do not fluctuate and flicker as candles do. As long as the flow of fuel is connected and uninterrupted, the light remains the same. Its brilliance may not be bright, but it will remain constant if it stays hooked into the source.

The lesson to John was: "John, you have seen the type in the tabernacle and read about it in prophecy. Now, here is the reality!" This scene of the "**candlesticks**" was vital to John, and Christ considers it vital yet today. He still wants men and women to see the church. If you are ever going to truly see light, or truth, you must come to the church. It is "the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15). The true church is where light and understanding goes forth. This is the reason Christ showed John the church in the first scene.

The Christ of the Revelation



The Divine Christ Having a Faithful Ministry in His Right Hand

Revelation 1:13 And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Christ Is in the Midst of the Church

Verse 13 portrays a most startling scene, yet one not unique in the Scriptures. In Revelation 1:12 John turned and saw a vision of the church. Then he said in **verse 13**, "**And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man . . .**" Here is an encouraging message: Christ is in the midst of the church. This heartening message is for all ages, regardless of the opposition of the enemy. Christ is faithful and abides with His people. This is a prophetic fulfillment of Jesus' promise in Matthew 18:20, which says, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." This promise was not merely to the people locally, but it was a timeless promise. In Matthew 28:20 Jesus declared, ". . . lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

Standing "**in the midst of the seven candlesticks**" (**Revelation 1:13**) is a portrayal of Christ performing that promise that He gave in Matthew. It is a picture of Christ being with the church and abiding in their midst throughout the seven periods of the Gospel Day. The Hebrew writer penned it well in Hebrews 13:5, when he wrote, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." In any age, if there has been any leaving or forsaking done (and there certainly has been), it has been on the part of the people, not Christ. Revelation 14:1 says, "And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb [this is a figure of Jesus, according to John 1:29] stood on the mount Sion [which is a figure of the church, according to Hebrews 12:22-23]."

Jesus' presence in **verse 13** teaches that He is vitally concerned with the affairs and activities of the Church of God. In all moves and decisions, God's people should consider His presence. We should have the attitude Moses had in Exodus 33:15, when he said, "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence." We need to recognize His presence, reverence His presence, and make cautious moves with this in view. If He removes the candlestick and His presence leaves, no matter what profession people make or what they call themselves, they have become Babylon.

The Everlasting Christ

Revelation 1:13-14 says: ". . . one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire." Here was an appearance of Christ completely foreign to John. He was the beloved disciple who leaned on Jesus' breast. Yet, **verse 17** says, "**And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead.**" In this scene he was not leaning on the breast of a loving Christ, but he was awed by what he saw. Though this scene was novel to John, it is not foreign to Scripture.

Throughout this introductory chapter, we are repeatedly introduced to the preexistent Christ. Verse 8 states, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." Verse 11 says, "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last." In **verse 17** He cried, "**I am the first and the last.**" In **verse 18** He said, "**I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore . . .**" This is a repeated theme throughout the first chapter and a truth borne out by other Scriptures as well. Micah's prophesy in Micah 5:2 tells us, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."

One truth the Revelation conveys is that Christ is from everlasting. This view that John saw was also seen by many of the prophets. After Jesus' death, He was glorified. John 7:39 says, ". . . for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified." Prior to His incarnation, He also was glorified. Jesus said in John 17:5, "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." Christ was a glorified Christ prior to His incarnation, as well as subsequent to it. He appeared to Joshua in Joshua 5:13-15 as "the captain." In Hebrews 2:10 He is "the captain" of our salvation. He appeared in Ezekiel 40:3 "like the appearance of brass," just as He did to John in **Revelation 1:15**.

Daniel 10:5-6 describes Christ: "Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz: His body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude." John saw this in **Revelation 1:13-15**. In this description of Christ is a picture that once again alludes back to the Old Testament.

The Greek word for "**garment**" (**Revelation 1:13**) is *poderes*, which means "reaching down to the feet." This is the same word the Greek Old Testament used to describe the robe of the high priest in Exodus 28:4 and 29:5 and also Leviticus 16:4. Josephus, the famed Jewish historian, described the garments the priests and the high priest wore when they were serving in the temple. In the *Antiquities of the Jews*, Josephus wrote that they wore "a long robe reaching to the feet," and around the breast "higher than the elbows," they wore a girdle that was loosely wound around the body. The girdle was embroidered with colors and flowers with a mixture of gold interwoven. The description of the robe and the girdle of the glorified Christ is almost exactly the description of the dress of the high priest.

God's people are portrayed as a new order of "priests unto God" in Revelation 1:6. In **verses 13-16** Christ affirmed His authority of the new order. He portrayed Himself as the "High Priest of our profession," according to Hebrews 3:1. Jesus firmly established that He indeed is the High Priest, having manifested Himself by this appearance "**in the midst of the seven candlesticks**" (**Revelation 1:13**). He proclaimed the fact that He is, according to Hebrews 2:17, the "faithful high priest" to the entirety of the church throughout the complete Gospel Day.

Revelation 1:14 describes Christ: "**His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow.**" Daniel saw this same picture in his prophecy in Daniel 7:9, which says, ". . . and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame . . ." Here Daniel correlates the "Ancient of days," which in this instance is Christ, with the thought of "did sit" and "his throne." Later in the chapter (verse 27), Daniel spoke of One "whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom." So he was dealing with the thought of a monarch and "an everlasting kingdom." In verses 5-6 of this introductory chapter, Christ introduced a new order of kings. In Revelation 17:14 He portrayed Himself as the King of kings, also vividly described in Revelation 19:11-16. Also in this chapter, Christ established Himself to be the reigning monarch now reigning on David's throne, as stated in Luke 1:31-33 and in Acts 2:29-32. **Revelation 1:13** says, "**And in the midst of the seven candlesticks . . .**" This shows Him as the Monarch, the Ruler of the true church of all ages. Each of these symbols conveys many truths. In **Revelation 1:13** the "**garment**" portrays salvation. We are told in Revelation 16:15, "Blessed is he that watcheth,

and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame." Isaiah 61:10 tells what these garments are: "My soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation."

The thought in **Revelation 1:13** of "**down to the foot**" indicates that it covers the whole man. The "**golden girdle**" depicts what enables the Christian to keep salvation: ". . . having your loins girt about with truth . . ." (Ephesians 6:14). This is the reason Christ was victorious—He was clothed with these truths. If you are going to be victorious, you must also adorn the doctrine. Notice that **Revelation 1:14** says, "**His head and his hairs were white like wool . . .**" This phrase, tied in with Daniel 7:9, refers to His purity. What does "**white like wool**" represent? Isaiah 1:18 tells us that "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." The thought of wool denotes the sinlessness and purity of the church in all periods of time.

Divine Attributes of Christ

In **Revelation 1:14-18** Jesus is shown with several divine attributes. When He introduced Himself to the seven congregations in Chapters 2 and 3, He used a different attribute for each congregation, or time period. Let us survey these seven epistles and see the attributes introduced in Chapter 1.

Revelation 2:1 says, "Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks" (as in **Revelation 1:13**). Revelation 2:8 reads, "And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive" (as in **Revelation 1:17-18**). Revelation 2:12 states, "And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges" (as in **Revelation 1:16**). Revelation 2:18 says, "And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass" (as in **Revelation 1:14-15**).

Revelation 3:1 reads, "And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God [as in Revelation 1:4], and the seven stars . . ." (as in **Revelation 1:16**). Revelation 3:7 says, "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth" (as in **Revelation 1:18**). Revelation 3:14 reads, "And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God" (as in Revelation 1:5).

Christ appeared to each congregation (representative of each church age) by a different attribute according to their needs. In various periods of time, there have been different obstacles and different foes; therefore, as the divine manifestation to bring victory in each age varied, so the responses varied. This is so even on an individual level. Read the Apostle Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 9:20-22: "And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."

The Apostle Paul approached different people in different manners because their backgrounds and needs were different. So it is with Christ. He portrayed Himself differently to each age because their needs were different. Therefore, I will deal with these figures in **Revelation 1:14-16** individually as we consider the letters. In these seven letters, Christ became a divine Messenger, a Prophet. In the description of Christ in Chapter 1, Christ is revealed in His threefold office as Prophet, Priest, and King. This is a glorified Christ. This is proved by **Revelation 1:16**, which reads, ". . . **and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.**" Daniel saw this picture in Daniel 10:6. A more recent occurrence is in Matthew 17:1-2: "And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light." Peter spoke of it in 2 Peter 1:16-17: "For we . . . were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory . . ."

In our text is a majestic, glorified, regal Christ—One who is awesome! This is the reason John said, "**And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead**" (**Revelation 1:17**). He fell prostrate as an obedient and frightened subject does obeisance to a frightful and dreadful king. If we, as God's people, truly had a vision of Christ in this manner, it would certainly remove all carelessness and indifference from our minds and overwhelm us with reverential fear. This is how

Christ wants the church to perceive Him. Yet, if your heart and life is truly right, you will hear, as John did in **Revelation 1:17-18**: "**Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen.**" Again, Christ alluded to His preexistent and eternal state. Why? Because this gives Him legitimate claim to supremacy and supreme authority.

Matthew 28:18 says, "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power [the Greek says '*authority*'] is given unto me in heaven and in earth." Why is His authority so great and so extensive? In **Revelation 1:18** He said, "**I am he that liveth, and was dead.**" There is a depth to this death. He not only gave up physical life, but Isaiah 53:12 tells us that "he hath poured out his soul unto death." Not only did He suffer physically, but He travailed in His soul (Isaiah 53:11). It was this travail, this pouring out of His soul, that enabled "the earth [to] be made to bring forth in one day" (Isaiah 66:8).

Jesus travailed, and died in the process, to produce a glorious church. Though He truly "**was dead**" (**Revelation 1:18**), 1 Samuel 2:6 declares, "The LORD killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up." Christ was brought up and now stands triumphantly, according to **Revelation 1:18**, which states, "**I am alive for evermore.**" In John 14:19 Jesus said, "Because I live, ye shall live also." Here is portrayed the life of the church in all periods of time. Yes, the life is in the Spirit, but only because Christ arose. First Corinthians 15:17 says, "And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." Romans 8:10 states, "And if Christ be in you . . . the Spirit is life because of righteousness." The church has had life in every age because Jesus is "**alive for evermore,**" and because He has "**the keys of hell and of death**" (**Revelation 1:18**). I will deal more with the thought of "**the keys**" in Revelation, Chapter 3; but briefly, the figure of "**the keys**" merely portrays control and access. One who possesses "**the key**" is the One who has control, the One who is in authority, and the One who has access to all things from which nothing is hidden or kept back. Christ is the Supreme Sovereign of the church, not only in this time world but also of that beyond the veil ("**of hell and of death**").

As mentioned earlier, Christ commissioned John in **Revelation 1:19**, "**Write the things which thou hast seen,**" which is past tense. This reveals the scope, or the time frame, of the Revelation. He also let us know the time delineation in which He performs His threefold office of Prophet, Priest, and King to the church. **Revelation 1:19** continues: ". . . **and the things which are** [present tense], **and the things which shall be hereafter.**"

A God-Called Ministry

Revelation 1:20 gives insight into several symbolic expressions. It says, "**The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand . . .**" Here Christ used the symbol alluding back to **verse 16**, and then He proceeded to give understanding: "**The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches.**" I have already proven that these angels do not denote celestial beings. In verse 1 "his angel" was a picture of the ministry. The Greek word for *angel* (in verses 1 and **20**) is *aggelos*, which means "messenger." Also, these were not celestial beings, because churches do not have angels; they have ministers, or pastors. Each of the seven letters was addressed to "the angel of the church" in Revelation 2:1; 2:8; 2:12; 2:18; 3:1; 3:7; and 3:14. This teaches that Christ was writing to those who were responsible, in authority, who had the oversight (1 Peter 5:2), to those who must give an account (Hebrews 13:17). These were God-called men, not celestial beings.

Why did Christ liken the ministry to "**stars**"? A star is a luminary agent vested with light to shine in the midst of a dark night. The ministry is God's luminary agent vested with "the light of the glorious gospel of Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:4) who is to shine out God's truth in the midst of a sin-benighted world. Look at the "star" in Matthew 2:2-9. In verse 2 the wise men said, "We have seen his star." The star "went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child [Christ] was" (verse 9). Just as the star led the wise men to Christ by the light vested in it, the ministry is to lead men to Christ by the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ vested in them. Daniel also saw this figure in Daniel 12:3. It says, ". . . and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." The "**stars**" in **Revelation 1:16** and **20** portray the ministry and the light and mission entrusted to them.

Notice where the true ministry is. In **Revelation 1:20** Jesus said they are "**in my right hand.**" Jesus said this to portray that the ministry is in His grasp, under His divine control, and upheld by divine authority. They are in a position of divine protection (John 10:28). In the Revelation, whenever you see language such as "I saw a star fall from heaven," it is a picture of a ministry out of divine control, who left the exalted position with Christ and fell to a human or earthen

level.

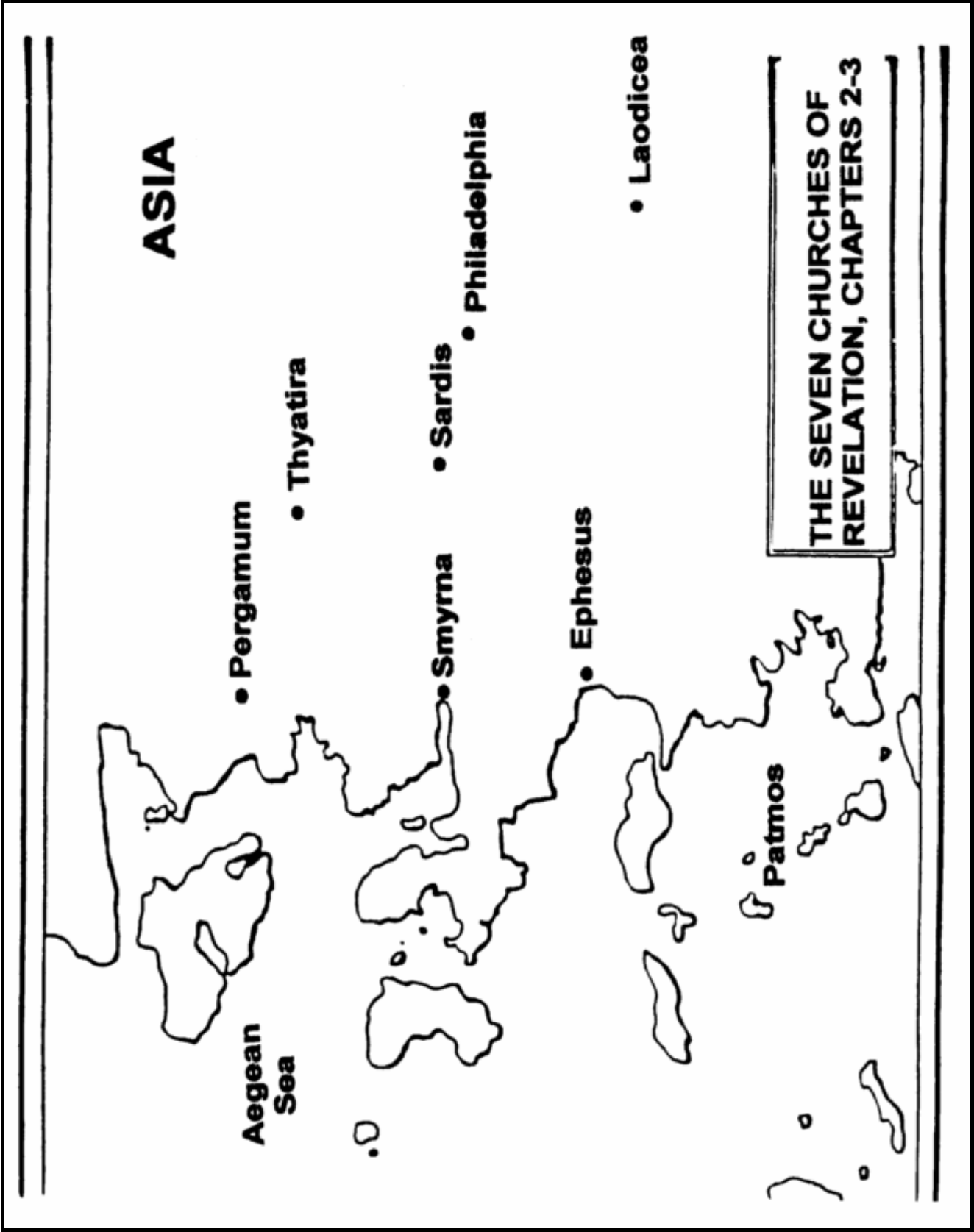
Revelation 1:20 says, ". . . the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand . . ." Here is a beautiful and encouraging picture! Even though there have been many dismal, disappointing scenes throughout the Christian dispensation, in every period God has had a faithful ministry who was "**in his right hand**" (**Revelation 1:16**), or in His control. There were periods when the prevailing condition was apostasy, darkness, or compromise, but in the face of it all, there were faithful men. This is the reason we have truth today. Had it totally died out in any period, we would not be enjoying it today. We are yet reaping the benefits of faithful men of previous eras. **Revelation 1:20** says, ". . . the seven candlesticks [the Greek says '*lampstands*'] **which thou sawest are the seven churches.**" Here, John closed out this introductory portion of the Revelation by again revealing the prophetic purpose behind the Revelation—a portrayal and record of the church, and that which she faces throughout the seven periods that comprise the Gospel Day.

Though this study of Chapter 1 has been lengthy, I trust that now, as Ephesians 1:18 says, "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened," you have enough fundamental knowledge of the basic symbols of the Revelation to understand the message as it unfolds in succeeding chapters. It is needful to have a clear understanding of many things introduced in Chapter 1 so that we will not need to deal with them again when they are employed as figures throughout the Revelation.

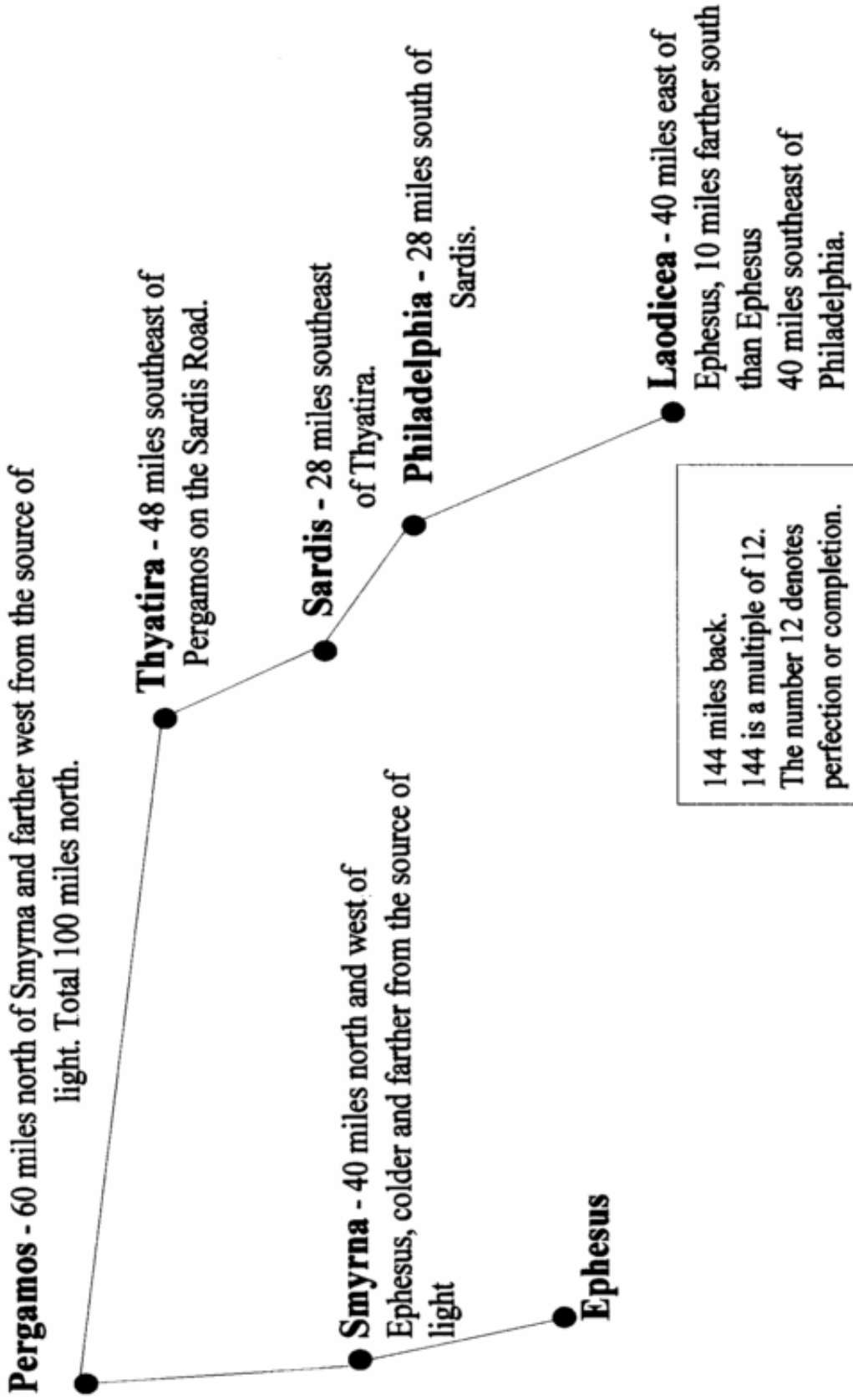
Chapter Two

Letters to the Churches

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Seven Congregations of Asia Minor



THE EPHESIAN AGE (A.D. 33 - 270)

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

2 I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

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

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

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

6 But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.

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

"Unto the Angel of the Church at Ephesus"

Many practical truths can be derived from these verses, but my burden in studying these writings is to give the proper prophetic understanding of these letters. To view these letters properly, you must keep several points in mind. These were literal epistles penned to various first century congregations. However, they were not preserved on that account. They were penned and preserved intactly in the Book of Revelation for their prophetic merit. If this were not so, they could have escaped our grasp as many other first century writings have.

As you begin to study Chapters 2 and 3 of the Revelation, remember that the Revelation is broken into at least seven series. This Christian dispensation is broken into seven distinct time periods, and these seven letters correlate with each time period. Each letter does not portray all aspects of the time period it represents but portrays a predominant, prevailing condition of that period. This is the reason there are at least seven series in the Revelation. Each series approaches the time period it is portraying from a different perspective, and it takes viewing all the series together to get the entire picture. This is similar to using overlays in a textbook. Each depicts a little different aspect, and not until all the pages are added to the overlay can one see the complete picture.

Revelation is a running history broken into seven segments. In the first chapter, the reader is introduced to "seven churches," "seven Spirits," and "seven stars" (Revelation 1:4, 16). Christ was merely setting the stage and giving the keys that take us down through the Gospel Day by means of these letters. Each of these letters parallels one time period of the Gospel Day. According to Revelation 1:19, the scope of the Revelation is in three tenses: "Write the things which thou hast seen [this is past tense; it had already occurred by A.D. 96], and the things which are [present tense], and the things which shall be hereafter [future tense]." Seven represents completeness. Through the vehicle of these seven letters, the complete Gospel Day is represented.

First, we need to establish the prophetic time delineation for these letters. The first letter to Ephesus, recorded in **Revelation 2:1-7**, was addressed "**unto the angel of the church of Ephesus.**" Chapter 2 properly starts the first series, because Chapter 1 is an introduction. This series starts at the beginning of the Gospel Day and goes through to the evening of time, or the consummation. Chapters 2 and 3 are wholly dedicated to the letters Christ dictated to "the seven churches which are in Asia." Revelation 1:11 says, "What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches [the Greek says 'congregations'] which are in Asia [Asia Minor, or proconsular Asia]; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea."

Revelation 2:1 begins, "**Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write.**" In the initial phrase of this epistle, we

are introduced to a point that is common in all seven of these letters. Without exception, each letter is addressed "**unto the angel.**" This would appear startling if used literally. Nowhere do the Scriptures teach that celestial angels have churches. As a matter of fact, the Apostle Peter, concerning the preaching of salvation, wrote in 1 Peter 1:12, ". . . which things the angels desire to look into."

Thus, these angelic beings in the Revelation must be other than celestial beings. Remember that we are dealing with a book of symbolic representations. It is essential that we establish whom these angels represent since they are featured predominately throughout the Revelation. The actual Greek word for the English word **angel** is *aggelos*, which literally means "a messenger." It is a symbol of a divinely-called messenger—a minister or a pastor. In Revelation 22:8-9 John said: "And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God."

In Galatians 1:8-9 the Apostle Paul wrote: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you . . . As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach . . ." In Galatians, Chapter 4, the Apostle Paul wrote that he was regarded as an *angel*. Paul said in Galatians 4:13-14, ". . . I preached the gospel unto you . . . but [you] received me as an angel of God . . ." Here we can see clearly that "**the angel**" is the one who receives the message from God and is responsible for preaching it. This is the reason each of these seven letters is addressed "**unto the angel**" (Revelation 2:1; 2:8; 2:12; 2:18; 3:1; 3:7; and 3:14). The significance of this is that God holds the ministry and (on the local level) primarily the pastor responsible for proclaiming the truth and holding the standard.

Ezekiel 3:17-19 tells us: "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul." The New Testament charge to ministers is very explicit as well. Second Timothy 4:1-3 says: "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears."

If God has something to say, He works through His ministry. Amos 3:7 says, "Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets." When the Apostle Paul knew that martyrdom was looming nigh, he warned the church of impending conditions. How did he do it? According to Acts 20:17, he "called the elders of the church." Then, in Acts 20:28-30 Paul wrote: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."

The message is to "**the angel**" because he is the one in the position of responsibility. He is the only one who holds the authority to change the situation. A vivid illustration of this is Paul's words in Colossians 4:16-17: "And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea. And say to Archippus [the pastor in Laodicea, thirty years before the Revelation was written], Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it." It is evident that Archippus did not heed the message; he did not fulfill his ministry, so lukewarmness set in.

Seven Congregations Represent Seven Ages

Let us look a little farther. **Revelation 2:1** begins, "**Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write.**" Each of these seven congregations was a literal congregation in a literal city. There was a divine reason that the Lord picked these seven of the many congregations and localities available. Why did He not choose Corinth, Rome, Philippi, Antioch, or many others? The seven were chosen because their geographical locations and physical and spiritual attributes best depicted the time periods they portray. *Baker's Bible Atlas*, page 228, says, "The order of the churches described in Revelation is in the form of a circuit, starting from Ephesus, traveling north to Smyrna and Pergamos, then southeast to Thyatira, Sardis, and Philadelphia, until the southern and eastern limit is reached at Laodicea." The distance between the cities as well as the direction of the movement portray spiritual truths. These cities were chosen not only for their

characteristics, but also for their geographical locations.

Smyrna was forty miles northwest of Ephesus. Smyrna was moving away from light, the east being the source of light. This is a picture of an apostasy; a move away from truth was starting to take place. The height of the Dark Ages is symbolized by Pergamos, which is the farthest north and west. At this point, a total distance of one hundred miles has been traveled. When you get to Laodicea, symbolizing the evening-time church, a total distance of one hundred forty-four miles has been traveled. This is a multiple of twelve, the Bible number for perfection and completeness. Also, notice that Laodicea is farther east (closer to the source of light), and farther south, which means that it received more heat than the morning-time church. (See the map of the seven congregations at the beginning of this section.)

This first epistle represents the first period of the Gospel Day, the period that begins with the institution of the church, A.D. 33, and goes to A.D. 270. "**Ephesus**" was a very ancient city. At the time the Revelation was given, it was the capital of proconsular Asia. It was a highly prosperous city known by the title *Supreme Metropolis of Asia*. It was a major commercial center where much business was transacted. Its soils were fertile and the city was watered and kept saturated by two rivers. (Remember that "**Ephesus**" represents the first period of time when the morning-time church was in her pristine glory.)

Webster's New World Dictionary gives the definition of *capital* as the "chief, principle, of primary importance, of most political importance as being the seat of government." A capital is where official records and documents are kept, and it is where the law goes forth and judgment is issued. Also, it is where the ruler resides. This portrayal of a capital is a picture of the church. The church is the capital, or depository, of God's light and truth. First Timothy 3:15 says, "But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."

Are official records kept in the church? Psalm 87:6 declares, "The LORD shall count, when he writeth up the people" Here we read that "the LORD shall count," that He keeps an accurate census, and that "he writeth" (or does the writing), showing that there *is* written documentation. The latter part of Exodus 32:32 speaks of "thy book which thou hast written." Revelation 21:27 denotes it as "the Lamb's book of life." Notice that all this is being spoken of Zion. Psalm 87:5 tells us, "And of Zion it shall be said" Zion is a figurative expression of the church.

Hebrews 12:22-23 says: "But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect." Verse 22 begins, "But ye are," which is present tense. When this was penned in approximately A.D. 63-69, it was a present reality. He was not writing to disembodied spirits. Verse 23 tells us it is the "church of the firstborn." In other words, it is the church that the Firstborn purchased. Romans 8:29 tells us the Firstborn is "his Son." Therefore, the "church of the firstborn" is the church that the Firstborn purchased. Acts 20:28 says it is "the church of God."

According to Luke 10:20, a child of God's name is written in heaven, and heaven is the top story of the church. Ephesians 3:14-15 says: "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." The capital is where the law goes forth.

We read in Isaiah 2:2-4: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

Verse 2 begins, "And it shall come to pass in the last days" Let us biblically establish when this prophetic expression is referring to (read Hebrews 1:1-2). The Hebrew writer declared in verse 2, "Hath [present tense] in these last days . . ." intimating that during the time of A.D. 63-69, the sacred writer considered himself "*in* these last days." We can go back further than A.D. 63. Acts 2:16-17 says: "But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days" In reference to the advent of the Holy Spirit and the commencement of a new dispensation, verse 16 says, "But this is that," or to put it in the clear language of John, 1 John 2:18 reads, "Little children, it is the last time . . ." Biblically, the last days began on the Day of Pentecost. Isaiah 2:3-4 tells us: ". . . for out of Zion [the church] shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations"

What is the law? Ezekiel 43:12 tells us, "This is the law of the house; Upon the top of the mountain the whole limit thereof round about shall be most holy. Behold, this is the law of the house." The law of the house is holiness. First Peter 4:17 tells us where judgment begins, "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?"

Ephesus—An Accurate Portrayal of the Morning-Time Church

History reveals that "*Ephesus*" was known as a free city. When this epistle was penned, the entire world was under Roman domination (Luke 2:1). Yet, the Romans had granted "*Ephesus*" the right of a self-government within its own limits. It never endured the indignity of having Roman troops compulsorily quartered within it. This is a living picture of the church in the world. The church is not of this world; it is on foreign soil just as "*Ephesus*" was, yet it is self-governing. In the early morning of pristine glory, she preached the beauty of holiness, laid judgment on everything sinful, and held the light of Christ forth in a pure and unadulterated manner.

Ephesus' soil was fertile; it was good ground for truth. Matthew 13:23 says, "But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty." The morning-time church had virgin soil. This congregation was chosen because in the early-morning time it was a thriving, spiritual congregation of approximately ten thousand people. "*Ephesus*" was a great, pagan city, a city of idols. It held one of the seven wonders of the ancient world—the temple of Diana. One scholar said, "This temple, according to modern excavations, was 418 feet in length and 239 feet in width, with 100 beautiful external pillars of Parian marble, each a single shaft about 56 feet high."

For a time, truth flourished in "*Ephesus*." Acts 19:1-20 states: "And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.

"And all the men were about twelve. And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God. But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus. And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

"And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them. Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?

"And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed."

In Ephesians 1:3 Paul, speaking to the Ephesian congregation, declared they were blessed "with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." The Apostle Paul was with this congregation longer than any other congregation (Acts 20:17-21, 31).

The city of "*Ephesus*" had two rivers. These rivers brought freshness and life to the city as well as removed pollution and corruption. They are beautiful symbols of the Word and of the Spirit—the two vicars that governed the morning-time church. Zechariah 4:2 speaks of "a *candlestick* all of gold," using the same word used in our lesson text (**Revelation 2:5**). Again, the Greek actually says "*lampstand*."

What is this "**candlestick**"? Revelation 1:20 says that "the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches," or *the church* throughout the seven periods that comprise the Gospel Day. Going back to Zechariah 4:2-6, we read: "And said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I have looked, and behold a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top thereof: And two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof. So I answered and spake to the angel that talked with me, saying, What are these, my lord? Then the angel that talked with me answered and said unto me, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord. Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts."

The "two olive trees" mentioned in verse 3 supply the lampstand with golden oil, or sustenance, to keep the light shining brightly. The two olive trees are defined in verse 6: ". . . This is the word of the LORD . . . Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit . . ." They are the Word and the Spirit. Zechariah 4:14 calls them "the two anointed ones." Revelation 11:3 calls them "my two witnesses." We know they are referring to the same thing because both Zechariah 4:11 and Revelation 11:4 refer to them as "two olive trees." Let us look a little further into whom the witnesses are. Romans 8:16 states, "The Spirit itself beareth witness . . ." We read in Hebrews 10:15, "Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us . . ." The Spirit is one of the witnesses. Concerning the other witness, Matthew 24:14 says, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness . . ." Therefore, these two rivers into "**Ephesus**," the source of health and life, are a symbol of the Word and the Spirit. They are a portrayal that the morning-time church operated under divine direction.

"He That Holdeth the Seven Stars in His Right Hand"

Looking at our Scripture text, notice by what attribute Christ appeared to the Ephesian age. **Verse 1** says, ". . . **These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.**" In Revelation 1:12-16 many attributes of Christ are portrayed. In each of the seven letters, He chose a different attribute by which to identify Himself. Why? Because Christ always appears to meet the need. When He said in John 4:4 that He "must needs go through Samaria," it was because that was where the need was. Jesus told the woman in John 4:16, "Go, call thy husband . . ." Jesus brought that up because that was where the need was. He has a way of getting past the surface to the heart of the matter. In Mark 10:21 Jesus told the rich ruler to "sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor." Why did Jesus say this? Is this a requirement that He places on all? No, but He knew where this man's problem was. Verse 22 substantiates this: "And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions." So it is in our text. To each era, Christ revealed the attribute needed to bring victory in that period of time. Ephesus was in jeopardy of losing their candlestick and their light (Ephesians 5:14 and **Revelation 2:5**). They were in danger of losing their position as the true church. Therefore, Christ portrayed Himself as the One "**who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks**" (**Revelation 2:1**).

Again, **Revelation 2:1** declares, "**These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand . . .**" What are these "**seven stars**"? Revelation 1:20 states, "The seven stars are the angels [or pastors] of the seven churches." This is a picture of the ministry in its entirety down throughout the Gospel Day. When **verse 1** says "**in his right hand**," it merely means in His control. When someone has something in hand, a common saying is "They have matters in hand," or they have it under control.

Why does Christ liken the ministry to "**stars**"? They are luminary agents in a sin-darkened world to lead men to Christ. We read in Matthew 2:9-10: "When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy." The star that led these men to Christ was in an exalted position. This is a picture of the ministry. Daniel 12:3 states, ". . . and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." Christ portrayed Himself as the Christ in control of the ministry and as the Lord of the lampstand. Something was going to take place, and He wanted them to know that He was still in control. He wanted them to know that leaving their first love would not be tolerated, and they could not remain the church in that condition. We read in **verse 5**, "**Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place . . .**"

This period of time started out on fire and powerful, and they had discernment. **Revelation 2:2** tells us, ". . . **thou**

has tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars." This is vividly portrayed in Acts 5:1-14. This story of Ananias and Sapphira very closely details what our text in Revelation was talking about. They could detect false apostles. Second Corinthians 11:13 says, "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ." However, something happened in this period of time. Unfortunately, the morning-time glory that commenced in A.D. 33 was short-lived.

The word *Ephesus* literally means "desired, committed, relaxed, or let go." What happened to Ephesus was just what Jesus predicted in Matthew 24:12, when He said, "And because iniquity [or lawlessness and rebelliousness against constituted authority] shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." As early as Paul's third missionary journey in A.D. 53-58, a mere twenty to twenty-five years after Pentecost, Paul had to warn these brethren in Ephesus specifically. In Acts 20:29-30 Paul said: "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."

This problem was not confined to Ephesus; it was spread throughout during the duration of this period. Look at Jude's writing in A.D. 66 in Jude, verses 3-4. Read the startling language he employed in verse 3: ". . . earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered [past tense] unto the saints." Jude made matters sound rather critical only thirty-three years after Pentecost. Then he began to elaborate in verse 4: "For there are certain men crept in unawares . . . ungodly men . . ." So we can see that something was beginning to work. Paul penned in 2 Thessalonians 2:7, "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work . . ." This was written in A.D. 50-51.

"Thou Hast Left Thy First Love"

Ephesus was the city of the great heathen goddess Diana. Though initially the church stood for truth, over time, because of the iniquity that abounded, they became affected and infected. History reveals this once thriving congregation began to let go and became relaxed (just as the name Ephesus implies). They permitted things that they should never have allowed. As **Revelation 2:4** says, they had "*left thy first love.*" These people did not *lose* their "*first love,*" but they "*left*" it. When one leaves truth but continues to profess and practice religion, that is apostasy.

The Apostle Paul taught in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, ". . . that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first . . ." The Greek word for *falling away* is *apostasia*, which means "defection from truth, or falling away from the true religion." The Greek word *apo* means "away," and *stasia* means "a standing"; so it is "to move away from a standing." Webster defines it as "an abandoning of what one believes in a faith." History tells us that this once thriving congregation began to be influenced by their pagan surroundings, and four things occurred. First, they began to eat food offered to idols, which was a violation of Acts 15:20 and 29. Second, they began to mix idol worship in with supposedly Christian worship. Second Corinthians 6:14-16 clearly prohibits this. Third, they eventually denied God as their Creator, again fulfilling Romans 1:25. Fourth, due to the influence of the immorality of women associated with the temple, the women became adulteresses.

Ephesians 5:1-8 tells us: "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour. But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them. For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light."

Paul forewarned of the very things that were going to work against them. In verse 6 he clearly said, "Let no man deceive you." Therefore, some must have made moves to deceive them in these areas. This is a picture representative of not only the Ephesian congregation, but also of the entire first period of the Gospel Day. It is a portrait of the morning-time apostasy. What had started out as pure Christianity, became diluted with paganism. They gradually started mixing pagan practices to such an extent that Jesus said in **Revelation 2:5**, "**Thou art fallen.**" One sad thing is that they once hated "**the deeds of the Nicolaitanes,**" as it says in **Revelation 2:6**. This was a sect formed by Nicolas, who was a proselyte of Antioch (Acts 6:5). The Nicolaitanes advocated loose living and loose sexual morality; yet they professed to be Christians. Over time, the Ephesian church and that church age became just like them. In **Revelation 2:5** Jesus

expressly commanded them to **"repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."** God's people may be entrusted with the **"candlestick,"** but if they do not adhere to biblical conditions, He can and will remove it. We have no record showing that Ephesus ever repented. Not only was the **"candlestick"** removed, but there is no longer a congregation or even a city in that place.

God has had a victorious, overcoming people in every period of time. **Revelation 2:7** says, **"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."** In the closing verse of this epistle, an equation is set before us. In this passage the word **"hear"** in the Greek means "to heed or obey." Jesus equates hearing **"what the Spirit saith"** as being the prerequisite to truly becoming an overcomer and being given to **"eat of the tree of life . . . in the midst of the paradise of God."** This is a privilege given only to an exclusive group of individuals **"that overcometh."** They are the ones who heed, or obey, **"what the Spirit saith."**

In this passage we also find a very clear message revealing that the **"paradise of God"** has been restored. In this epistle, which symbolizes the morning time of the Christian dispensation, is a very clear indication that what had been lost through Adam has been restored through Jesus Christ (see Revelation 22:1-3). A more detailed picture of paradise, in the sense of its symbolic representation, is portrayed in Revelation, Chapter 22.

Let us look at a couple of the predominant symbols in our text. **Verse 7** says, **"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life."** The symbol of **"the tree of life"** was employed by the wise man as well. Proverbs 3:13 says, "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom . . ." Then, in verse 18 he declared, "She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her." This teaches that wisdom is a **"tree of life."** The Apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians 1:24, wrote, "But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." Wisdom is **"the tree of life,"** and Christ is wisdom, teaching us that He is this **"tree of life."** If we will heed what the Spirit is teaching, truly embrace it, obey it, and be overcomers, then He will enable us to continue to partake of Christ and of the sustenance that He gives to sustain spiritual life.

Christ went on to say in **Revelation 2:7**, **". . . which is in the midst of the paradise of God."** According to Revelation 1:13, Christ was in the midst of the seven, golden candlesticks. In this paradise reference, it says **"the tree of life [or Christ] . . . is in the midst of the paradise."** Paradise is a picture of that exalted position in which the church dwells—where revelation, the presence of Christ, and divine sustenance come from. Ephesians 2:6 says, "And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." The church dwells in an exalted, elevated, ecclesiastical position.

The Apostle Paul taught in 2 Corinthians 12:1-4: "It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise . . ." The third heaven (verse 2) and paradise (verse 4) are synonymous, or interchangeable terms. This third heaven, or paradise, is a place that a man is lifted up to through the Spirit of God. This enables a man to "come to visions and revelations of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 12:1). It is not something beyond this veil of flesh. Paul referred to this exalted position where he received visions and revelations of the Lord in 2 Corinthians 12:2 as "the third heaven." The Scriptures teach there are three heavens: a celestial Heaven where God dwells (Matthew 6:9); a firmamental heaven (Genesis 1:8); and that ecclesiastical heaven, or exalted position where divine revelations are enjoyed and the presence of Christ dwells (Ephesians 2:6).

Again, **Revelation 2:7** teaches us that which was lost through Adam—paradise, the privilege of having eternal life, the privilege of having access to the tree of life—has been restored through Jesus Christ. This is indicated by being incorporated in the very first letter that symbolizes the commencement of the Gospel Day. It also indicates that the privilege of partaking of divine sustenance is not something that man can enjoy anywhere. Just as the literal Tree of Life was in the literal garden and man would have had to be in that locality to enjoy it, so it is with truth, and so it is with Christ. He is not in every locality. He is in the midst of the **"seven golden candlesticks";** he **"is in the midst of the paradise of God."** In this early morning period of time, He was holding forth the truth that to those who overcame, Christ was in the church, and the truth was in the church. That was the position man had to get in to enjoy visions and revelations of the Lord and divine sustenance.

Time Frame of the Ephesian Letter

This first epistle coincides with the beginning of the Gospel Day. In Revelation 12:1-3 we are introduced to another set of figures used to symbolize the beginning of the Gospel Day. Verse 1 speaks of a woman. Verse 2 tells us she is an expectant woman, a mother "being with child." Galatians 4:26, as well as other Scriptures, shows her as a figurative expression of the church. Revelation 12:3 introduces her first opposing force—a great red dragon, which was a symbolic representation of the pagan Roman Empire. (The appearance of the church as the first symbolic representation and her first opposition verifies the time setting as A.D. 33.)

The time frame for this letter commenced at A.D. 33 because that was when the church was instituted. Matthew 16:18 says, "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Jesus said, "I will [future tense, at that time] build my church." What type of material does He use to build the Church of God? Is it brick and mortar? No. The Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 3:9, "For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building." Second Corinthians 1:2 tells us he was addressing "the church of God which is at Corinth." First Corinthians 1:2 repeats this statement and also says this church is comprised of God's people, who are "called to be saints." The original Greek word for the New Testament word "saint" is *hagios*, which means "pure morally, blameless, and holy." The Holy Spirit enables one to live holy.

Acts 2:1-4 tells us when the Holy Ghost came: "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." The Holy Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost. This is when the church (the Greek word is *ekklesia*, which means "called out") was instituted. Revelation 21:1-2 says: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." This vision became a reality in A.D. 33, establishing the time frame for the beginning of the first letter.

The end of this period is defined in Wickersham's *A History of the Church*, page 104, which says, "Another great event that marks the close of this period of time, A.D. 270, is the division and decline of the Roman Empire." This first letter represents the inception of the Gospel Day (A.D. 33) through to when the Roman Empire began to divide and decline in its pagan form (A.D. 270). Thus, the ending of the first period is the beginning of the second era—the Smyranean age.

THE SMYRNEAN AGE (A.D. 270 - 530)

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

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

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

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

Smyrna Represents a Spiritual Falling Away

In this portion of Scripture, Christ addressed yet another congregation of Asia Minor: the congregation in Smyrna. Let us begin to examine this particular epistle to see what it conveys. **Revelation 2:8** begins "**And unto the angel . . .**" In this age of independence and self-sufficiency, we should note that concerning the needs of the people in the seven letters, Christ never addressed the people directly. In every instance He worked through His ordained channel—"the angel," or the ministry. Amos 3:7 says, "Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets." The Lord works through His ministry. When He wanted to feed the multitude, how did He do it? Matthew 15:36 states, "And he [Christ] took the seven loaves [a picture of completeness] and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake them, and gave to his disciples [the ministry], and the disciples to the multitude." Luke 9:1-2 says: "Then he called his twelve disciples together . . . And he sent them to preach . . ."

The ministry gets the Word from Christ, who in turn feeds the saints. Therefore, in our Scripture text, He addressed the ministry. They are the ordained avenue through which He has chosen to communicate with man. The ministry is held responsible for what is taking place in the church. To symbolize this era of time (A.D. 270 to A.D. 530), "**the church in Smyrna**" was selected. Why did Christ choose "**Smyrna**"? In the Revelation each congregation was selected because its location, attributes, physical characteristics, and spiritual condition best symbolized the period it represented.

"**Smyrna**" was about forty miles north of Ephesus, located at the mouth of a river that emptied into the Aegean Sea. Its cafes were fascinating and beautifully lit so that at night they looked like fairy houses. Its streets were rough with granite-like boulders, and the alleys were full of pits and holes, which made it dangerous at night. The city was morally bad. Plundering at night by vandals, bandits, and robbers made it unsafe to be out after dark. It was a rich, prosperous city. Camels laden with goods often crowded people off the streets. This congregation, or city, was chosen to represent the second candlestick age, or the second period of time.

On the Day of Pentecost the church was instituted. She came with pristine glory. Revelation 12:1 depicts her as "a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet." Revelation 6:2 says she "went forth conquering, and to conquer." She even defeated and cast down Rome in its pagan form. Revelation 12:9 declares, "And the great dragon was cast out . . ."

By A.D. 270 Rome became divided and was on a decline from which she never recovered as a paganistic power. Unfortunately, in the face of victory the church's pristine glory was short-lived. As far back as approximately A.D. 58-59, Paul warned in Acts 20:29-30 of things to come: "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." He prophesied to the young minister Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:1, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils." In A.D. 52 Paul penned in 2 Thessalonians 2:7, "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work [present tense] . . ."

The Apostle Peter saw this coming as well. He wrote in 2 Peter 2:1, "But there were false prophets also among the

people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them . . ." How did they deny the Lord? It was not verbally; that would have been too pronounced and obvious. Titus 1:16 says, "They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate." Jude let us know that this apostasy was under way in A.D. 66, only thirty-three years after Pentecost. Jude 3 says, ". . . ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered [past tense] unto the saints." What happened? Verse 4 tells us, "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness . . ."

The Apostle Paul prophesied in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, ". . . for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first." The term "falling away" is actually the Greek word *apostasia* from which our English word *apostasy* is derived and means "defection from truth." *Holman's Bible Dictionary* defines it as "the act of rebelling against, forsaking, abandoning, or falling away from what one has believed." This is what occurred in the Smyranean age. The stage was prepared in the Ephesian age when they left their first love, as recorded in Revelation 2:4; but in this second time period, that move became the predominant condition. In the trumpet series (Revelation 8:8), a great mountain is portrayed, which is a figurative portrayal of the church. We know this is true because in Revelation 21:9 the angel told John, "Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife." Verse 10 declares, "And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain . . ."

John was told that he would be shown the bride, which was the Lamb's wife. In 2 Corinthians 11:2 the Apostle Paul said, ". . . for I have espoused you to one husband [speaking of Christ], that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." When Paul spoke of the chaste virgin, he referred to her as *you*. Who is the "you" that he was addressing as a "chaste virgin," the bride to Christ? In 2 Corinthians 1:1 we see that Paul was speaking "unto the church of God." Therefore, that chaste virgin is the church, the bride, the Lamb's wife, who was going to be revealed. Again, in Revelation 21:10 when John spoke of "a great and high mountain," that mountain was a figurative expression of the Church of God.

Revelation 8:8 tells us that "a great mountain burning with fire [the fire of the Holy Spirit—in other words, a church divinely instituted and divinely directed] was cast into the sea." Revelation 17:15 states that the waters are people. The sea is a mass of water. So what we see here is the move of a great mass of people, and when literal fire goes into water, the fire goes out. Also, as the mountain goes into the sea, it goes out of public view. In figurative expressions, this is a picture of the morning-time apostasy. Much of that which had been the true church left the hands of God and the Holy Spirit and fell into the hands of men. This mountain in Revelation 8:8 "was cast into the sea," the sea of apostasy. In Revelation 13:1 a hideous beast rose out of this same sea. These passages show that the Smyranean era was a transitional era, one in which this mountain was being cast into the sea, and in the midst of that sea, something was being formulated that later came out in the form of a hideous beast. Jesus gave a parable that coincides with this age in Matthew 13:24-30: the parable of the tares. In this parable is a portrait of the good and bad growing together for a period of time (again depicting a transitional type of era). These seven parables in Matthew, Chapter 13, are another form of expression or vehicle to carry one down through the entirety of the Gospel Day. These seven parables correspond with the seven letters in Revelation, Chapters 2 and 3, with each one representing a period of this Christian dispensation.

Let us look at the geography and characteristics of "**Smyrna**" in light of this apostasy. "**Smyrna**" was forty miles north of Ephesus. By moving north, this symbolizes one is going into a colder climate or spiritually cooling off. Jeremiah 23:8 says, "But, The LORD liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land." We read in Zechariah 6:6 and 8: "The black horses which are therein go forth into the north country. . . Behold, these that go toward the north country have quieted my spirit in the north country." Failure to heed the Holy Spirit's voice is what leads to an apostasy. This is the result of moving to a position where one can go on with a religious profession but never hear the voice of the Spirit of God. This black horse in Zechariah 6:6 ties right in with the black horse in Revelation 6:5, dealing with the same time period that symbolizes apostasy. The north country was a reference to the Babylonians. Jeremiah 46:10 says, ". . . in the north country by the river Euphrates." The Euphrates flowed right through Babylon. So, the north country is emblematic of spiritual Babylon.

Teaching the Word Without the Spirit Brings About False Doctrine

Ephesus, a picture of the morning-time church, had two rivers—a symbolic expression of the Word and the Spirit. However, in "**Smyrna**" there was only one river. What is the picture? We read in Zechariah 6:8 that they "have quieted my spirit." The "**church in Smyrna**" would not listen to the Holy Spirit nor yield to His government. Yet, they still wanted to claim that they were the church, holding onto the Word, teaching and preaching without giving the Spirit right of way. Second Corinthians 3:6 says, "Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." This is what occurred. They quieted the Spirit by refusing to listen to or obey the Spirit. Yet, they continued to teach and preach with the letter only, and instead of producing light, it produced death.

They have taken a few Scriptures, such as Matthew 16:18, which says, ". . . Thou art Peter, and upon this rock [they teach that the rock is Peter] I will build my church"; and Matthew 16:19, "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven"; and Jesus' words in John 20:23, "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them." Without the Spirit to enlighten their understanding, they have developed their own thinking on these verses and developed teachings that trust in man rather than Christ. The letter that the Spirit wanted to use to bring life instead has brought spiritual death to millions who have embraced their false teachings. It gave rise to a system called spiritual Babylon. The thought of Babylon originally came from the Hebrew, as recorded in Genesis, Chapter 11. Here we see that the people could not understand each other, and everyone spoke something different. Verse 9 says, "Therefore is the name of it called Babel [or confusion]." The Septuagint version says it was "called Confusion." This is exactly what occurred in the spiritual realm also. Look at the Genesis account that parallels what has occurred in the Gospel Day. Genesis 11:1 tells us, "And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech." This is a vivid picture of the morning time of the Gospel Day; they had unity and harmony. Acts 1:14 says, "These all continued with one accord . . ." Acts 2:1 says, "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place."

Genesis 11:2 states, "And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, [East is the source of light. Notice, they journeyed *from* the east, or in other words, they turned their backs on light. They walked away from light—a picture of the apostasy beginning.] that they found a plain . . ." They went to a low, level place instead of a high, exalted place. Verse 3 says, ". . . let us make brick . . . And they had brick for stone . . ." Only God can create a stone. A stone is divinely made, and the stone to build upon is Jesus Christ. He is the "chief corner stone" (Ephesians 2:20). Isaiah 28:16 calls Him "a tried stone, a precious corner stone." However, they did not want that stone. Genesis 11:3 tells us that "they had brick for stone." They said, "Let *us* make brick." Brick is a man-made substitute. They did not want what God made; they wanted a man-made substitute. We read in verse 4 that they wanted to reach unto Heaven, but they did not want to go God's way. They wanted to construct their own way to Heaven, and that is exactly what religion is doing today. They will not take the Stone—Jesus Christ; they will not listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit. Through their own teachings and creeds they are trying to construct a way to Heaven. Yet, all they have succeeded in doing is creating Babylon or confusion. Revelation 11:3 says there are "two witnesses," and anytime people refuse to let them *both* stand to their feet (Revelation 11:8), it is Babylon.

Let us look at other characteristics of "**Smyrna**." Its cafes were lighted. This time period, spiritually, would lead to gross darkness known as the Dark Ages. What light people had was quickly becoming artificial. The people of Ephesus conducted their business during the day, in the light, but Smyrna's main business was conducted at night. The Smyrnan people felt more comfortable with twilight or artificial light than with genuine light. A spiritual eclipse was occurring. The light was being obscured right in the midst of the clear day. Isaiah prophesied of it in Isaiah 63:18. He said, "The people of thy holiness have possessed it but a little while: our adversaries have trodden down thy sanctuary." Joel 2:2 speaks of "a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness." Amos graphically foretold what was going to occur in Amos, Chapter 8. Verse 9 says, ". . . I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day." Verse 11 says, ". . . I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD." In this period of time, darkness was setting in as a result of an apostasy. Clear light was becoming dim. The clear day was the precious light of the morning time, but this mass move of apostasy caused the light to go out of the public view. It became obscure and gave rise to a system that produced artificial light.

Next, we learn that the streets of "**Smyrna**" were rough and full of pits. The people had a rough time traveling. The church also had rough going; they faced many pitfalls in this age of apostasy and onsetting darkness. It was a city of

force, vandals, thieves, and robbers. In John 10:1 Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door [Jesus Christ—see John 10:7 and 9] into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber." There was force involved. The system that came out of the apostasy was so forceful that its cry was, "Be a Catholic or die." In "*Smyrna*," just as the camels crowded people off the streets, Catholicism crowded everything else from public view. They would tolerate no dissension; there was no room for anything but Catholicism. Revelation 13:8 says, "And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb" Daniel 7:25 says that "they [the saints] shall be given into his hand." This was an age of great peril!

When Christ appeared to this age, notice the attribute He depicted Himself as. In **Revelation 2:8** He described Himself as "*the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive*." To the people in Smyrna, He revealed Himself by the characteristic of "*the first and the last*" (**Revelation 2:8**). What was He attempting to convey to this age of time? They were in a period of change. Everything around them was shifting spiritually. What had once been truth was no longer regarded as truth; what had once been error was now being counted as light. Isaiah 5:20 describes what was taking place. They called evil good and good evil. They put darkness for light and light for darkness; they put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.

Christ—A Divine Constant

Spiritually, everything was changing due to the apostasy. Politically at this juncture, pagan Rome was still a force. A grappling for power was taking place as the decentralization from the Caesars occurred and the minor kingdoms became politically dominate. Also, the acquisition of political power by the bishops of Rome had an effect. Everything seemed to be changing, and the saints of this era were tempted to change as well. When Christ appeared to them, what facet of His divinity was magnified? Again, **verse 8** speaks of "*the first and the last*" as if to say, "I am what I started out as, and I shall be the same to the end."

He amplifies the divine quality of being everlasting, eternal, immutable, and unchangeable. Psalm 90:2 declares, ". . . from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." Some may say, "That is God, not Christ." When it comes to divine qualities, Christ is all that God is. Jesus made this plain in John 10:30, when He said, "I and my Father are one." Christ is God as well. Hebrews 1:8 reads, "But unto the Son he [God, the Father] saith, Thy throne, O God [God, the Son], is for ever and ever" Christ is eternal just as God is. Look at the prophecy of Christ in Micah 5:2: ". . . whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." Christ revealing Himself to this age as "*the first and the last*" is a clear implication that there is no variableness between the two positions.

We read in Hebrews 13:8, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." Christ, who is truth (John 14:6), does not change. During a time when everything was changing, He let the saints know, "I am the same; truth is the same; it has not changed; I have not changed; so don't you change." Jeremiah said in Lamentations 3:23, ". . . great is thy faithfulness." Divine character is immutable; it is perfect. Matthew 5:48 says, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Although, in this context He was speaking of perfected love, the principle of it holds true.

God's divine character is perfect in every sense and therefore is unchangeable. Look in Malachi 3:6, which says, "For I am the LORD, I change not." The Psalmist also recognized this truth when he penned in Psalm 33:11, "The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever" In Psalm 102:27 he wrote, "But thou art the same" The Hebrew writer confirmed this in Hebrews 1:12, when he declared, "And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same" James made it crystal clear in James 1:17, when he wrote, ". . . with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." One rendering says, "Who is himself never subject to change."

In this epistle, Christ was reiterating the same thing penned in Hebrews 12:2, which says, "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith." The Amplified Bible expands and clarifies what the sacred writer was conveying. It says, "Looking away [from all that will distract] to Jesus, Who is the Leader and the Source of our faith [giving the first incentive for our belief] and is also its Finisher [bringing it to maturity and perfection]." He was telling them to look to Him to stay steady, not to change, and to "**hear what the Spirit saith**" (**Revelation 2:11**). Even in a changing, turbulent time, through Christ, they were able to be overcomers.

The thought of "*the first and the last*" also teaches that the true experience that they started out with was sufficient to carry them all the way through. Jesus said, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in

weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). These were very turbulent times, and Smyrna was a very turbulent city. This period was one of the perilous times Paul spoke of in 2 Timothy 3:1. There was political and spiritual upheaval. This is why there were no charges made in this letter. Smyrna was told in **Revelation 2:9**, "**I know thy poverty . . . (but thou art rich) . . .**" Smyrna portrays the poor but rich church. In direct contrast to this is the Laodicean letter (Revelation 3:14-22), which speaks of the rich but poor church. Smyrna, though literally impoverished, was spiritually rich. This is only one of two letters (the other one being the Philadelphian letter) where there were no charges made. **Revelation 2:10** tells us why: ". . . **behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that you may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful . . .**" These saints were faithful right in the midst of adversity and in the face of all the confusion and turbulence taking place.

Let us look at what it means when it says, ". . . **and ye shall have tribulation ten days**" (verse 10). Although pagan Rome was declining and the Imperial Caesars were losing the universal sway that they once enjoyed, still pagan Rome was a power to be reckoned with. In the phrase "**ten days**," we are introduced to a time symbol. The nature of the Revelation is symbolic; therefore, "**ten days**" cannot represent ten actual days. Isaiah 34:16 teaches that every Scripture has a mate. For every dark saying, there is another passage somewhere that will shed light on it. How do we measure prophetic time symbols? In Genesis 29:27 Laban, speaking of Leah, said, "Fulfil her week . . . thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years." Thus, prophetically, a week is seven years. Consider Numbers 14:34 where God spoke of how long they would wander in the wilderness: ". . . ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years . . ." Ezekiel 4:6 teaches the same truth. It says, ". . . I have appointed thee each day for a year." So, prophetically, a day equals a year. Thus, the "**ten days**" in our text equals ten years.

This was the ten-year period under the Roman Emperor Diocletian, from A.D. 302 to A.D. 312, when persecution was very severe. The word "Smyrna" comes from *myrrh*, which means embalming spices (John 19:38-40). This was the congregation whose pastor, the venerable Polycarp, died such a famous martyr's death. These people were a picture of a totally consecrated, submitted church, even, as **Revelation 2:10** says, "**unto death**." We can vividly see the effects of faithful living. To Ephesus in Revelation 2:5 Christ said, "I . . . will remove thy candlestick out of his place." In modern times not only is there no trace of a congregation in Ephesus, but there is no longer even a city. However, Smyrna was faithful, and today Smyrna has about two hundred and fifty thousand people. Over half are nominal Christians and less than one fourth are Muslims, although it is under Turkish rule. Faithfulness pays big dividends!

Let us look again at **verse 9**. It talks of those "**which say they are Jews, and are not**." Each of the seven letters, in almost every case, has two elements being dealt with: a negative aspect, usually depicting a prevailing condition, and a positive aspect. This shows that in every period there were those who overcame (Revelation 2:7; 2:11; 2:17; 2:26; 3:5; 3:12 and 3:21). When **verse 9** speaks of those "**which say they are Jews**," keep in mind that we are not dealing with literal, but symbolical "**Jews**." A transition took place with Christ. The old Jewish economy was done away with and a new economy was instituted. In 2 Corinthians 5:17 Paul said that "old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." This passage is commonly used in regards to salvation, but if you view it contextually, you will see that he is not dealing with salvation but with the old Jewish economy and the New Testament economy. Look at the preceding verse, which states, "Wherefore . . . know we no man after the flesh." Here Paul wrote about knowing men fleshly as under the old economy and now knowing them spiritually under the New Testament economy. He conveyed the same thought in Philippians 3:3.

Who Are the New Testament Jews?

We read in Romans 2:28-29: "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." This plainly establishes the fact that outward lineage no longer dictates who is a Jew in this New Testament dispensation. In this passage he equates being a Jew as a spiritual work. The circumcision is of the heart in the Spirit. John 1:11 says, "He came unto his own, and his own [the Jewish nation] received him not." He initially came "unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 15:24), but they refused Christ. Matthew 23:32 declares, "Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers."

When the Gospel Day commenced, Paul said in Acts 13:46, "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you [verse 45 tells us he was addressing the Jews]: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves

unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." The saving of the Apostle Paul (the Apostle to the Gentiles in A.D. 33) was the end of the seventy prophetic weeks, or four hundred ninety years, that Daniel spoke of in his writings. Daniel 9:24 says, "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people . . ." This caused Daniel to realize that after this time period Israel would no longer be God's chosen people. That is why Daniel 10:1-2 says: ". . . he understood the thing, and had understanding of the vision. In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks." He was mourning because he understood the pronouncement of verse 27, which says, ". . . and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate . . ." He realized the gravity of this pronouncement: Israel would be cut off and left desolate. This pronouncement was made by Jesus in Matthew 23:38, when He said, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." Daniel realized the full ramifications of this prophecy, and that is why he mourned for three weeks.

After the end of the four hundred and ninety years, Paul made his pronouncement (Acts 13:46), and judgment came in A.D. 70. Daniel 9:27 prophesied, ". . . and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate." The desolation of Jerusalem took place under Prince Titus and the Roman armies. Romans 11:21 tells us that "God spared not the natural branches." Verse 20 tells us why: "Because of unbelief they were broken off." Christ is the Stone that the builders disallowed (1 Peter 2:7). However, because we, through faith, have embraced Him, 1 Peter 2:10 says, "Which in time past [Old Testament dispensation] were not a people, but are now [New Testament dispensation] the people of God . . ." Those who were a people became not a people. This does no injustice to the passage, for if the verse is true, then the converse is true as well. In Matthew 21:43 Jesus made it plain that a transition was taking place. He said, "Therefore say I unto you, [Verse 23 tells us it was the chief priests and the elders of the people—representatives of the Jewish nation. Verse 45 says, 'And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them.'] The kingdom of God shall be taken from you [the Jewish nation], and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof."

Who is this nation bringing forth those fruits? What fruits does God want brought forth? Consider what fruits will give you the kingdom or a kingdom experience. John the Baptist told the Pharisees what it was in Matthew 3:8, when he said, "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance." Repentance gives men access to the kingdom. Now, go back to Matthew 21:44, which says, "And whosoever shall fall on this stone [the stone that was to become the head of the corner, as stated in Ephesians 2:20] shall be broken . . ." Psalm 51:17 says, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart . . ."

In essence, Matthew 21:44 says, "Whosoever will come in old-time repentance and fall before Christ with a broken and contrite heart is a ripe candidate to be inducted into the Kingdom of God." When one comes to God repenting, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses him from all sin according to 1 John 1:7. Then he is born of the water, which is the Word (according to Ephesians 5:26), and of the Spirit, and he enters into the Kingdom of God (John 3:5). When you are a partaker of that spiritual birth and have had the circumcision of the heart (Romans 2:29), you enter into the kingdom and are a Jew inwardly, a New Testament Jew.

Let us look at **Revelation 2:9**, which says, ". . . **I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not . . .**" This teaches of people who profess to have an experience; they profess to be the people of God and are not. Romans 9:6 says, "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel." They profess, as **Revelation 2:9** says, and "**say they are Jews,**" but in reality they "**are the synagogue of Satan.**" Why did Jesus say this? Remember that "every word of God is pure" (Proverbs 30:5). There is divine design and divine truth behind *every* word of God. The word "**synagogue**" in **Revelation 2:9** comes from the Greek, meaning "a bringing together, an assembly." The Greek word is *sunagoge*: *sun* meaning "together" and *ago* meaning "to bring or to drive." This is an excellent choice of words because the tactics employed by Roman Catholicism were to assemble people together with force, to drive them together. As the result of the apostasy, there was a move to drive people together to an assembly based not on truth, but on teachings generated by Satan. Paul called them "doctrines of devils" (1 Timothy 4:1).

Let us look at a few of the doctrines that developed or were developing during this period, and we will see why Jesus called it "an assembly of the adversary," according to **Revelation 2:9** in The Emphatic Greek Diaglott. It was a gathering of people, brought together by force and fear, to stand on doctrinal positions that were averse to truth. Paul foresaw this move. Look at his prophecy in 1 Timothy 4:1-8. He wrote that "some shall depart from the faith." How does this occur? It was because they were "giving heed to seducing [the Greek meaning is imposter or deceiver] spirits, and doctrines of devils." Behind every false doctrine is a false spirit.

Doctrines of Devils

Let us examine a few false doctrines that were developing during this period. First Timothy 4:2 says, "Speaking lies" Such as what? They taught that the Bishops of Rome, the Pontiffs, were direct successors of Saint Peter. They taught that in Matthew 16:18, where it says "upon this rock I will build my church," the rock is Peter. They taught other lies such as: only the Pontiff and Roman priesthood are entrusted with the keys of the kingdom, the priests have the power to remit sins, and the *scala sancta*, or sacred stairs, at the church of Saint John Lateran are the actual stairs Christ ascended to Pilate's judgment hall. They teach that when the priest prays over the host (the wafer), it actually becomes the body and the divinity of Jesus. These are just a few of their false teachings. The Apostle Paul, under divine inspiration, brought up *lies* first because the whole system is built upon lies.

Let us look at some others. Verse 1 says they are "doctrines of devils"; yet they are teachings that Rome holds sacred. Verse 3 mentions "forbidding to marry." This is a reference to their doctrine of celibacy for priests and nuns. Paul said it is a "doctrine of devils." Verse 3 tells us another one is "commanding to abstain from meats." For years this command was so strong that a Catholic would not eat meat on Friday. This was supposedly an allusion to the day our Lord was crucified, but Paul said it is a "doctrine of devils."

Secondly, our Lord was not crucified on a Friday. That, too, is a Roman Catholic tradition. Scripture and history verify that Christ was crucified on the fourteenth day of the Jewish Levitical month *Nisan*, which was a Wednesday, the same day the Passover lamb was slain; thus fulfilling the type with reality. Just to substantiate this truth, Matthew 12:40 says, "For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." By no stretch can you get three days and three nights from Friday afternoon to Sunday morning. The truth is, Jesus was not crucified on Friday, nor did He resurrect on Sunday. This is just another evidence of the prophecy. The western world celebrates what is known as "Easter" at a totally different time than the Eastern Orthodox, who observe it during Passover Week. Why? Because Rome changed the time for the western world, which it controlled at that point in time. To further prove that Roman Catholicism changed the time, we should be reminded that the western world observes a Roman Gregorian calendar, which was instituted during the reign of Pope Gregory XIII.

Are there other false doctrines? There are a multitude of them. First Timothy 4:7 says, "But refuse profane and old wives' fables" One is the bodily assumption of the Virgin Mary. They teach that when Mary died she was physically taken to Heaven—body and soul. Another is the doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary. The teaching is that although Mary went on to bear several more children, she continued to remain a virgin. That is a lie.

What else? Verse 8 says, "For bodily exercise profiteth little" However, their services are full of bodily exercise. They kneel before they take their seats. The entire mass requires repeated bodily exercise in the form of multiple genuflect repetition and recital. In this era of time, a hierarchical system was developing—a structure or a system where some brethren were more preeminent than others. The preeminence created a method of dealing with people who would not submit to those in authority. It is called excommunication. John verified that this was occurring in 3 John 1:9-10: "I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes [which according to the *Handy Dictionary of the Bible* means nurtured by Zeus—a heathen deity], who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. . . . neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church." Here we see the rise of the doctrine of excommunication.

In this particular period of time, **Revelation 2:9** refers to "**the synagogue of Satan.**" This is contrasted with the Pergamene letter, which in verse 13 speaks of "where Satan's seat is." Satan's seat exemplifies a system firmly established that has a seat of government, power, or authority. However, in the time frame of this epistle, this system had not become so firmly established. According to the *American Education Encyclopedia*, Roman teachings say (by the decrees of the Vatican Council of A.D. 1870) that when the pope speaks *ex cathedra* (which is Latin for *from his seat*) "he is infallible in all matters of faith and doctrine." That is Satan's seat. **Revelation 2:9** speaks of the "**synagogue [or assembly] of Satan,**" teaching that during this period there would be men who would pervert the Gospel of Christ (Galatians 1:6-7). These men were working to draw away disciples after themselves (Acts 20:30). They had succumbed to seducing spirits and had begun teaching doctrines of devils. They were feverishly working to assemble a people together on these doctrines, and this gave rise to a false system of worship.

This Smyranean period closes at A.D. 530. Page ninety-eight of Fisher's *History of the Christian Church* says, "It was

around two hundred years after Constantine, the first supposed Christian emperor of the Roman Empire, that paganism had vanished." Constantine's reign was from A.D. 323 to A.D. 330, and adding two hundred years brings us to A.D. 530. The same Fisher's *History of the Christian Church*, page 138, gives this reference: "In the year of A.D. 530 the decisions of the many synods were made by the Roman bishop, Boniface II." Boniface II firmly amalgamated the power of the papacy and became regarded as the first bishop of Rome with universal powers. This date concludes a transitional period and begins the Pergamene period, which represents the Dark Ages. So the Smyranean era commenced in A.D. 270 with the decline and division of the pagan Roman Empire and concluded in A.D. 530, which is the year that Boniface II was regarded as the first universal Pope of Rome.

THE PERGAMENE AGE (A.D. 530 - 1530)

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

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

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

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

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

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

Time Frame of the Pergamene Era

This third letter depicts the third candlestick age—the Pergamene age—covering the period of time from A.D. 530 to A.D. 1530. The Smyranean age, the age of turbulence and transition, ended in A.D. 530. By then paganism (the great red dragon) was defeated and bound.

Revelation, Chapter 20, lets us know that the pagan power of Rome had been totally defeated. It was no longer a viable force. Revelation 20:1 says, "And I saw an angel come down from heaven, [The angel is a picture of a God-called ministry. The call cannot come from mother or father or from one of the saints, but a truly divine call comes down from God out of Heaven.] having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand." The key is the Word, and the power to bind (the chain) is the Spirit. To be a true minister you must have the proper equipment to work with—the Word and the Spirit.

Verse 2 tells us, "And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan [the Greek says '*the accuser and adversary*'], and bound him a thousand years." That thousand years was from A.D. 530 to A.D. 1530. The truth had been put on this paganistic system, and Revelation, Chapter 12, says they cast him down. How? "By the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they [the saints] loved not their lives unto the death" (verse 11). However, although the dragon was defeated and bound, the devil was still loose. He just changed clothes and came up through another system of religion. The devil does not quit working because the truth is told on him in one area. When he could no longer work through the dragon, he came up as a beast. He changed his garb and became a supposedly Christian system of religion. During the thousand years the dragon was bound, papal Rome was at the zenith of her power.

Prophetic Time Symbols

The Bible plainly states the total length of time people would be subjected to the workings of this devilish system of religion. Let us look a little farther at prophetic time symbols. Revelation 11:2 says, "But the court which is without the temple leave out . . ." This is the very picture of Roman Catholicism. Revelation 11:1 says, "And there was given me a reed like unto a rod." To understand what the reed represents, we must look at Chapter 10. We read in Revelation 10:8-11: "And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go and take the little book which is

open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth. And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey: And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey; and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter. And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings." The reed was that little book which he had eaten. The Word of God was what he was going to prophesy and preach to people. The Word of God still measures people today.

Let us read a little further. Revelation 11:1-2 says: "And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God [a figure of the church], and the altar, and them that worship therein. But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months." The temple was an allusion back to the *Old Testament* temple, the place where God had dwelt, where the people could meet God. However, the Gentiles could not come into the Old Testament temple; they had to stay without. The church is the *New Testament* temple of God. Roman Catholicism represents those who are without. Symbolically, they are Gentiles. They have not had the circumcision of the heart that makes one a spiritual Jew. In the Smyrnan letter Jesus spoke of those "which say they are Jews, and are not" (Revelation 2:9). In other words, they professed to have an experience. They had a form of godliness, but denied the power thereof. Spiritually, if one is not a Jew, then he is a Gentile.

Revelation 11:2 is speaking of this forty-two-month period during which Roman Catholicism would have sway. If you study prophetic times, these forty-two months are the same forty-two months mentioned in Revelation 13:5. It was the period of time when the beast would make war with the saints, a time when the temple would be trodden down by the Gentiles, a period of time when the church (the spiritual Jews) did not have free right of way. There was no public message. It was a time when those who said they were Jews, but were not, were the ones with the predominate power.

Let us look at how prophetic time breaks down forty-two months. There are many prophetic time figures that denote the same period of time. Daniel 7:25 talks about time, times, and the dividing of time. Revelation 12:14 talks about time, times, and half a time. You can read about forty-two months in Revelation 13:5. Revelation 12:6 talks about "a thousand two hundred and threescore days." These are all figures for the same prophetic period. *Time*, when it is singular and no specifications are given, equals one year. One year is twelve months, and there are thirty days to a Jewish calendar month. Twelve months at thirty days per month equals 360 days. *Times*, when it does not give any numerical signification as to how many times (like it does in Daniel 4:16 or in Isaiah 14:31), is just two. Times as two years is twenty-four months, multiplied by thirty days a month equals 720 days.

Next, let us look at *half* or *a dividing of time*. That is half a year: six months at thirty days a month equals 180 days. When you add the twelve months, the twenty-four months, and the six months, it comes to forty-two months. When you add the 360 days, the 720 days, and the 180 days, it comes to 1,260 days. The prophetic delineation of time is each day for a year (Numbers 14:34; Ezekiel 4:6). In Numbers they spied out Canaan for forty days. God said, "Now, you are going to wander in the wilderness each day for a year," and they wandered for forty years. Thus, one thousand two hundred three score prophetic days equals one thousand two hundred three score years (or 1,260 years). These years covered the time from 270, when pagan Rome started her decline, until 1530 when the first Protestant sect was organized. So, the totality of her period of reign is from 270 to 1530.

Prophetic Time Symbols

Forty-two months x 30 days to a Jewish calendar month = 1,260 days
 Time = 1 year or 12 months x 30 days to a Jewish calendar month = 360 days
 Times = 2 years or 24 months x 30 days to a Jewish calendar month = 720 days
 Dividing of Time = ½ of a year or 6 months x 30 days to a Jewish calendar month =
 180 days
 Time + Times + Dividing of Time (360 days + 720 days + 180 days) = 1,260 days
 1,260 days or "each day for a year" = 1,260 years (A.D. 270 - 1530)

The Roman Emperor, Diocletian, abdicated in 312 or 313, and then the jockeying for power began. Finally, Constantine assumed the throne in 325. Soon after, he saw a vision in the sky that he thought was a cross. He then

received a message to "fight in this sign." Now, he was as bloody and ungodly a man as he had ever been, but suddenly he supposedly was a Christian emperor. He convened the first general Council of Nicaea and made Christianity, by force, the state religion. At this time what would become papal Rome was entrenching herself in political and ecclesiastical power. (This occurred in approximately 325 to 330.) History tells us that two hundred years after that, pagan Rome was completely defeated, and papal Rome arose in its place (530).

The Pergamene epistle is representative of the age of Catholicism. How do we know that? Look at the Pergamene letter, and see how Christ presented Himself to this age. In each of the seven letters, He presented Himself by a different, divine attribute according to the needs of the age. The needs of each age were different. **Revelation 2:12** says, "**And to the angel [the messenger or the minister] of the church [or congregation] in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges.**" Jesus was letting them know that He is still holding the unchanging, powerful, immutable Word of God. He appeared that way because the people were changing God's Word. He stood up in their midst and said, "I still have the original. It does not change!" The people of this era of time had changed God's Word to suit their teachings. Jesus rose right up and said, "I hold the sharp, two-edged sword in My hand. You have not changed the original Word. You may say the priest can forgive sins; you may say that you call men to the ministry; you may say you can decide what is right and what is wrong; but I am still the One who holds all of that."

Roman Catholicism changed the laws. Paul said in 1 Timothy 4:3 that there was not any meat which was to be refused once thanks was given for it. Yet, Roman Catholicism taught for years that meat could not be eaten on certain days. Many of them still hold to that teaching today; yet, they can eat fish. Evidently, fish is not considered meat. Nevertheless, after Jesus was resurrected, He said, "Have you any meat?" and they gave Him fish and honeycomb (Luke 24:42). Many of the doctrines of devils are foolish. Roman Catholicism can make all the rules they want, but that still does not change the reality.

Hebrews 4:12 tells us what this two-edged sword is: "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword . . ." This two-edged sword is a figure of the Word of God. We read in Ephesians 6:17, "And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit [what is it?], which is the word of God." God's Word is immutable and unchangeable. It does not matter what priests, popes, and preachers try to do. God's Word does not change. This was the message Jesus was trying to get across to this age.

A Famine of Hearing the True Word of God

During the Pergamene age the Bible was closed. It was literally chained to a pulpit. When Martin Luther wanted to read the Bible, he had to go to the library or the reading room of the monastery in which he lived to read the one copy that was chained to the lectern. The people were ignorant of God's Word because it was written in Latin and not in the language of the people. Because of this ignorance, Roman Catholicism proceeded to change it. In this dark age, men came up with many doctrines. Thus, Christ appeared to this age as the Christ of the Word. The Word is still in God's hand; He has not resigned the Word to any man. Men can try to change it, but when it is all said and done, God's Word is forever settled in Heaven (Psalm 119:89).

Man can hold a religious council and say, "We do not want to be archaic in our position. We really do not feel that abortion is murderous; there are situations when it is the best thing to do. So, we are no longer going to cry out against abortion as something that God would not be pleased with." Religion can have councils and be in unanimous agreement, but Christ still has the Book. A group of men holding a council does not change God's Word. We read in Psalm 119:152, "Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them for ever." Romans 3:4 tells us, "God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar." God will be true even if He has to make every man a liar. He has set His word above His name (Psalm 138:2). His Word cannot be broken. Yet, Roman Catholicism has tried to change it by adding to and taking away.

Roman Catholicism changed the times. Daniel 7:25 says, "And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times [the world celebrates the birth of Christ on December twenty-fifth, because that is when the Pope said Jesus was born] and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time [this same period of time from 270 to 1530]." Papalism was changing things. They tampered with God's Word. The Douay Version (the authorized version of the Roman Catholic Church), the New Jerusalem Bible, the Vulgate, and every other accepted Catholic Bible has twelve more books than the King

James Version. They have incorporated twelve spurious books into their Old Testament that are not in the Jewish canon or Scripture. These are books that are not in the Jewish Bible, books that are not in the Bibles of the mainline Protestant organizations, and books that Jesus and the disciples never quoted.

One of the books is the Book of Maccabees, which speaks of praying for the dead. Roman Catholicism lights candles and prays for the dead. They tell people that their loved one down in purgatory needs to have a mass said for him or her. Then, the priest lights some candles, holds a mass, and supposedly prays that one out of purgatory. The teaching is that if no mass is said, they stay in purgatory until All Saints' Day when a mass is held to pray all the forgotten souls out of purgatory. There is not an ounce of truth to that, whatsoever. Yet, Roman Catholicism is the world's largest supposed-Christian organization. Presidents and kings kiss the Pope's ring and call him, "His Excellency, His Holiness, Holy Father." The Bible calls him the man of sin, the son of perdition (2 Thessalonians 2:3).

Let us look at why Christ used "**Pergamos**" to represent the third age. These seven congregations of Asia Minor were selected because their spiritual condition and geographical locality best depicted the time period that they represent. "**Pergamos**" was located about sixty miles north of Smyrna, which was forty miles from Ephesus, a total of one hundred miles north. In figurative expressions, going north is going into the cold country. Zechariah 6:8 speaks of horses that went into the north country where they quieted the Spirit—a cold spiritual condition.

Not only was "**Pergamos**" north, but it was also west. West is farther away from the source of light. You have to turn your back on light to go west. Roman Catholicism was produced by people who turned their back on light; it was produced by people who had quieted God's Spirit. When people go into error and apostasy, the faithful and true Witness will speak to them. They have to hush Him and go over top of Him to get into that condition. One cannot go into sin or apostasy without the faithfulness of God giving ample opportunity to get right. These people did not want to hear the Holy Spirit. They turned their back on the source of light and started heading west and north.

Once they turned their backs on truth, much of what had been the church became nothing more than the nominal church. As they turned their backs on light and quieted the Spirit, they were in a condition of complete spiritual darkness. Instead of having an experience of salvation, which the New Testament sun brought forth, they started preaching salvation by works, by doing penance, by saying the rosary. Right in the midst of the clear Gospel Day, the sun went down at noon. Amos prophesied of this dark age in Amos 8:9-11. He wrote: "And it shall come to pass in that day [a prophetic expression of the Gospel Day], saith the Lord GOD, that I will cause the sun [in Revelation 12:1 the woman was clothed in the sun, representing the New Testament message] to go down at noon [right in the midst of a clear day, the sun went down at noon—a spiritual eclipse], and I will darken the earth in the clear day: And I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; and I will bring up sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness upon every head; and I will make it as the mourning of an only son, and the end thereof as a bitter day. Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD."

This dark age was a period of famine, not of bread or water, but of hearing the true, unadulterated Word of God. Anything other than the straight Word of God will take you from spiritual light to darkness. There is no quicker way to go into darkness than to trifle with God's Word. That is exactly what the people in this age had done, and that is why Christ appeared to them as the Christ of the Word with the sharp, two-edged sword.

The prevailing, spiritual condition of this age was darkness, coldness, and deadness. Nevertheless, God still had a faithful people. He has had overcomers in every age regardless of the prevailing condition. What Christ was portraying in this series of the Revelation was not the total condition, but the predominate, prevailing condition of each age. We know there were overcomers in the Dark Ages because fifty to sixty million people were martyred during this time. Those martyrs were not Catholics; they were the overcomers, the saints, the church in the wilderness. **Revelation 2:17** tells us, "**He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna . . .**" During this dark age when there was a famine in the land, when there was no public message being proclaimed, God had "**hidden manna**." When that woman fled into the wilderness, a place of seclusion, the Word and the Spirit fed her (Revelation 12:6). God had a "**hidden manna**" to feed and sustain the church. Thus, the true, honest saints were able to have victory and be overcomers.

The Beast That Came Up Out of the Sea

"*Pergamos*" was famous for its amphitheater in which was a den of wild beasts. This is a perfect picture of the predominant system in this period. We read in Revelation 13:1, "And I [John] stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up . . ." It was no accident that God chose "*Pergamos*" with its amphitheater of wild beasts to represent this age of papalism, this age of the beast. The actual Greek word for *beast* used in Revelation, Chapter 13, is the word *therion*, which means "wild beast" (just like what was in the amphitheater in Pergamos).

Let us identify what this *beast* represents. Look again at Revelation 13:1, which says, "And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy." History tells us that around 200 B.C. the people of "*Pergamos*" deposed of their king, took over the city, and set up the family of the Italian kings to rule. This is a clear symbol of Roman Catholicism setting up its line of popes. "*Pergamos*" was a producer of opium, and Roman Catholicism is a distorter that pacifies men's minds with an opiate of religion. Their judgment is so clouded that they think they are right.

Why does Christ use the thought of a *beast*? (Remember that we are dealing in figurative expressions—using that which is natural and literal, that with which we may be familiar, to portray a spiritual picture.) He used a beast because it portrays the nature and the spirit behind this system. It is a system that calls itself Christian, yet it will cut out people's tongues, pinch off women's breasts, and put molten mercury or lead in people's ears, nose, and mouths just because they will not be Catholic. A system that will drag men through the streets until there is not even a body left to bury and call itself Christian is a beastly, ghastly, ungodly system. You can read accounts such as I have mentioned and many more heinous acts perpetrated by Roman Catholicism in *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*. If it were not for the civil law, things would be the same today. The spirit has never changed. Recently in Ireland, Catholics and Protestants have been fighting and killing each other. They have thrown bombs at people and shot people down in cold blood. They walk into a church building to go through the form of godliness, and then they think they are clear to go out and kill again. That spirit has never changed! God's people cannot be sympathetic with that system. You will never help anybody out of it by being sympathetic with it.

Let us study to see how the term *beast* is used in the Scripture. It is used in more than one place. For every symbol mentioned in the Revelation, for every dark Scripture, there is another Scripture that will shed light on it. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:32, "If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus . . ." Paul was not talking about the four-footed kind of beasts. To understand what the fighting and wrestling were over, look at verse 12, which says, "Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?" Paul was in a fight over truth and heresies, or false doctrine. He fought with men who should have been for truth but who had a false beastly spirit that denied and worked against truth. In Ephesus, Paul was warring against false religious spirits (Ephesians 6:12).

When Peter employed the term *beast*, he explained whom he was referring to. Second Peter 2:1 says, "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction." False prophets and false teachers are depicted as beasts because of their spirit. Beasts are out to devour. A real saint is a sheep, and a real man of God is a shepherd. Shepherds do not devour the flock, but beasts do not care what effect things have on people. Verse 12 begins, "But these, as natural . . ." They only understand things on the natural level. They cannot understand anything spiritual. The word *natural* used here is also mentioned in 1 Corinthians 2:14. It says, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God . . ." He was talking about unregenerate man.

Look again at 2 Peter 2:12, which states, "But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not." Literal beasts cannot speak anything, but these beasts do a whole lot of speaking because they are false preachers, false prophets, and false teachers. One way to tell when a person is operating on the natural, beastly level is when they start speaking evil of the things of God, the Word of God, and the man of God. When they start speaking evil of things that they know nothing about, that is always a telltale sign. Jude employed the term *beast* in Jude 10. In Jude 4 and 10 he said: "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ . . . But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts . . ." So, we see that the beast John spoke of in Revelation 13:1 and the brute beasts Jude spoke

of represented the *men* who gave rise to this religious system in the Revelation.

Let us look again at Revelation 13:1. It says, "And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea . . ." Let us look at what this sea represents. Revelation, Chapter 8, speaks of something going into the sea. Verse 8 says, "And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain [a figure of the church] burning with fire [anointed by the Holy Spirit, on fire for God] was cast into the sea . . ." Here is a picture of the morning-time apostasy, where much of what had been the church fell out of God's hands into man's hands. That which went into the sea was a people who had apostatized. This beast that came up out of the sea was nothing more than the product of men's minds who had fallen to the level of apostasy.

Isaiah 57:20 tells us what the sea actually is. Isaiah wrote that "the wicked are like the troubled sea." Biblically, who are the wicked? The whoremonger, the adulterer, and the murderer, though wicked, are not the height of wickedness. Those people, as a rule, know they are wrong. The wicked, whom Isaiah spoke of, are those who profess to be right, when all along they are wrong. That is terrible deception. We read in Psalm 50:16-17: "But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth? Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee." The wicked turned west, away from the source of light. God's Word is a light to our path (Psalm 119:105). When people cast His words behind them, turn away from truth, go their own way, yet, keep right on professing, that is the height of wickedness. That is what produced the morning-time apostasy. Those men's foolish minds became darkened, and out of those darkened minds rose up the Roman Catholic system of religion. The word *beast* in Revelation, Chapter 13, is a picture of an apostate system comprised of apostate men. Roman Catholicism still holds to the name Church of God. If you study their documents, you will find that they profess to be the Church of God. Roman Catholicism started with the backslidden Church of God, and she has been backslidden ever since. There is no light in her for she is in spiritual darkness.

"The Number of a Man"

Let us look again at our Scripture text. **Revelation 2:13** says, "**I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is . . .**" Now, the Smyranean letter was to them "which say they are Jews and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan" (Revelation 2:9). The synagogue of Satan consists of those who keep and propagate doctrines of devils. Many of those doctrines are enumerated in 1 Timothy, Chapter 4. Verse 1 says, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits [the only way to depart from the faith is to give heed to a seducing spirit], and doctrines of devils." The only thing a seducing spirit can produce is doctrines of devils.

Behind every false doctrine is a false spirit. There is great power behind false doctrine. God's people must be careful of what they read and hear; they must be careful of what books and magazines come into their homes. One can pick up a false spirit by reading the wrong type of magazine. If the man or woman who wrote that magazine had a spirit of some kind, you could pick up that spirit by reading their article. If you listen to the radio, hear the wrong thing, and give vent to that thought, a wrong spirit can come right in. God's people need a healthy fear of false doctrine.

Let us read on. Verse 2 says, "Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron." There are historical accounts that tell of ones who had seared their conscience. Pope Sixtus IV had two illegitimate children, whom he later made Cardinals, born to him by his mistress. Pope Innocent VIII had sixteen children by various women and celebrated all their marriages with a ceremony in the Vatican. He was a man whose conscience was seared. Taking a vow of celibacy does not mean one can be a whoremonger with sixteen women. Yet, he did and was still considered "Holy Father." There was nothing holy about him. Verse 3 says, "Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats . . ." This sounds like the doctrines of Roman Catholicism. Paul called them the "doctrines of devils," and the Revelator called it the synagogue of Satan.

So, we see that the synagogue of Satan is representative of Roman Catholicism. In **Revelation 2:13** Jesus said, "**I know . . . even where Satan's seat is.**" Whom does the Bible say sits in "*Satan's seat*"? We read in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4: "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away [*apostasia*, in the Greek, is the same word that *apostasy* comes from] first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." These are very descriptive terms of a system of religion that is best represented

by a man. Here Paul was talking about a man. The Revelator also let us know that the beast is best identified by a man.

Revelation 13:16-17 says: "And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark *in* their right hand [notice he said *in*, not *on*], or *in* their foreheads [again, *in*, not *on*]: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name." Nowhere in the Scripture does it say that the mark of the beast is 666. That is the number of his name. The Bible distinguishes between the mark and the number with the word *or*, letting us know they are not the same thing. The mark in the right hand stands for the right hand of fellowship, and the mark in the forehead represents minds being indoctrinated. However, that has nothing to do with the number.

Revelation 13:18 says, "Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number [not mark] of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six." This man is the same man who Paul said sits in the temple of God, shows himself that *he* is God, and opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is even called God. Revelation 13:5 says, "And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies."

Let us find out who this man is and what this number represents. We can identify the beast by knowing who the man is. The number of the beast is the number of a man. On the miter of the triple crown that the popes of Rome wear is a Latin inscription: VICARIUS FILII DEI. Now, numbers were not invented until the tenth century. Before the invention of figures by the Arabs, it was a common practice for the letters of the alphabet to be used as numbers. If you subscribe numeric expressions to these letters: V or U equals 5, I equals 1, C equals 100, L equals 50, and D equals 500 (some letters have no numerical notification).

If you add up VICARIUS, you get 112. If you add up FILII and DEI, you get 554. By adding 554 and 112, the total is 666. That is the very inscription that the Pope wears across his forehead on his miter. The number that identifies this beast is the number of a man, and the man who best represents that system is the Pope of Rome.

The inscription VICARIUS FILII DEI is Latin. The English translation is "Vicar of the Son of God." According to Webster, the word *vicar* means "a person who acts in the place of another." In other words, the Pope is saying that he has taken the place of Jesus Christ. Jesus has not given His place to anyone. The Pope is a usurper who has risen up, opposed, and exalted himself contrary to what God says. The Pope has the name of blasphemies (Revelation 13:1)! Let us look at some of those blasphemies. For years when the mass was said in Latin, the part that everyone recited was, "Dominus Deus Nostra Papa." Now, that sounds harmless if you do not know what you are saying, but in English it translates to "Our Lord God the Pope." That is blasphemy! The Pope is not our Lord God; he is the man of sin, the son of perdition. Thus, he does have the name of blasphemy. A few of his titles are: "Our Lord God the Pope," "King of the World," "Holy Father," "King of Kings and Lord of Lords," and "Most Holy Lord."

V	5	F	0
I	1	I	1
C	100	L	50
A	0	I	1
R	0	I	1
I	1	D	500
U	5	E	0
S	0	I	1
Total	112	Total	554
Grand Total (112 plus 554)		666	

Pope Leo XIII said, "We [referring to the popes] hold upon the earth the place of God Almighty." That is blasphemy! On January 9, 1870, the Vatican Council proclaimed, "The Pope is Christ in office and Christ in jurisdiction and power. We bow down before thy voice, oh Pius, as before the voice of Christ the God of truth is clinging to thee, we cling to Christ." That is blasphemy! Tetzels, who sold the indulgences that so stirred up Martin Luther, was going through Germany with this cry: "The Lord God Omnipotent hath ceased to reign—he has resigned all power to the Pope." That is blasphemy! Roman Catholicism has not repented or recanted any of those statements. It has not revoked or corrected one of those titles. Why? It is because they still feel that way. In the thirteenth century this title was given to the Pope: "The Bishop of Rome is the Supreme Lord of the Universe." You can go to any public library and, if they have not removed certain books, verify these things. This system, this beast, is best represented by this man. This can be proved in three languages—Latin, Greek, and Chaldean. The number of the beast is the number of the popes of Rome, not as a

man, but the office that he fills. I do not speak against the Pope as a person. It is the office that he fills, the spirit that he possesses, and the system that he rules which is false. As we study this Revelation, keep in mind that I am not speaking against persons or personalities. Ephesians 6:12 says, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers [or spirits] . . ." When I lay forth the truth, I am not speaking of people, but of systems of religion that work against the welfare of people, damning souls to hell.

Satan's Seat

Look again at **verse 13** of our Scripture text. Jesus said, "**I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is . . .**" The beast got his "**seat**," power, and great authority from the dragon (Revelation 13:2). This man who sits on this "**seat**," in the temple of God, showing that he is God, is actually sitting in "**Satan's seat**." The title that they still use, Pontifex Maximus, was an old pagan title ascribed to the high priest and to the Caesars of the pagan Roman Empire. The Pope holds that same title today. The nuns are nothing more than a modern version of the Vestal Virgins of Antiquity. Rosary beads also come from the dragon. Pagans still use prayer beads all over the world today.

Let us continue to read **Revelation 2:13**, which says, "**I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith** [in other words, they profess to be of the Christian faith, but in reality they are dwelling where Satan dwelleth], **even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.**" Although this system holds fast to Christ's name and professes to be Christian, in reality, it is the synagogue of Satan ruled by one who sits on Satan's seat. It is a system where Satan dwells.

Second Thessalonians 2:4 says, "Who opposeth and exalteth himself [God did not exalt him, but he exalteth himself] above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." Let us look at what the Apostle Paul said would occur. Verse 8 says, "And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming." Paul was telling us that Christ would consume them with the spirit of His mouth. Jesus said in **Revelation 2:16**, "**Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.**" This Scripture and 2 Thessalonians 2:8 both speak of the same thing and the same time period. In essence, He was telling them, "You need to repent of this condition. If you do not, I am going to fight against you with truth." However, they did not "**repent**," and in A.D. 1530 He turned "**the sword**" (truth) loose again, and a deadly wound was laid to that beast (Revelation 13:12). Although Jesus told them to "**repent**," this system has never repented and to this day does not teach repentance.

Second Thessalonians 2:9 talks about "the working of Satan." Revelation 13:2 talks about the beast getting his power, his seat, and his authority from the dragon. The seat of Satan symbolizes authority—one who has control. The Pope certainly has control. He can excommunicate and denounce. When he speaks *ex cathedra* (which means "from his seat"), he is supposedly infallible. That is a lying wonder. There is no truth in that! Does the Pope truly have any authority? First Timothy 4:7 says, "But refuse profane and old wives' fables . . ." Roman Catholicism is filled with all kinds of fables: fables such as the bodily ascension of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the perpetual virginity of Mary. Although she had several children after Christ, they say Mary forever remained a virgin. There is no truth in that. They teach that Saint Christopher is the patron saint of travel. These are old wives' fables. However, a Catholic had better believe them or he could be excommunicated. They teach that if you are excommunicated, you are a heretic, and there is no hope for you. That is Satan's seat.

Revelation 2:14 talks about eating or partaking of things "**sacrificed unto idols.**" When people pray to Mary, Christopher, or one other than God, they are partaking in idol worship. This man who sits in Satan's seat got his power and great authority from the dragon and is just as paganistic. Roman Catholicism is no more Christian than paganism was with the worshiping of Jupiter, Mercury, and Diana of the Ephesians. In **Revelation 2:14** Jesus spoke of "**the doctrine of Balaam.**" Jude, in his writings, spoke of those who "ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward" (Jude 11). What was "the error of Balaam"? (Read Numbers 22:5-21.) It was being moved by greed, "supposing that gain is godliness" (1 Timothy 6:5). This also is a portrait of Catholicism, one of the richest religious organizations on the earth, who points to their gain as the favor of God. However, true godliness is not measured by earthly gain. Then, Jesus spoke of "**the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes**" (**Revelation 2:15**). This was a sect started by a man named Nicholas who was "a proselyte of Antioch" (Acts 6:5). He became caught up in a false teaching that endorsed loose sexual morality. The

combination of both of these erroneous doctrines well portrayed the predominant conditions working in Roman Catholicism during this period of time.

Lack of Love for the Truth Brings Great Deception

How did these people get into a position where they could be so deceived, unable to see the truth clearly? Second Thessalonians 2:10 tells us how. It states, "And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish [why?]; because they received not the *love* of the truth . . ." Here is why this apostasy happened. It was not because they did not *know* the truth. One has to know truth to turn away and to apostatize from it. It was also not because they did not *live* it for a period of time; but it was because they did not *love* it.

Love for the truth is the only thing that protects God's people from these spirits that are still working yet today. The spirit that produced Roman Catholicism is still working just as much today. However, it is in the form of an unclean spirit like a frog (Revelation 16:13). If the saints do not love the truth, they can get carried away and end up in deception just as people did in the Pergamene age. Paul, speaking of people like this, said in 2 Thessalonians 2:11-12: "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, [Who sends this delusion? 'God shall.'] that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned . . ." Truth is a very precious commodity! Truth is very fragile. It cannot thrive under every condition or in just any environment. The very seeds of apostasy are sown when people fail to realize how precious truth is. Truth is precious because of what it cost to produce it.

Jesus' final warning to the Dark Ages (the papal era) in this Pergamene epistle is found in **verse 16**, which says, "**Repent; or else . . .**" That is strong, final language. The Gospel accounts say to repent for the Kingdom of God or some good thing is at hand. However, the Christ of the Revelation is a totally different vision of Christ. He is a stirred Christ. Look again at **verse 16**: "**Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword [the Word of God] of my mouth.**" Second Thessalonians 2:5-8 says: "Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work [in other words, the apostasy was already in motion]: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked [verse 3 tells us he is that man of sin, the son of perdition] be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume [how?] with the spirit of his mouth . . ." According to Revelation 1:16 what came out of His mouth was the sharp, two-edged sword, the Word of God. So the Spirit of His mouth was nothing more than the Word of God. It is the Spirit who administers the Word, inspires the preaching, gives revelation to the hearers, and convicts the heart.

The last words Jesus said to the papal era were, "**Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them . . .**" (**Revelation 2:16**). Repentance is worth giving serious thought to when Jesus is going to fight against you. Romans 8:31 says, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Turn it around: if God be against you, who is going to be for you? Who can help you? God's people must be very careful how they handle truth. The wrong handling of truth can stir Jesus. Christ told this era to "**repent**," but they did not. Roman Catholicism does not teach repentance yet today, although the Bible does. John the Baptist's first message was to "**repent**"; Jesus' first message was to "**repent**"; Peter's first message was to "**repent**." Roman Catholicism teaches penance. That is different from repentance. Repentance means to turn, to go another direction. What is penance? If the speed limit is fifty miles per hour and you went sixty, then penance is to go ten miles slower going back. That is not a changing of one's way, but a human, mechanical way for one to try to pay for his own wrong. If man could have paid for his own wrong, Jesus Christ would not have had to come and pay the ransom cost. If you go into a Roman Catholic confessional and tell the priest what you have done wrong, he will say something like, "You need to say five 'Hail Marys' and three 'Our Fathers'." They do not teach repentance; they do not say, "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee" (John 5:14). No, they tell people to try to pay for their own sins; yet they keep right on living in sin.

Jesus told the people of this era, "You have a space of time to repent." Since they did not repent, God was as good as His Word—He turned the sword of truth loose. For a thousand years no public message was declared. The saints hid away in the catacombs, fearful for their lives. Fifty to sixty million people were martyred during this era, dying horrible deaths. Nevertheless, God raised up some men, right in the midst of the dark night of papalism, and He gave them a glimmer of light, some understanding concerning the truth. They took what little understanding they had and laid a deadly wound to the beast (Revelation 13:12). Truth destroys error and falsity. The power of truth is still greater than the power

of error.

The Pergamene period is that time known as the Dark Ages. The thousand years that millenarians are looking to take place in some future point of time was this era of time, from A.D. 530 when Boniface was first regarded as a universal bishop until A.D. 1530 when the first Protestant creed was formulated at the Diet of Augsburg in Augsburg, Germany. The Articles of Faith of the Lutheran church were drawn up, thus ending the exclusive rule of papalism.

THE THYATIRAN AGE (A.D. 1530 - 1730)

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

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

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

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

22 Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.

23 And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

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

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

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

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

28 And I will give him the morning star.

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

The Call of God's Ministry

This epistle is the fourth of seven; it depicts this fourth candlestick age, the Thyatiran era, from A.D. 1530 to 1730. The Thyatiran letter is the most lengthy of all seven epistles, and fittingly so, because this is the age that saw the sixteenth century Reformation halt the dark night of papal rule. It laid a deadly wound to the beast and then built a system that mirrored it. It became an "image to the beast" (Revelation 13:14). Religious systems are produced by spirits. The system of Roman Catholicism did not just happen to occur. Something spiritually took place first; something changed in men's spirits. The same is true concerning this beast (Protestantism) that came up out of the earth (Revelation 13:11).

Revelation 16:13-14 says that "three unclean spirits" have gone out to the whole world. They are working to turn the Church of God into another sectarian religion. To prevent that from happening, God's people must be cautious of what they listen to. It is not good to listen to religious radio stations. There are all kinds of spirits coming out over those airways. Also, Christians must watch what kind of literature comes into the home. The people who wrote those articles have spirits, and if you lend your mind to an article, thinking, "that sounds reasonable," you could imbibe a spirit right through that article by being sympathetic with it.

In studying this letter, I want to put these beasts in their proper, historical perspectives and study how they worked.

Those same spirits, which worked in separate eras through the Gospel Day, are loose and working today. The Church of God is facing an amalgamated force of every one of them in this evening time. Nevertheless, just as the saints had victory in every age, we can have victory today. Each of the seven letters has a common vein of truth—"he that **overcometh**" (**Revelation 2:26**). No matter how dismal the circumstances of the age seemed to be, there was power to be a victorious, overcoming people.

Rome's exclusive world power was broken in A.D. 1530 when the Augsburg confession was drawn up. This confession of faith of the Lutheran church was drawn up and presented at the Diet of Augsburg in Augsburg, Germany. This age, which could well be called the Lutheran age, started out with the sword of truth laying a deadly wound to the beast—Roman Catholicism. However, before the age was over, they had healed that same wound and built an image to the beast. They made an image, or a likeness, to the very thing they preached against and became just like them. Today, Lutheranism is almost the same as Roman Catholicism. If you study them, you will find that there is very little distinction between them.

During the Thyatiran age, the sixteenth century reformation rose, then sank, and fell from being a reformation that sounded forth God's truth. It became merely a sectarian creed and organization. So, at the end of this age (1730), God again reached down and raised up another man to herald the truth—John Wesley. Thus, the Wesleyan era began. Now, Luther was a man of God in the beginning, and the sixteenth century reformation was a move of God, but Protestantism was a move of the devil. The devil took what had begun as a move of God—a move to restore truth—and caused people to feel self-sufficient and self-contented until they stopped walking in light. Once they felt they had arrived, they became sectarian. They sat down, spiritually, and went no further. Thus, they went into spiritual darkness. The deciding factor was how they handled truth.

Let us look at this Thyatiran epistle. **Revelation 2:18** says, "**And unto the angel of the church** [the Greek says '*congregation*'] **in Thyatira write.**" In every one of these seven epistles, when there was a problem in the congregation, Christ spoke to the person responsible and in charge—the pastor. If somebody teaches who is not qualified to teach, it is the pastor whom Christ holds accountable; if someone sings, takes an active part in the service, or holds an office they are not qualified for, the pastor must answer to Christ. Christ issues the injunction to the pastor telling him what to do. That is why each letter is addressed "**to the angel,**" or the pastor. The pastor is the only one in a position to do anything about it. If someone in the congregation has a problem or gets out of place, the only person qualified to correct that person is the pastor. None of the seven letters was written to a trustee or any board or committee member. All seven were "**unto the angel.**"

Verse 20 says, "**Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee,** [Against whom? "**The angel.**" When things are not right in the congregation, Christ holds the pastor responsible.] **because thou sufferest** [or permits] **that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach.**" Hebrews 13:17 admonishes the church, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, [The pastor is the only one who has to give account for his congregation. There is no one whom Christ talks to like He talks to the pastor.] that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you." When the man of God has grief, is burdened, and lays awake nights over his people, that is not profitable to those who cause the grief. People may get stirred up against the pastor, but it is better for them to have something against the pastor than for Christ to have something against the pastor. Christ is the One who will judge in the last day.

I am stressing this point of the ministry because of how Christ appeared to this Thyatiran age. Remember, there had been a thousand year period when there was no public ministry. Notice how he appeared to this age. **Verse 18** says, "**And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire . . .**" To find out what this "**flame of fire**" means and whom Christ's eyes are, go to Hebrews 1:7. It says, "And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire." This "**flame of fire**" is the ministry; Christ's eyes are His ministry. At the end of the dark age, Christ said, "Repent or I will bring out the sword" (**Revelation 2:16**). Now the sword is no good without a ministry to wield that sword, and so He appears as the Christ of the ministry. What else did He say He was? The last part of **verse 18** says, ". . . **and his feet are like fine brass.**" Christ was saying, "Rome has gone far enough. Now, I am getting My sword out, and I am putting My foot down on some things. Things are going to be set in order."

When Rome would not repent, God found men who would stand up against the system that ruled the whole world, men who looked papal Rome in the eye and said, "You are wrong!" That is part of the call of God's ministry. The dark

age was over; light had come; the sword of truth was being loosed. Christ had a ministry unafraid to wield that sword. What the sword did not get, God put his foot down on and put it under. One reason that Christ deals with the ministry as being a "*flame of fire*" is because He wants a ministry that is on fire, not dead. Another part of their job is to break people out of a lukewarm condition and set them on fire.

Let us look at why Christ picked "*Thyatira*" (**verse 18**). "*Thyatira*" was a city that was very silent in historical records. It is the city that some scholars say was inconsequential. However, these seven cities of Asia Minor were chosen because their geographical locality and their spiritual condition best depicted the era that they were selected to represent. These seven cities formed a semicircle, almost a complete circle in their geographical outlay. (See maps in the front of this book.) Pergamos was the farthest north (in the cold country) and the farthest west (the farthest away from the source of light), a picture of the Dark Ages. "*Thyatira*" was located forty-eight miles southeast of Pergamos on the Sardis road. "*Thyatira*" represents an era that was heading out of the cold. The reformation was taking place. Moving south represents moving toward the heat, and heading east is going toward the light. The sun rises in the east—that is where the light comes from. This was a gradual restoration of truth.

In the first three epistles, the move was of an apostasy moving away from the source of light and the source of heat. This move reached its zenith in the dark age of Roman Catholicism. Then God loosed the sword of His mouth—the truth—and a gradual restoration of truth began to take place. With each succeeding period of the Gospel Day, it gets further south and further east—closer to heat and closer to light. However, God did not desire to do it that way. If any of these people had been willing to continue walking in light rather than sitting down on it, God would have restored all the truth. Yet, every group of people always came to a point where they thought they had arrived, and that is where they stopped. Whenever they stopped, God had to reach down His hand and get another group of people to proclaim His truth. That should serve as a warning: God's people must keep pace with truth or they will lose it.

Breaking the Chains of Papal Bondage

"*Thyatira*" was a city whose streets were paved with fragments of sculptured stone from wrecked temples of worship. That is a picture of the Lutheran era breaking the exclusive rule of papalism into fragments with the sword of truth. They laid a deadly wound to the beast, Roman Catholicism (Revelation 13:3); they broke the exclusive rule of Rome. Yet, although they broke it up into fragments, they did not remove those fragments. They did not remove those teachings. They continued to travel and conduct business on them. Revelation 13:14 tells us that they made an image to the beast. They turned right around and healed the very wound that they had inflicted.

Roman Catholicism preached salvation by works, and when God turned the sword of truth loose, the message He gave Martin Luther was Romans 1:17: "The just shall live by faith." The doctrine of justification by faith demolished the heresy of the doctrine of salvation by works. This teaching broke the exclusive power of Rome's dark night, and people began to see a glimmer of light. They began to see a ray of hope; they began to see that there was salvation other than in what Rome propounded. However, Revelation 13:12 tells us, ". . . whose deadly wound was healed," showing us that they turned back to the very teachings they once preached against. Revelation 13:14 says, "And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast . . ." An image is a likeness. When you look in the mirror and see your image, you see your likeness. In the beginning they taught against salvation by works, but today Lutheranism is as full of works as Roman Catholicism.

Christ presented Himself to this age as One "**who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire**" (**Revelation 2:18**). Christ's flames of fire are the ministry. So, He pictured Himself as One who was beholding the work of the ministry. Why would He portray Himself that way? For a thousand years Rome had decided who preached, what was taught, and who was ordained. However, now Christ loosed the sword of truth and put Himself back in the position as the Christ who ordains the ministry.

In **Revelation 2:18** Christ has feet "*like fine brass*." What do these feet represent? This beast of Roman Catholicism needed a foot put down on its head. Isaiah 52:7 says, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!" When Christ came forth with feet "*like fine brass*," He had a ministry who was not afraid to preach salvation; the just shall live by faith; and salvation is not in the pope—it is in God. By preaching these teachings, they put

their foot down on Roman Catholicism. (Keep in mind that I speak of Roman Catholicism not as a people, but as a system that is contrary to God's eternal Word.)

Romans 10:15 says, "And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, [Why are the feet so beautiful? It is because those feet carry the message of truth.] and bring glad tidings of good things!" The feet portray the conveyance of the Gospel. In Matthew 4:19 Jesus said, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Jesus is the One who makes fishers of men. It is still a divine work. Man can go through every school there is, but if Jesus does not make him a fisher of men, he will not catch any fish.

These are simple truths yet the people lost sight of them, giving rise to a dark age. John 20:21 tells us, "Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." Christ sends forth the ministry. The Apostle Paul was probably one of the greatest men who lived and worked in the morning-time era of the New Testament. What made Paul such a successful man? Was it because he was highly educated and affluent? Where did his success lie? First Corinthians 1:1 states, "Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God . . ." He was successful because he was in the will of God. He had a divine call, and he operated in the realms of that divine call. Galatians 1:1 says, "Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead)." The call to the ministry is still a divine call.

The Thyatiran era was the period of time that broke the fetters and chains of papal bondage. During this time God was calling men to wield the sword of truth. One man whom God called was John Wycliffe. He was martyred because he translated the Bible into English. The Roman Catholic Church had him killed because they did not want people to know what the Bible said. Another such man was John Huss of Bohemia. As they were preparing to burn John Huss at the stake on July 6, 1415, he made this prophecy: "You are now going to burn a goose [*Huss* in the Bohemian language means *goose*], but in a century you will have a swan whom you can neither roast nor boil." In 1516—almost a hundred years to the day—Martin Luther held a public discussion with a papal official in which he upheld certain doctrines of truth that greatly stirred the Romanists. The historian J. H. Merle d'Aubigne said, "This dispensation made a great noise and has been considered as the beginning of the reformation."

Let us look a little farther in **Revelation, Chapter 2**. Christ was a gentleman. Before He ever laid charges, He always commended what was commendable if He could find anything. However, when He wrote to the congregation in Laodicea (symbolizing our day), He did not say one commendable thing in that epistle. In this epistle to Thyatira, He began by bringing forth His commendation. **Revelation 2:19** says, "**I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith . . .**" This is how the reformation started.

Martin Luther, a monk living in a monastery, was a highly educated man holding a doctor's degree. To read the Bible he had to go to a library or a reading area and read a copy that was literally chained to the pulpit or the desk. The authorities did not want the people to have access to the Bible, because understanding of the Word would have destroyed their system.

Martin Luther was an honest man at this point in time. In 1510, while on an official visit to Rome, he ascended the sacred stairs of the church of Saint John Lateran, called the *scala sancta*. Rome's official doctrine concerning these stairs located in Rome, Italy, are that they are the exact same stairs that Jesus ascended into Pilate's Judgment Hall centuries earlier in Jerusalem. So, in a manner of reverence and humility, Martin Luther was doing as all pilgrims did when they came to Rome—crawling up the stairs, kissing each stair, believing that these were the stairs that Jesus climbed on the way to His trial and crucifixion. As Martin Luther was crawling up these stairs, trying to attain his salvation by works, God brought light to him, saying, "Martin, the just shall live by faith." He got up off those stairs and started preaching, "The just shall live by faith." Martin Luther took that sword of truth, small as it was, and started preaching salvation by faith. That laid a deadly wound to Roman Catholicism, and the reformation began.

God was opening Martin Luther's eyes. While he was in Rome on an official visit, he attended an official papal dinner that was served by sixteen naked girls. That was a real eye opener to an honest heart! When Johann Tetzel, also a monk, came to Germany selling indulgences (pardons for sins), the purpose was to raise funds to build Saint Peter's Basilica. Even today people exclaim over its magnificence. However, when John wondered about the whore, in essence, the angel said: "Do not marvel at her. I will show you the truth of her" (Revelation 17:7). That beautiful edifice in Rome was built at the price of deceiving precious souls with lies.

This brazen promotion of indulgences opened Luther's eyes and prompted him to nail his ninety-five theses to the door of the church building in Wittenberg, Germany. God so stirred Martin Luther at the selling of those indulgences by Tetzel that He raised the reformation to full strength. Tetzel's sales pitch for these indulgences was: "Indulgences are

the most precious and most noble of God's gifts. There is no sin so great that an indulgence cannot remit, only let him pay well and all will be forgiven him. Come and I will give you letters all properly sealed by which even the sins you *intend* to commit may be pardoned." Thus, they drummed up the money to build that beautiful building. Another statement Tetzal made was, "The Lord God Omnipotent hath ceased to reign, and He has resigned all power to the pope." That is a lie from the pits of hell! God has never resigned His power to anyone.

Jezebel—A Symbol of a Dominating False System of Worship

God said that "Babylon hath been [past tense] a golden cup in the LORD's hand" (Jeremiah 51:7). At one time she offered real Bible salvation. There was a time when these brethren offered and taught real salvation. Then what happened? The true reformation was short-lived, and a sectarian spirit took over. This is why **Revelation 2:20** says, "**Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.**" Let us look at what actually took place. "**Jezebel**" is an allusion to the Jezebel of old. Keep in mind that the Book of Revelation is a symbolic book, and this is not the literal Jezebel. When this letter was penned by John, in A.D. 96, Jezebel had been dead for many centuries. This is a figurative expression, using something familiar to teach something that is unfamiliar. Thus, "**Jezebel**" is used as a symbol.

Revelation 2:20 tells us that "**Jezebel . . . calleth herself a prophetess.**" "**Jezebel**" is one who deals in religious teachings and doctrine. Now, much of the New Testament is drawn from things that were familiar to Hebrew customs and culture, and so it is in Revelation. There is significance in every Scripture, and there is significance as to why "**Jezebel**" was portrayed in this particular passage. The word *Thyatira* literally means "dominating female." Historically, Jezebel was a Phoenician princess who became the Canaanite wife of Israel's King Ahab. She was the daughter of Ethbaal, King of the Zidonians (1 Kings 16:31). Her royal family was remarkable at that time for its religious fanaticism and its strong temper. Jezebel had a strong, domineering character and was self-willed and forceful. Thus, Jezebel is an accurate symbol for a dominating female. The name "**Jezebel**" literally means "unhusbanded." This woman, "**Jezebel**," portrays the religious system of Protestantism that arose during this time period. Just as literal Jezebel refused to be controlled, or dominated, by a husband, Protestantism refused to give the husband his proper place and authority.

Spiritually, who is to be the husband? The prophecy of Isaiah 54:5 declares, "For thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of hosts is his name; and thy redeemer the Holy One of Israel." Christ is the Husband. In 2 Corinthians 11:2 the Apostle Paul, speaking to the church, said, ". . . for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." Christ as the husband and the church as the bride is the theme throughout the Scriptures.

The husband is to be the head of the woman. In 1 Corinthians 11:3 the Apostle penned, ". . . the head of the woman is the man." Just as the husband is the head of the woman, Christ is the Head of the church. Colossians 1:18 says, "And he [Christ] is the head of the body, the church . . ." However, in this Lutheran Age, the people were described in **Revelation 2:20** as "**Jezebel**," because they refused to let Christ assume the role of the husband, the head, and they developed systems with human heads.

The Revelator caught another glimpse of Protestantism, and in Revelation 9:7, using figurative expressions, he said, "And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; [That is exactly what occurred during this era of time. The reformers fought against one another. They became carnal, hateful, intolerant, and bitter.] and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold [showing us that they assumed the position of the head—a position of reigning holding the reins of control], and their faces were as the faces of men." Men, not Jesus Christ, were the heads of the organizations in this era, and these men were just like Jezebel of old. She was self-willed and forceful; she had a great temper, and those same things occurred with the men who started out as reformers.

The Parable of the Leaven in Matthew, Chapter 13, which corresponds with this time period, shows us that God gave them "three measures of meal" (Matthew 13:33). He gave them the unadulterated Word of God, but they took leaven. It was not given to them—they took hold of thoughts and teachings that other spirits brought to them. They embraced those teachings, and their spirits changed for they became dominated by those spirits. They became carnal, battling one with the other. They showed a strong temper with those who disagreed with them, as Luther did with Zwingli and others. With their domineering characters and personalities and self-will, they started forming their own systems and placing their own human heads over them. Sectism is built on division.

Let us again consider Jezebel of old. When she came from Tyre to Israel, she brought her own gods. She was a

worshiper of Baal, an enemy of truth. What was Baal? Second Kings 10:27 says, "And they brake down the image of Baal . . ." Baal was an image. Jezebel was a dominating female who caused Israel (God's people) to worship an image, who incorporated a false system of worship for an entire period of Israelite history. Throughout this period, she more or less dominated their religious practice. She refused to give the true God His rightful place.

This parallels what happened in this era of time. Those who had been reformers in the sixteenth century became self-willed, and they refused to allow Christ to be the head. They created an image to the beast, a false system of worship that dominated an entire era of time. Matthew 13:33 says that this woman ["*Jezebel*"] dealt in leaven. Then, Jesus said in **Revelation 2:20** she was "**to teach and to seduce.**" In other words, she was to engage in beliefs and worship of a system that was just as human, just as manmade, as Romanism was. This false prophetess was to dominate the people of God throughout the entire period of time known as the Protestant era.

Non-Biblical Doctrines Taught by Protestantism

So we see that "*Jezebel*" stands as a symbol for a false system of worship, a system that wants to dominate, by its will, teachings and doctrines, rather than let Christ assume His rightful and true position. These men who started out as reformers became lifted up in themselves, and another spirit took hold of them. They introduced "leaven" into the "meal." Matthew 13:33 tells us that "the whole was leavened," which means that the entirety of this time period was dominated by this system that was teaching things that were not God-ordained, things that were contrary to God's eternal Word.

One of the charges God had against the Lutheran era was this: "*Thou sufferest that woman Jezebel . . . to teach.*" Today Lutheranism has catechism classes, confirmations, christenings, and infant baptism just like Romanism; they burn candles and observe Lent just like Romanism. "*Jezebel*," the dominating female, represents the reformation giving rise to the system of Protestantism. Whenever a female dominates, something is out of order because the head of the woman is the man (1 Corinthians 11:3). If a woman is married, her husband is her head; if she is unmarried, her father is her head. If her husband is unsaved, then her head is Christ. **Revelation 2:20** talks about allowing that woman "*Jezebel, to teach.*" Here was a woman usurping authority. Now, I am not dealing with women teaching; I am dealing with "*Jezebel*" teaching. There is a big difference! "*Jezebel*" was not qualified to teach. **Verse 23** states, "**And I will kill her children . . .**" The "*children*" are all the people, or converts, whom her teaching produced, and Jezebel, as a mother, produced these children or sectarian believers. This age allowed a beast to arise (Revelation 13:11) and made an image (Revelation 13:14), and the outgrowth was "*her children*"—their Protestant converts. These converts, or people, were produced as a result of "*fornication*" (**Revelation 2:21**), without the benefit of marriage, without allowing Christ to be the Husband. Jezebel was "*in a bed*" (**Revelation 2:22**), committing "*adultery*" (**verse 22**), and that is how these children (converts) were produced. Those converts had the image of the system that produced them, Protestantism or "*Jezebel.*" This text says, "**I will kill her children with death,**" revealing that the end results of false teaching is "*death.*" They started out in this era with a message that brought life, but in the end, when their doctrine deviated from truth, it produced death.

The dominating attitude and spirit of "*Jezebel*" during the Protestant era, caused people to fight against one another. During the Thirty Years' War, Protestants put armies on the field and killed people who disagreed with their doctrine. That was an image. They had the same spirit Rome had. The same spirit is prevalent in Ireland where Catholics and Protestants are fighting yet today.

In the literal, Jezebel was a dominating female who seduced Israel and caused them to commit idolatry and spiritual adultery. Protestantism is a very dominate religion that causes people to do such things as "**eat things sacrificed unto idols**" (**Revelation 2:20**). Protestants have candles, altars, robes, Lent, and many other things that they got from papalism; papalism got them from paganism; and paganism got them from hell. These practices are not godly or even Christian. One of the things that Protestants disliked so much about Rome was her intolerance. However, in time Protestantism became just as intolerant.

I would like to quote a historical excerpt: "Great strides of progress were made during the days of the reformation until disagreement arose among the reformers. They could not agree on certain points of doctrine, so division came among them. The disagreements became so bitter that the different groups began to oppose one another and went so far as to send armies on the battlefields to support their creed with carnal weapons. Each group made their own regulations, wrote their own creeds and disciplines, and upheld them by every possible means. Luther denounced Zwingli as a heretic. The Calvinists would have no dealings with the Lutherans. Calvin consented to the burning of Servetus because of

differences of religious views. While in England, we are told, the Anglican Protestants waged bitter war against the Catholics and also Protestants who would not conform to the established church."

This Protestant system is no more godly than Roman Catholicism. Protestantism is no more a Christian system than papalism is. This Protestant system is a beast just like papalism is a beast. It is not divine; it is a brute beast. What had been a God-inspired reformation became a beastly system of man, because instead of letting Christ continue to guide and wield the sword through divine direction, they took matters into their own hands. They did not wait on God. They figured that they needed to have a human head.

Revelation 2:19 says, "**I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last** [referring to works] **to be more than the first.**" They had twice as many "**works**" as faith, twice as much human machinery as they had divine inspiration, and it gave rise to a beast. This era started out as a restoration of precious truth. Jesus was loosing the "fateful lightning of His terrible, swift sword," but the people did not keep pace nor continue to walk in that light. They built an image to the very organization they had stood against. They became just like the very thing they came out of.

Let us look a little further in **verse 19**. It says, "**I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.**" One can reach a position where "**patience**" is no longer a virtue. The angel (pastor) of the church in Thyatira reached the point where his "**patience**," his tolerance with Jezebel and with the things taking place in the congregation, was no longer an asset to him. It became detrimental. A pastor must be very patient with people as they grow and gain understanding. However, there comes a point when "**patience**" and tolerance are no longer a virtue. Silence is not always golden; sometimes it is yellow. That is the point this pastor of Thyatira had reached. He would not stand up to spiritual Jezebel. Ecclesiastes 3:7 tells us that there is "a time to keep silence, and a time to speak." It takes God's Spirit to know the distinction. One is as necessary as the other.

All false religion is big business. They do not have a burden for the souls of men. Just as Thyatira was a great commercial center, so is spiritual Babylon. Revelation 18:10-14, speaking of spiritual Babylon, says: "Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come. And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more. The merchandise [notice how things are prioritized] of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, And cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and [at the bottom of the list is] souls of men." In their order of priority, after all the worldly things, after all the things of this life, their last interest was the souls of men. It is the last thing mentioned.

Notice that verse 12 speaks about merchandise. The reason for that is false religion has made merchandise of the souls of men. They do not care what condition man's soul is in as long as he gives his money. They are interested in the souls of men because that is their stock and trade; that is how they make their money. Revelation 18:15 tells us, "The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing." Why are they weeping and wailing? When truth and judgment are put on Babylon, then it can no longer hold people in its clutches of deception and falsity. Babylon cannot make merchandise out of them and fleece the flock. Once the flock sees the truth, they will come out. There are more men interested in *fleeing* the flock than in *feeding* the flock.

The city of Thyatira was located on the borders of Mizzya and Lydia. Sometimes Thyatira was thought to be in Mizzya, and other times it was determined to be in Lydia. This exactly portrays the way that people were in the beginning of the Protestant age. They were so confused that they did not know where they were. Sometimes they were on one side, and at other times they were somewhere else, spiritually speaking. They did not know where they stood doctrinally. The Bible speaks of such a condition as this in Ephesians 4:14. It says, "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine . . ." They were tossed to and fro. Spiritually, they were still children. They needed more maturity.

The Word and the Spirit Lying Dead in the Street

If you go to Revelation, Chapter 11, you will see what happened during this Protestant era. Verse 8 says, "And their dead bodies [speaking of the two witnesses—the Word and the Spirit] shall lie in the street of the great city, which

spiritually is called Sodom [representing wickedness] and Egypt [a type of bondage], where also our Lord was crucified." Now, the Lord was not crucified in Sodom or Egypt. He was crucified outside of Jerusalem. Sodom is used as a figure. It brings to mind lewdness, wickedness, and heinous sins. Egypt is a picture of bondage. Together they present a picture of spiritual Babylon, which is a mixture of bondage and wickedness.

Verse 9 says, "And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves." The three days and a half was three and a half centuries (A.D. 1530-1880), the entirety of the Protestant era. Although people would not let the Word and the Spirit—the two witnesses—live, reign, and rule in their midst, they still did not want to bury them. Even today there is not a Protestant body that wants to bury the Word and the Spirit. They want to leave them laying around so they can say: "Oh yes, we have the Word. Oh yes, we teach the truth; we teach the Bible." Every one of them wants to say, "We have the Spirit of God!" However, they will not let the two witnesses operate; they will not let them live; they will not let them manifest themselves. They do not want to bury them, but they want to keep them out on public display.

Verse 10 says, "And they that dwell upon the earth [or on the human, man-made level] shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another." A good example of this is when man appoints preachers and pastors. That is exactly what happens in religious systems where the Word and Spirit are dead. Men give gifts one to another, but God is still the One who sets the members in the body as it pleases Him. He is the One who gives the gifts.

Go back with me to 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, which states: "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit [The Spirit of God gives the gifts, men do not. When man gives gifts, it is out of divine order.] the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge [how?] by the same Spirit;

"To another faith [how?] by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing [how?] by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he [the Spirit] will." The Holy Spirit gives the gifts in God's church. However, it does not work that way in Babylon. **Revelation 2:20** gives us Jezebel's credentials. It says that Jezebel "*calleth herself a prophetess.*" God never called her a "*prophetess*"; she called "*herself a prophetess.*" Babylon works that way yet today. They do the calling, and they give gifts one to another.

Let us look a little farther at **verse 20**. It says, "**Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants . . .**" It is so very vital that those who preach rightly divide the Word of God, because teaching has a power and an influence on people. People can be seduced by the spirit that produces wrong teachings. The Church of God does not allow spiritual Jezebels to come in and "*teach.*" Jezebel is out "*to seduce.*" All a deceived person can do is deceive somebody else. This is one of the charges that Jesus made unto the angel of the congregation. He said, "**I have a few things against thee** [the angel] . . ." It is the pastor who has the responsibility of whom to allow "*to teach*" the people. Teaching has an effect on people. People are what they eat, spiritually speaking, and if they eat the wrong thing, they are going to be seduced.

Behind every teaching is a spirit prompting that teaching. First Timothy 4:1 states, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits . . ." They departed because they gave heed to seducing spirits. Seducing spirits propagate doctrines of devils. Behind every doctrine is a spirit; and if the doctrine is false, it is because the spirit is false. This is why Christ was so stirred about Jezebel teaching.

Look at the rest of **Revelation 2:20**. Christ said, "**Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.**" Because of the influence of Jezebel's teachings, the people were made to partake of things that they should never have partaken of. Notice that He said that she would "*seduce my servants to commit fornication.*" If you drop down to **verse 22**, you will read that He said, "**Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation . . .**" Here Christ was talking about "*fornication*" and "*adultery.*"

To see how Protestantism causes people to "*commit adultery*" or "*fornication,*" read Psalm 87:5-6. It says: "And of Zion [Hebrews 12:22-23 tells us that Zion is a figurative expression for the church] it shall be said, This and that man

was born in her: and the highest himself shall establish her. The LORD shall count, when he writeth up the people" God counts the people for only God knows who is genuinely converted. Yet, Babylon has taken it upon herself to count the people. The Lord writes them in His Book, in the Lamb's Book of Life, but Babylon says, "We are going to open the church doors and write the names in our book." This is spiritual adultery. The Scripture teaches that God counts the people and that God writes the records of His church, the Church of God. In Acts 2:47 we read, "Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." When one receives an experience of salvation, he becomes a member of Christ, and the Lord adds him to the church of which He is the Head. God counts; God writes up; God adds members to the church; but this woman endeavors to "**seduce**" these members to "**commit adultery**."

How Spiritual Adultery Can Happen

First Corinthians 6:15-18 says: "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication." This kind of "**fornication**" is spiritual. Christ is the Bridegroom, and the church is the bride. Only the true church has the Bridegroom. These other bodies do not have the Bridegroom; they are harlots. When ones take their experience and join into a harlot body that has no husband (or the Bridegroom), they are committing spiritual adultery. This is exactly what happened during this era. The people were coming out of Catholicism, and Lutheranism was saying: "Join up with us! Be numbered amongst us!" Lutheranism was just as much a harlot as Romanism was.

Second Corinthians 6:14-17 says: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: [False religion puts believers and unbelievers both on their roll. Some are just going through the motions, but their name is in the church book nonetheless. That is an unequal yoke for God's Spirit cannot work where carnality is allowed to go free.] for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them [*them*' refers to unbelievers, the harlot system that unequally yokes God's people together with those who do not stand for truth], and be ye separate" That is the call of our day. Those who do not "come out" are committing "**fornication**."

There are many things that people indulge in that is just like flirting. God not only wants His people to come out from among them, but He wants them also to be separate. God's people are to stay clear of the harlot, her teachings, and her magazines and periodicals, which are nothing more than the harlot's love letters to try to woo the Christian. God's people need to stay clear of her love songs such as supposedly Christian rock. Let us read Hosea's prophecy to see how bad spiritual "**fornication**" actually is. Hosea 4:12 says, "My people ask counsel at their stocks, and their staff declareth unto them: for the spirit of whoredoms hath caused them to err, and they have gone a whoring from under their God."

Hosea was not speaking in the literal. He was talking about people who were erring from truth. He called it a spirit of whoredom. A whore is one who does not care with whom she has sexual relations, and that is a good comparison to the religious world. Their attitude is, "If it is religious, it has to be good!" That is the same attitude a whore takes toward sex. She feels that as long as it is sex, it is good no matter whom it is with. That old, whorish spirit has come right on over into religion. False religion says that as long as someone is sincere, that is all that is necessary. However, one can be sincerely wrong. It takes more than sincerity to get to Heaven.

Hosea 4:15 says, "Though thou, Israel, play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend." God does not want His people playing the harlot. He is very jealous over His people. The worst enemy truth has is religion. Hosea 9:1 says, "Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy, as other people: for thou hast gone a whoring from thy God" God considers it "a whoring" to go by other means or avenues than to the Bridegroom. Spiritual Babylon causes people to "**commit adultery**" by seducing them and enticing them to join up with earthly, manmade organizations. That is "**adultery**," because Christ is the Husband of the church. Go with me to Isaiah 54:5. It says, "For thy Maker is thine husband [who is this?]; the LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel." Who is the maker? Who is the husband? The Redeemer, Jesus Christ, is the Husband; He is the Bridegroom.

This is important because the husband is the head. Yet, Babylon will not let Christ be the Head. They have all kinds

of heads since He is not the Husband. Because they will not let Him be Head, that makes them harlots as they are partaking of things that do not belong to them. They will not accept the vows or the husband. In 2 Corinthians 11:2 Paul wrote, "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy [and every *good* pastor is jealous for his people]: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." Christ is the Husband. The Church of God is a divine organism. In the minds of religion, everything is either Roman Catholic or Protestant, but the Church of God is neither one. The Church of God was instituted before either one of them ever came along. Jesus said in Matthew 16:18, "I will build my church," and in A.D. 33 He built it. Roman Catholicism did not come along until many years later, and Protestantism came after that.

Hebrews 11:10, talking about Abraham, says, "For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Now, Abraham never found that city. That city he was speaking of is nothing more than an expression of the church. Look at it closely. It says, "For he looked for a city" To see what the city is, go back and read Matthew 5:14. Jesus said: "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid." The city He was talking to the disciples about was the church. Revelation, Chapter 21, makes this very plain. Verse 9 says, "And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife." That is a figurative expression of the church.

Verse 10 describes what John saw. It says, "And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city" When the angel was going to show John the bride, he turned right around and showed him a city. If that was taken literally, that would be a really big woman! Chapter 21 goes on to give descriptive elements of that city. This city is a figure of the church. Hebrews 11:10 tells us, "For he looked for a city which hath foundations" To find out what the foundation is, turn to 1 Corinthians 3:11. It says, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid [what is that foundation?], which is Jesus Christ." The foundation of the city, or the church, is Christ. The church is built on Christ, not on man. It is not built on the earth, but on the Rock. So, this "city which hath foundations" is a picture of the church "whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10). To find out who the builder of the church is, look again at Matthew 16:18, which states, "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I [red letters in the Bible denote that Jesus was speaking] will build my church." The Builder and the Maker is Christ. He built it on the rock; He built it on truth; He built it on a revelation of truth that has its basis in the Word of God. The church is not built on the sayings of men, but on a divine revelation of truth.

Beasts Symbolize False Teachers and False Systems

The beasts spoken of in the Revelation are not literal beasts. Throughout the Revelation when John referred to certain entities as beasts, he was depicting their nature or their spirit. To see how the word *beast* is employed in the Scriptures, turn to 1 Corinthians 15:32. It says, "If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus" What kind of beasts did he fight at Ephesus? The beginning of the verse tells us that he fought after the manner of *men*. He was not fighting with some hideous monstrosity, but he was fighting with men who had beastly, carnal natures. To see what Paul dealt with at Ephesus, read Acts 20:17-18, which says: "And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church. And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons."

Verses 28-30 tell us: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves [this is the kind of beasts he fought with at Ephesus—wolves] enter in among you, not sparing the flock [what kind of wolves or beasts were they?]. Also of your own selves shall *men* arise, speaking perverse things [why?], to draw away disciples after them." These beasts and these wolves were men.

To read more about wolves, go back to Matthew 7:15. Jesus was not speaking of the four-legged wolves when He said, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." The wolves are false prophets. Men are whom these beasts represent. Second Peter 2:1 and 12 say: "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you . . . But these, as natural brute beasts, [These false prophets and false teachers are considered brute beasts because their understanding of the things of God is on the natural, brute, animal level. An organization produced with those kinds of people will become a system where people can do everything imaginable and yet tack on a Christian name.] made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil [now

a literal beast cannot speak, much less speak evil, but these beasts speak freely] of the things that they understand not." In other words, they do not understand the truth, but they can surely speak against it.

Jude talked about these people in verse 4. He said, "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation [what kind of men?], ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." Verse 10 says, "But these [the ungodly men] speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts" Here the brute beasts are defined as ungodly men who live on the unregenerate, natural level, men who cannot understand anything spiritual, men who speak evil of those who do understand. That is what these beasts are, and that is the kind of spirit that produced this system of Protestantism.

The pictorial chart portrays these beasts and these horrible animals coming up. Keep in mind that the Revelation is a spiritual book written to the church, written to spiritual people to depict spiritual truth, and it uses spiritual language. A beast represents nothing more than people who are devoid of the Spirit of God, and because they live on the natural, unregenerate level, they produce things on a human level. Revelation 13:11 tells us, "And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth." If you go back to Revelation, Chapter 21, you will read that the true church is not something that some man drummed up; it is something that God sent down. The true church came down, and it is the only thing going back up. Everything else came up and is going down. Revelation 21:2 says, "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, *coming down* from God out of heaven"

You can read of the church coming down in Acts 2:1-4: "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost" The church came down from God out of Heaven when the Holy Ghost moved into the hearts and lives of those men, changed them, and made them new creatures in Christ Jesus.

The Church of God came down from God, and when the end comes, it is going to be delivered up to God. First Corinthians 15:24 says, "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered *up* the kingdom to God, even the Father." Revelation 13:11 tells us that the systems of men came up out of the earth. They are something men come up with, and they are going to be cast down. They will not be able to stand the judgment blast. Revelation 19:20 says, "And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone."

Look again at Revelation 13:11, which tells us, "And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon." When you can see where this beast came from, you will find that this beast is nothing more than the system of Protestantism. It is in direct succession to these other beasts: Revelation 12:3 is the dragon; Revelation 13:1 is the beast; and Revelation 13:11 is this Protestant beast. This beast has two horns, which represent the two political powers under which Protestantism was developed: Germany in the Lutheran era and England in the Wesleyan era.

Notice that this beast had "two horns like a lamb." Although this beast is hideous, ungodly, natural, brute, unregenerate, and void of the Spirit of God, its appearance had lamb-like features. In Matthew 7:15 Jesus spoke of something that appeared like a lamb or like a sheep, but He had another name for it. He said, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." What is this that looks like a lamb? Jesus said it was a false prophet. Revelation 16:13 tells us that another name for this beast is "the false prophet" and lets us know that its nature is a spiritual nature. It says, "And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon [paganism], and out of the mouth of the beast [papalism], and out of the mouth of the false prophet." Here this beast, Protestantism, is referred to as a false prophet. That which took on an appearance like a lamb is a picture of false prophets or false religion. It is a false system because the spirit that promotes it is a false spirit. Revelation 16:14 says it is the spirit of devils that promotes it.

Protestantism is a false prophet, which means it is a propagator of religion, but because it is a beast, it only has natural things to propagate, not spiritual. It came up out of the earth, a symbol of man. Ecclesiastes 12:7 says, "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." Here Solomon refers to the human portion of man as the dust of the earth. Thus, earth is a representative of man. In Jeremiah 22:29 the Prophet said, "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD." He could not have been talking to the literal earth for it does not hear

anything. He was talking to man; he was speaking of the earth as man. Matthew 6:9-10 tells us: "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth . . ." Not *on* earth but He wants His will done *in* these earthen vessels. Second Corinthians 4:7 states, "But we have this treasure [where?] in earthen vessels . . ."

To see what these earthen vessels are, read 2 Corinthians 5:1. It says, "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved . . ." What is this earthly house he refers to as "this tabernacle"? Turn to 2 Peter 1:13-15. Peter wrote: "Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me. Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease . . ." By saying that he was going to put off his tabernacle, he was saying that he was going to die. He was going to lay down the body. The tabernacle or the earthly house is our human part, and this system, which came up out of the earth, came up out of the minds of men. It came up out of the human part of man. God never told man to try to build a church; He never told man to formulate a set of doctrines and creeds; He never told man to choose who was to be the head. Man came up with all those things himself.

Christ was the One who brought about the reformation by turning the sword loose, but He never ordained for the beast to be healed. Another spirit came in, and that gave rise to Protestantism. What started out as a move of God ended up as a system used of the devil. I trust that you can see that this letter represents the Lutheran era, that period of time from A.D. 1530, when the Articles of Faith of the Lutheran organization were written, to A.D. 1730, when the Wesleyan era began. This was the period that gave rise to the system of Protestantism and was the first portion of the "cloudy day," or the reign of Protestantism.

Chapter Three

Letters to the Churches

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THE SARDIAN AGE (A.D. 1730 - 1880)

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Cloudy Day—A Mixture of Light and Darkness

Notice that the very first word of our text begins with the conjunction "**and**." This lets us know that verse 1 is speaking in conjunction with what has been previously said. These seven letters to the congregations in Asia are not dealing with isolated circumstances. Each letter is a part of the whole, and without studying the entirety of the seven letters, you will never understand the whole picture of the Gospel Day. By beginning **Revelation 3:1** with a conjunction, Christ showed that He was not finished taking us down through the annals of this Gospel Day.

The fifth letter, which represents the fifth candlestick age called the Sardian age, covers the time period from A.D. 1730 to 1880. The prior letter shows that the Thyatiran era is the preceding age (A.D. 1530-1730). The Thyatiran age could also be called the Lutheran era, and during this time a gradual restoration of truth began. These fourth and fifth periods of time, the Thyatiran and Sardian ages, together comprise the Protestant era. In prophecy, the darkened day is a picture of the dark night of papalism or the Dark Ages. The cloudy day was part light and part darkness. The hold of Roman Catholicism was broken by light being shed forth. Yet, light did not come in its full strength; it came as a cloudy day, and that cloudy day is that which we call the Protestant era.

There is a distinction between the dark night and the cloudy day. The church started out in the morning with clear light. Revelation 12:1 says that the woman was clothed in the sun. The light was bright, radiant, manifest, and abundant. That is why the enemy was against it. It was too clear, too plain, too easy to see because it was unobscured by falsity. So, the devil worked in an apostasy. As the song writer said, ". . . when the Sun first arose, And the gospel divine put to flight all its foes, The nations rejoiced, but forsook it so soon" An apostasy came in, and "the sun in its strength was darkened at noon." Thus, a dark age came right in the middle of the clear day. Then, as that dark age began to wane, as Christ loosed the sword of His mouth and began to turn truth loose, a gradual restoration of light and man's failure to continue in it caused a cloudy condition. That is what the Protestant era was, and that is what is still in Protestantism today. You will get a few tidbits of truth, but you will get a whole lot of cloudiness and confusion. It is a mixture of light and darkness.

Ezekiel 34:11-12 says: "For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day." That cloudy day was a mixture of truth and error. Amos spoke of this spiritual eclipse that would take place. Amos 8:9 says, "And it shall come to pass in that day [a prophetic expression of this day—the Gospel Day], saith the Lord GOD, that I will cause

the sun to go down at noon [just as noon is in the middle of the day, this dark age was right in the midst of the clear day], and I will darken the earth in the clear day."

Verse 11 says, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD." There was a spiritual famine because the Word of God was not available. It was not preached in a public manner as it had been in the morning time. This same famine is portrayed in Revelation, Chapter 6. The black horse is a figure of the spirit that produced the Dark Ages.

Revelation 6:5 says, "And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand." The black horse in Zechariah 6:6 represents those who went into the north country—a picture of an apostasy that gave vent to the rise of Roman Catholicism. Revelation 6:5 tells us that he who sat on the black horse had scales in his hand. The scale does not belong in any man's hand; it belongs in God's hand. "A just weight and balance are the LORD'S" (Proverbs 16:11). He is the One who told Belshazzar, "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting" (Daniel 5:27). Nevertheless, here is a system of religion that took the scales into their own hands. Paul said in 2 Thessalonians 2:4 that he "sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." This is a picture of the office of the popes of Rome. They supposedly took that which is God's authority and God's seat into their own hands. This was the outgrowth of those who quieted the Spirit.

Revelation 6:6 says, "And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine." Here is a picture of truth going out at a starvation rate, not enough to keep anyone alive. There was a spiritual famine in the land of hearing the Word of the Lord.

Following that dark age was another age described in Zechariah 14:6-7: "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark: But it shall be one day which shall be known to the LORD, not day, nor night . . ." That is a picture of this Protestant era, this cloudy day that was not day nor night, but a mixture of the two. Light began to break, but it was only partial light.

The Thyatiran age had only one light—the message of justification. Most of what they had was cloudiness, confusion, and darkness. So when people of the Thyatiran era failed to continue to walk in light, Jesus said the light that was in them became darkness (John 12:35), and God had to reach down again and get hold of another people to continue the onward progression of truth. That brings us up to the Wesleyan era or the Sardinian age. (The Protestant era comprised two periods of the Gospel Day: the Lutheran era from A.D. 1530 to 1730 and the Wesleyan era or the age of Methodism from A.D. 1730 to 1880.)

The sixteenth-century reformation, which began with Luther, was very short-lived, and various denominations developed very quickly. Many of the men who were once reformers took on a foul spirit, and a beast rose up right out of the minds of those men. It is necessary to study this as every sect has a seducing spirit that motivates it. Those spirits are not content with the sects they have already formed, but they would like to overtake Church of God congregations. When supposed Church of God people tell their pastor, "We want you to step down, and we will decide whom we shall call in to be the pastor," that is sectarian to the core! Sectarianism does not allow the Word and the Spirit to stand to their feet as the true vicars of the church. The spirits that produced false religious systems in the Protestant era are loose yet today. They would like to turn Church of God services into a dead form of worship, just like man-made organizations.

Some of the same men to whom God showed glorious truths, ended up with bitter spirits, putting armies on the field to kill other brethren. A beast rose up that looked like a lamb (Revelation 13:11); it looked like Christianity but spake as a dragon. Just as paganism had a multiplicity of gods (people could worship the god of their choice), Protestantism has multiple faiths or supposed churches. Their motto is, "You can go to the church of your choice," and that is just as devilish as it was in old pagan Rome.

God gave Luther a truth, and he started out well with that truth. However, Lutheranism turned right around and built an image to the beast. They became just like the thing they said they were coming out of. Thus, God had to reach down and get another man to herald forth the truth. In Fisher's *History of the Christian Church*, he tells us that John Wesley was ordained in 1728 in the Church of England. According to the journal of John Wesley, page 31, Wesley began a ministry to the jails. It says, "On August 24, 1730, my brother and I . . . believed it would be worthwhile to spend an hour or two in a week." This led to the origin of the Holy Club (page 32). This is where we get our date (A.D. 1730) for the beginning of the Sardinian age.

A Message of Holiness and Righteousness

Let us look at the message of the Wesleyan age. All that Luther had was Romans 1:17, which says, "The just shall live by faith." That laid a deadly wound to the beast, a system that taught that salvation was purely by works. The initial message of justification showed people how to get saved, but that was hardly a message to keep people faithful unto the end. That is the trouble with Babylon yet today. There are a few places that hold enough of the Word to get people saved, but they do not have enough of the Word to keep them saved.

In the Wesleyan era, God gave a message that not only would help people to get saved, but would also help people to stay saved. To see what the message was, look at **Revelation 3:4-5**, which says: "**Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments;** [Jesus Christ knows everyone's name, whose name is in the Book of Life, and whose garments are defiled. He is the all-seeing eye.] **and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life . . .**" Verse 4 says, ". . . they shall walk with me in white . . ." and verse 5 says, ". . . the same shall be clothed in white raiment." To understand what the "*white raiment*" is a picture of, read Revelation 19:8. It says, "And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." The fine linen, clean and white, represents righteousness.

The Wesleyan brethren preached righteousness and holiness. They began to teach a knowledge and understanding of truth that not only would save but would enable people to live right. Fisher's *History of the Christian Church* says: "There was another point in Wesley's teaching that excited much displeasure. This was his doctrine of Christian perfection that he held to be attainable by the believer in this life. He meant an uninterrupted reign in the heart of love to God and man. The Wesleyan preaching made its doctrine of assurance and hope as a privilege for all, and complete deliverance from sin was embraced in its announcement of a free, complete salvation held out to every transgressor." The Wesleyan message was sinless perfection, holiness—not just a message of justification. Fisher's *History of the Christian Church* says, on page 516, "All his life Wesley had been, as he truthfully avowed, in quest of holiness."

John and Charles Wesley went to the colony of Georgia as missionaries from the Church of England. As they were on the boat, they came in contact with a Moravian who had such serenity, such peace, such an inward piety about him that it stirred John Wesley. He could not get away from it, and the whole time he was in Georgia, he was miserable. It was not until he returned back to England and sought out those same people that he began to get his eyes open to holiness, righteousness, and powerful living. God raised him as a special vessel to herald that message. One of John Wesley's sayings was, "The world is my parish." He did not just carry a localized burden, but he realized the field was the world (Matthew 13:38).

Holiness Is the Law of the House

The cities in Revelation, Chapters 2 and 3, were chosen, not only for their spiritual representation but for their geographical representation as well. In Sardis we again see a move south and east. Sardis was twenty-eight miles southeast of Thyatira. Originally the move from Ephesus (the morning-time church) to Pergamos (the Dark Ages) was 100 miles. Now, having moved seventy-six miles south and east, we are three fourths of the way back. The light of justification came in the Lutheran era and holiness in the Wesleyan era. Yet, there was one more major doctrine to be restored before the message of truth was basically restored. God gave these men the truth; God brought the reformation and shed the light. However, what started as a move of God, ended up as an organization of men when they quit walking in the light and let their own thinking take over. That serves as a warning to Church of God congregations today. Many start out as the people of God and end up as Babylon. In the beginning, every one of the moves Luther and Wesley made were moves of God, but people did not keep pace with truth. That is why today the need is to keep walking in the light. If we get a step or two behind truth, we can end up just as sectarian as any manmade organization, having a form of godliness but denying the power (2 Timothy 3:5).

John Wesley preached a message of holiness, of sinless perfection, and that is a Bible truth. Jesus said in Matthew 5:48, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." That is a high standard. How can one be perfect as the Father in Heaven is perfect? God is as perfect as He knows how to be, and if you are as perfect as you know how to be, walking in all the light and understanding you have, you are as perfect as He is. Luke 1:74-75 says:

"That he would grant unto us, that we [this is a present tense, up-to-date message that incorporates you and me] being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life." The only acceptable service is in holiness and righteousness. All of God's preachers are holiness preachers.

Titus 2:11-12 says: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly [when?], in this present world." This is the holiness message that John Wesley began to preach. Hebrews 12:14 says, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." The writer was not talking about Christ's second advent, because Revelation 1:7 says that every eye shall see Him, even they which pierced him. Here in Hebrews, it is saying that the only way the world is going to see the Lord is through the holiness of the saints. Without holiness no one is going to see the Lord, because He is "Christ in you" (Colossians 1:27). If they do not see Christ in you and me, they are not going to see the Lord.

Through this restoration of truth, we are getting back to the *law* of the house. In the next period of time, Philadelphia, we will get back to the house (the Church of God). Ezekiel 43:12 tells us, "This is the law of the house; Upon the top of the mountain the whole limit thereof round about shall be most holy. Behold, this is the law of the house." Holiness is the law of the house. God was bringing about a gradual restoration of the truths that were lost through the morning apostasy and the ensuing Dark Ages. God used Wesley as an agent of reform to herald the truths of not only justification but of holiness, living a sanctified, set-apart life. The Bible teaches sanctification. God wants His people dedicated, consecrated, and set apart for His service.

As in many other cases, the reign of truth in the Wesleyan era was short-lived. The Apostle Paul, in Galatians 5:7, said, "Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?" What happened to this era? Fisher's *History of the Christian Church* tells us, "The facts of the merits of Methodism are attested by the reformation of morals and the lessening of crime that everywhere followed in the steps of Methodist preachers." They were greatly used of God. God used Wesley. He was a good man. Till the day he died he was God's man, but after his death Methodism became a sect, as all movements of the past. It began to manifest an intolerant, dogmatic spirit. They turned around, as Revelation 13:14 says, and built an image to the beast. Neither John nor Charles Wesley would have claimed to have the church built upon them, but Methodism has put them as the founders. Any organization having human founders or origins is part of the beast; it is not the true church. After the death of Wesley, they started disputing amongst themselves, and that which was once a reformation from God gave vent to the rise of another man-made system. They split and divided. What started out as Methodism, ended as Welsh-Calvinist Methodist, the Nazarenes, and the Salvation Army. Since then the Wesleyans and many other sects have split off. Why did this happen? Because they quit walking in the light. They made an image to the beast, started following man, and became a sect.

Webster defines a sect as "a set of opinions; a small group that has broken away from an established church." Christ established only one church, and everything that has veered off of that is a sect, a break off, and comes from man not from God. In Matthew 16:18 Jesus said, "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church." Jesus only built one church. What is that one church? We read in Acts 20:28, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." How many times did Jesus shed His blood? One time. How many things did He purchase? One thing. What did He purchase? The Church of God. Everything else is a sect.

In the Greek, *sect* is the same word that is used for *heresies*. Every sect came from a heresy, or some man developing and formulating a set of creeds and doctrines around a concocted theory. Second Peter 2:1 says, "But there were false prophets . . ." and that is just exactly what Protestantism is called—the false prophet. Revelation 16:13 tells us, "And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon [paganism], and out of the mouth of the beast [papalism], and out of the mouth of the false prophet [Protestantism]." Revelation 19:20 says, "And the beast [speaking of papalism] was taken, and with him the false prophet [Protestantism] . . ." This lamb-like beast, which Revelation 13:11 talks about, is figurative of what Jesus talked about when He said in Matthew 7:15 to beware of false prophets that come to you in sheep's clothing. Second Peter 2:1 says, "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies [or sects] . . ." Jesus only built one church, the Church of God.

Giving Heed to Seducing Spirits

Notice how Christ represents Himself to this time period: **"And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God . . ." (Revelation 3:1).** How do we know that He established only one church? When He speaks of having the **"seven Spirits of God,"** it is a figurative expression of the Holy Spirit in each of the seven periods that comprise the Gospel Day. The Spirit is God's agent of life, and people who are following God's agent of life do not divide up the body and bring spiritual death. When people begin separating the body, splitting it with divisions and schisms, they are not led by the Spirit of life. Another spirit has entered in, and that spirit is what produced that religious system. This is what happened in the Wesleyan era. It started out as a move of God, but another spirit entered in. Men had a change of spirit, and they started bringing forth doctrines of men instead of truths from God. Through these doctrines, they started building an image to the beast.

First Timothy 4:1 states, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and [what does seducing spirits produce?] doctrines of devils." Before the doctrine ever comes, someone's spirit has to change. These men started out as men of God, but after the older generation died, another spirit took over. Apostasy usually happens in the second or third generation. People who came out of Babylon, who had to seek and pray for truth, once they found it, realized how precious God's Word and God's church was. Yet, after a generation or two is raised in the truth, the younger folks lose the appreciation that those who came out of Babylon had. Oftentimes, this leads to people looking at things with a different view. This is when an apostasy starts. Ideas start changing, and many times, Christians are doing things because Mom and Dad always did it, or that is the way they have always been taught. So, over time they start laying aside the old landmarks. Those who came out of Babylon were the first generation. They did not just embrace things, but they did as the saints in Berea (Acts 17:11): they searched the Scriptures. They prayed and sought God. If we, as the Church of God, are not careful, our children will not have the appreciation of the truth that we have, and a gradual veering away will happen just as it has happened in every era of time. That is why we need a teaching ministry. If people understand the truth, then they will not be so quickly steered away from the old landmarks. When people measure up to the truth only because the preacher says so, what happens when the preacher is not around to say so?

Revelation 9:1, speaking of the fifth-seal ministry, says, "And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star [a picture of the ministry] fall from heaven unto the earth [a picture of the Wesleyan era]: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit." He had the key, but he did not have the chain. When a man preaches the Word without the Spirit, he messes up more than he fixes up. The next verse says, "And he opened the bottomless pit." When you try to handle the Word without the Spirit, you are going to let out more than you are going to shut up. In Revelation, Chapter 20, an angel (a God-called ministry) came down from heaven having the key (the Word) and a chain (the Spirit). Verse 2 says, "And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan [the Greek says 'the accuser and adversary'], and bound him a thousand years." During the thousand years that the dragon was bound (from 530 to 1530), the devil was very much loosed. Verse 3 says, "And cast him into the bottomless pit [when truth was put on that system, it showed that it had no Bible foundation, no basis in truth], and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more [not 'never' but 'no more'], till the thousand years should be fulfilled [they were fulfilled in 1530]: and after that he must be loosed a little season."

Let us look at the little season he was loosed. Revelation 13:11 states, "And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth [out of the minds of men]; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon." This Protestant era had power in two periods of time. Thus, the beast had two horns representing the Lutheran era and the Wesleyan era and the two political powers that supported them—Germany and England. In this verse, the dragon was being loosed through the system of Protestantism. Revelation 20:3 says it would be loosed a little season. The dragon was the opposing force in A.D. 33, and Roman Catholicism held worldwide sway in A.D. 530. Then, this Protestant beast was loosed for a little season from 1530 to 1880. Revelation 11:9 says that it would last three days and a half, which was actually 350 years, beginning in 1530 when the first Protestant creed was drawn up at the Diet of Augsburg in Augsburg, Germany, to 1880 when D. S. Warner began to first publish the message in print concerning "come out of her my people" (Revelation 18:4). That was the little season that the dragon was loosed in the form of this Protestant beast.

Revelation 11:7 says, "And when they [the Word and the Spirit] shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit . . ." What beast is this? The dragon was put in the bottomless pit (Revelation 20:3),

but at the end of the dark age this dragon was going to be loosed through the form of a beast. What beast was that? Revelation 13:11 tells us, "And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth," and Chapter 11 says the beast came out of the bottomless pit. These are just different expressions for the same thing. God never told anyone to start an organization named after Luther, Wesley, or any other reformer and call it a church. Jesus said in Matthew 16:18, "I will build my church." He is the only One ever ordained to start one. Everything else came out of the earth, out of the minds of earthen vessels (2 Corinthians 4:7). When you lay the truth square on it, it has no Bible foundation upon which to build. That is why it is called "bottomless."

Characteristics of Sardis

"**Sardis**" is the fifth church mentioned in the Revelation (**Revelation 3:1**). At the time of John's vision on the Isle of Patmos, there was a congregation of God's people located in this city. Let us notice the conditions and environment that surrounded this congregation and then make a spiritual application to the Sardian candlestick age in the Gospel Day. The geographical locality of the city of "**Sardis**" was about twenty-eight miles southeast of Thyatira. Moving east signified that the people had moved out of the Thyatiran age down into a position of more light and more understanding of the Word of God. Moving south signified a warmer climate, spiritually, in this era of time. Wesley was entrusted with the light concerning holiness. This was a truth that was not available in the Lutheran era.

Literally speaking, there was a road from Pergamos to "**Sardis**" by way of Thyatira, and the lesson is that in the sixteenth century, there was a road opened out of Catholicism by the reformation to an experience of justification by faith in Christ (which was the Lutheran era's message). In the Wesleyan age, the road was opened by light from God's Word on being able to hold an experience of holiness and sinless perfection. This was a message that had been obscured through the dark night of Rome but was being restored in this Wesleyan era. A reformation had begun that would lead God's people from the dark, papal night to the blessedness of the evening light.

"**Sardis**" was a prosperous, commercial city. Many of its traders ceased their traveling and settled down to business in their own shops. Certain kinds of manufacturing had their beginnings here in "**Sardis**." In making a spiritual application, the people of God in the Sardian age were surrounded by the same conditions of which the city of "**Sardis**" afforded. In this age, the churches became more settled. People did not move around as they had previously, and because of that, there were those who settled down and refused to keep walking in light. They became too settled and failed to progress with truth, becoming sectarian. In the preceding age (the Lutheran era), people only had the experience of justification to twist and color (which ties in with the dyeing of cotton goods, a practice back in Thyatira). In this Sardian age the dyeing and coloring of wool garments was discovered, showing that they had the doctrine of holiness to reject, twist, and color. Just as it is a greater art to color wool than it is to color cotton, so the Sardian age had greater light to try to twist and change.

There was much idol worship in the city of "**Sardis**." The Temple of Cybele was noted and bore the architectural marks of human hands. It was a great heathen center that had all kinds of columns and pillars and decorations. Its large, high columns were its outstanding features. Out of all the columns that this Temple of Cybele had, there were two columns that outstripped the others in their grandeur. In Greek mythology, this temple is called the Mother of the Gods, or the Great Mother. Spiritually, this goddess is a symbol of sectarian institutions or man-made churches that arose in this fifth period of time and a symbol that the teachings of Protestantism, who "spoke as a dragon" (Revelation 13:11), are paganistic. In the Sardian age, all sectarian churches are considered to be a part of it. While they disagreed and fought each other in many ways, they still had the same sectarian spirit. Spiritual Babylon cannot get along; they cannot agree on doctrine. Nevertheless, when a little truth comes along, they will lock arms to fight it. Why? Because they have the same sectarian spirit.

At the present time in modern history, only two columns of this Temple of Cybele still remain. All the magnificence and grandeur this temple once had has been destroyed except for two of its pillars. What is that a lesson of? During this era, many fancy doctrines and teachings were preached, but the only two that have stood the test of time were the messages on justification and on holiness. All the rest of the teachings from this time are in shambles. They became as wood, hay, and stubble. They would not stand the fires of truth (1 Corinthians 3:12-13); they crumbled and were carried away.

Another pertinent fact about "**Sardis**" was that it was seemingly built on a rock. However, it was in fact more like

closely-packed mud than rock, and it tended to crack and wear away. Herodotus, the Greek historian, tells how Cyrus of Persia besieged the city: "After fourteen days, Cyrus then offered a reward to any of his soldiers who could find a way into the impregnable '**Sardis.**' A certain Mardian soldier named Hyeroeades had been watching the battlements of '**Sardis,**' and at a certain point he had seen a Sardian soldier accidentally drop his helmet over the battlements, and then make his way down the precipice to retrieve it. Hyeroeades knew that there must be a crack in the rock there, by means of which an agile man could climb up. That night he led a party of Persian troops up by the fault in the rock. When they reached the top, they found the battlements completely unguarded. The Sardians had thought themselves too safe to need a guard. So '**Sardis**' fell."

This is a picture of spiritual Babylon. They think they are on the Rock, but "their rock is not as our Rock" (Deuteronomy 32:31). Sardis' foundation was not truly rock, but merely compacted earth. It was not secure, yet they had no guard. They had a false sense of security. A similar situation is portrayed in Isaiah 28:15, which says, ". . . we have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement." Again, it was a false security. Isaiah 28:17 says it was a "refuge of lies." Spiritual Babylon takes comfort in her teachings and her religious moves. That is what happened in this era of time, but it did not afford them any real protection from the enemy. Babylon attempts to hide in "**a name that thou livest, and art dead**" (**Revelation 3:1**). False religious systems and false securities (such as infant baptism, baptismal regeneration, church membership, eternal security, and many more) do not foster life, but rather death. The truth will sweep away these false refuges and false securities.

Notice how Christ represented Himself to this time period. **Revelation 3:1** says, "**And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.**" The latter portion of **verse 2** reads, "**For I have not found thy works perfect before God.**" This was an era that started out with a message on perfection, but before the era was over Jesus, in essence, was saying, "You are not perfect." Why did He say that? It was because they had lost the real, life-giving quality to holiness. Holiness is more than the outward standard. That is part of holiness, but real holiness is whether you are alive or dead. If you do not have that spiritual life, you are not perfect. The people of this holiness era started out with life, they started out with truth, but they ended up with a dead form. That is where those movements are today. They have lost the reality of true holiness. That is why, in essence, Jesus said: "I am He that hath the Spirit, and I know who has it and who does not. You may try passing it off to someone else, but you are not going to pass it off on Me." He told them, "You can say that you are alive, but I know you are dead."

Why did Christ identify Himself by this attribute? Many religious people are as Jude said—twice dead, plucked up by the roots (Jude 12). There is no life and no hope of life. Yet, they do not think they have any trouble. They say, "I do this, and I do not do that; I go here, and I dress this way so I have it!" However, if they do not have the life, they do not have any perfection or holiness. It is not in what you do altogether, but it is in what you are; and what you *are* will affect what you *do*. Too many are looking at what they are doing instead of what they are, and they are deceiving their own selves.

Jesus laid a strong rebuke on this congregation because they were supposed to be a holiness people. If anyone was to be an example, it was them. They were to "**walk in white**" (**verse 4**), but if one is not white on the inside, he is not white on the outside. Many feel that because they have the external right, that makes them a fit candidate for Heaven; they believe they are living a holiness message. There is a false holiness spirit in the world today. The Pharisee thought he had it. In essence, he prayed, "I thank Thee I am not as other men. I do this, and I do that," but he was a hypocrite (Luke 18:10-14).

The Stars in God's Right Hand

The message in **Revelation 3:1** is "**unto the angel.**" The angel (or the pastor) is who God sends the message through. That is God's plan. Look again at **verse 1**, which says, "**And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God.**" The "**seven Spirits**" is a figurative expression of the Spirit in the seven periods of the Gospel Day. To understand what the Spirit is and what one of His manners of operation is, read Romans 8:2. It says, "For the law of the Spirit of life . . ." The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of life. The very first charge that Jesus laid to them was, "You have a name that you live but you are dead." So, He identified Himself as "**he that hath**" the Holy Spirit, which is the Spirit of life.

Romans 8:10 tells us, "And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life . . ." The life

is in the Spirit. The people of this era of time were spiritually dead, yet saying they were alive. Jesus said: "Take the sign down; quit professing. You are not going to fool Me. I am He that has the Spirit, and the Spirit is life. I know who has life and who does not. The Spirit is the agent of life." In John 3:6 Jesus, speaking to Nicodemus, said, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." It is the Spirit that brings the birth, which brings life. Shaking hands, signing a card, joining an organization, or being baptized will not give you life. The agent of life is the Spirit. Second Corinthians 3:6 says, "Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." The life is vested in the Spirit.

Notice another identifying factor Jesus used in **Revelation 3:1**. It says, ". . . **he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars.**" The life is not very far away from the "**stars**" or the ministry because God uses the ministry to introduce people to life. He uses the "**stars**" to lead men to the source of life. Matthew 2:1-3 says: "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him." East is the source of light. God was giving these men some light. They were Gentile men, according to Ephesians, Chapter 2, without God and without hope. Yet, when Christ came, God had a star show some light to them. That is still the way Christ works yet today.

Verse 9 says, "When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was." The star led honest men to Christ. Christ identified the ministry as the "**stars**" in His right hand because they are God's luminary agents to shine in a sin-benighted world; they are to lead men to the source of light. When the brethren in this Wesleyan era lost their real message and took on a beastly sectarian attitude, they no longer were "**stars**." They lost their light and could not shine. Thus, the lost could not see their way to life. They only saw their way to a religious form; they had a name that they lived but were dead.

The "**stars**" were in Christ's right hand, and throughout the Scriptures the right hand denotes power. The Bible talks about the right hand of power, and the ministry is God's power. In His right hand were "**seven stars**." Daniel 12:3 says, "And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." Just as the wise men came on the scene with honesty of heart, God sees the inquiry of every honest heart today. Their intent was right; they wanted to worship Him, but they did not know how or where. The wise men inquired of the wrong person, and in ignorance you may inquire of the wrong person. However, if you are honest, God will lead you to the truth.

John 14:6 says, "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life . . ." Jesus Christ is the ultimate source of life. When He appeared to the Sardian people, He was saying: "I am He that hath life. I impart the Spirit, who brings life to man." The Spirit of life and the Spirit of holiness are the same thing. You cannot have spiritual life without holiness, and you cannot have holiness without spiritual life. Look at what resurrected Him. Romans 1:4 states, "And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." The Spirit of holiness resurrected Him from the dead. Romans 8:11 says, "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken . . ." That word *quicken* means "make alive." The Spirit who raised Him, the Spirit of holiness, is the same Spirit who makes us alive or gives us life.

The Star Fell From Heaven to Earth

Next, let us look at the pronouncement on these people in **Revelation 3:1**. It says, "**And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.**" The people of this era started out anointed of God with a holiness message that produced powerful lives, but they did the same thing that the Lutheran age did—they laid down the sword of truth and picked up a beastly spirit. They made an image to the beast (or became just like it) and ended up a sectarian institution without light or life. Today, when people go there, they do not get an experience with Jesus Christ; they get a sectarian spirit. They have a "**name**," and they *claim* to have an experience. Yet, they do not have the Spirit of holiness.

Revelation 3:1 says, "**These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God . . .**" In essence, what was He saying? "I am He who hath life. I am He who has the access, the control of the Spirit of God, which is the agency of life. I am He who has '**the seven stars**,' the light that leads men to life. You are saying that you have light and life, but you

'*art dead*.'" The fifth trumpet in the trumpet series portrays the same period of time. In Revelation 9:1 John said, ". . . I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth . . ." Heaven is that exalted position where the star (the ministry) was ordained to be a luminary agent to shine forth the light of life. However, something worked and their spirit changed. The star fell from heaven to earth. Every time somebody falls from that exalted position, a change of spirit has taken place. Jude tells us that when an angel falls from a position of light, he goes into darkness.

In Jude 6 we read, "And the angels [ministers] which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation . . ." They were not content to hold the position that God put them in, stay with the message that was delivered to them, and hold to the faith that was once delivered to the saints. They had to get their thoughts into it. God used Brother Wesley in a great way, and as far as history records, Wesley was a good, godly man until the day he died. He did not have a sectarian spirit. However, just as with Paul, after Wesley's departure, some other things took place. Men rose up and said, "Let us build a church based on Wesley's teachings." They knew better than to try it when Wesley was living, for he would have told them to stop. So they waited until he was gone. They would not keep their first estate, the habitation that God had placed them in, and continue progressing in truth. Whenever you leave the place where God wants you and try venturing out somewhere else, you are going to get out of His hand, out of His control, and you are going to fall.

Look again at Jude 6, which says, "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness . . ." When they left that habitation, when they fell from heaven to earth, they went from light to darkness. That is why today they have teachings such as the millennium, the rapture, and the great tribulation.

Second Peter, Chapter 2, tells about the angels who have sinned. These are not celestial beings because the celestial angels are not creatures of choice. They do not have any temptation to sin.

Second Peter 2:4 says, "For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell [or Tartarus], and delivered them into chains of darkness . . ." When they sinned, they fell from heaven (that position as an emissary of light) down to a position of darkness. What can a person do in darkness? Jesus said, "If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (Matthew 15:14). Someone who is blind is in darkness. There is no greater darkness than having once had light, no greater blindness than having once seen. The people of this era started out with a message of God, but they did not hold to that habitation, or that message. They took on a beastly spirit and led multitudes into darkness. Although they had the name representing a holiness life, they were nothing more than dead men's bones. Keep in mind that I am not speaking against personalities; I am not warring against flesh and blood (Ephesians 6:12), but I am dealing with systems and spirits that have produced those systems.

We read in 2 Peter 2:1-2: "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, [The reason there is a Methodist church and a Wesleyan church today is because someone veered away from the truth and embraced a heresy. Their teachings did not come from God's Word; they came from some man's mind.] even denying the Lord that bought them [not verbally, but as Paul said in Titus 1:16, 'In works they deny him'], and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of."

Verse 4 says, "For if God spared not the angels . . ." referring to the "false prophets" and "false teachers" in verse 1. In verse 12 he said, "But these [fallen angels], as natural brute beasts . . ." So we see that this beast that came up out of the earth was fallen angels out of divine control. They were operating on the natural, brute, beastly level. They began basing their decisions on seemingly good ideas. In Acts, Chapter 1, the Apostles gathered together before they had the Holy Ghost. Since Judas was dead, they decided to take a vote to see who should replace him. Neither one of the men they were considering was ever mentioned again in the Scriptures. Why? God was not in it. They chose Matthias, but God chose Paul. Paul did a whole lot more than Matthias. That is the difference between the divine and the human.

When the people of the Sardinian era laid down that message of truth, they picked up a beast-like spirit. They made an image to the beast and became just like that which they had come out of—the Church of England. The head of the Church of England is the king, or as is the case today, the queen. They came out of that, for they realized that it was not in divine order to have the king as head of the church. Yet, in time they built an image, and today they also have an earthly head. Revelation 9:1 says, "And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit." Verse 11 says, "And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon." They have a king over them, and it is not King Jesus. The word *apollyon* means destroyer. That is what sectism does to truth—it

destroys it. A good example of this is found in Matthew, Chapter 13. When the seed was sown, the fowls of the air came and devoured it. Luke 8:11 tells us, "Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God." Many times when God sows the seed and people become troubled about their spiritual condition, a foul spirit in sectism says, "You do not need to worry about that." When people listen to that spirit, the seed has been plucked up.

The people in this era made an image to the beast, or became just like the first beast. This is why Revelation 13:11 says that this beast had an appearance like a lamb. When you initially look at it, it looks like Christianity, but when it begins to speak, its teachings are like the old dragon. The spirit of unbelief motivates the dragon. How? If you take them to John, Chapter 13, which talks about feet washing, they do not believe it. That is the spirit of unbelief. That same spirit that motivated the dragon is what motivates Protestantism. They quit progressing in truth because they took hold of that dragon spirit, a spirit of unbelief.

The divine call is to come out, because if honest hearts stay down there, Revelation 18:4 says they will become a partaker of her plagues. They will become just like that system. Initially, they may not have the spirit of that system, but if they keep feeding at its trough, they will. They will come to a crisis point where it is time to come out, and if they do not, their spirit will change. They will become as 2 Timothy 3:5 says, "Having a form of godliness . . ." Godliness has a form to it. There is a right way for one to wear the hair and to dress; there is a standard for worldly adornment and on visiting certain places of amusement. Every bit of that is Bible, but to have the form of godliness without God is vain. To have a name that you live and be spiritually dead is vain. Look again at 2 Timothy 3:5. It says, "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." Do not hang around with them; do not feed at their trough because in time you will pick up their spirit.

Sectism is really nothing new. The Jews were sectish. There were Sadducees, Pharisees, Herodians, and many other sects. In Matthew 23:27 Jesus said, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones." Here is a picture of a false holiness spirit, a picture of a people who, because they had the outward appearance right, thought they had holiness. Back up and read verse 26: "Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also." God wants heart purity first. Jesus said to cleanse first the inside. If we are not really careful, that same false holiness that took hold of these people will take hold of you and me today.

Acts 23:3-4 says: "Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, thou whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law? And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high priest?" In Exodus 28:36 God gave Moses the instruction on how to make the vestures for the high priest. He told him to make a miter for the head and on the front of that miter was to be inscribed "HOLINESS TO THE LORD." However, merely having that inscription and having that miter on his head did not make this high priest holy. Paul called him a "whited wall" even though he had holiness on his forehead. Holiness on a garment does not make one holy in heart. Certainly, God desires external holiness, but holiness is two pronged. Second Corinthians 7:1 tells us, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness . . ." If you do not have holiness in flesh *and* spirit, you do not have holiness.

Certainly, God had overcomers in this age. **Revelation 3:5** says, "*He that overcometh . . .*" There were overcomers, but the prevailing condition of the Sardian age was that they went so far in truth and stopped. That ought to strike a little fear in our hearts. Every move in history has done that. Paul described it this way in Galatians 5:7: "Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?" They began preaching a message on perfection and holiness, but they ended up as a fallen people.

The old city of Sardis was literally destroyed by an earthquake. This accurately represents the ending of the fifth-seal age. Revelation 6:12 says, "And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake." At the opening of the sixth seal (1880) more light came on the Word of God, and like an earthquake it shook and destroyed man-made churches and creeds. When that literal earthquake shook old Sardis and sent it down, the only thing left standing of the old Temple of Cybele was two pillars—representing justification and holiness. This is a symbol of the spiritual earthquake taking place in the sixth seal and everything becoming rubble except for the two messages that God had given in the Lutheran and Wesleyan eras. So at the close of the Sardian age, more light was yet to come. When it came it was like an earthquake; it shook and crumbled the great columns and pillars of Protestantism to where everything fell down to an earthen level except those two messages.

In Smyrna, Pergamos, and Thyatira, there are nominal Christians yet today, but in Ephesus and Sardis there are no

known Christians in either one of those cities. How people regard Christ and His stars has a great deal to do with their eternal welfare and the welfare of their children and grandchildren. There is a high price for rejecting the truth. In Revelation 2:1 and Revelation 3:1, Christ appeared to both Ephesus and Sardis as the Christ of the stars, or the Christ of the ministry. These people would not take the message in either one of those cities. Jesus told us in Matthew 10:14-15: "And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city."

God could not work as He wanted in the Wesleyan era. So in 1880, He got hold of another man—Daniel Sidney Warner—and gave him a message of truth. Thus, the delineation of time, where the Sardian age stopped and the Philadelphian age began, was A.D. 1880.

THE PHILADELPHIAN AGE (A.D. 1880 - 1930)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Time Frame for the Philadelphian Letter

This is the sixth of the seven letters that make up the second and third chapters of the Book of Revelation. This letter, which was given **"to the angel"** or the pastor of the congregation **"in Philadelphia,"** represents the sixth period of the Gospel Day, the sixth candlestick age from A.D. 1880 to A.D. 1930.

It was in 1880 that the two witnesses—the Word and the Spirit—arose from the dead, stood to their feet, and took their rightful position as the vicars of the church of the Living God, for that was when Daniel Sidney Warner publicly proclaimed, both through preaching and publication, the message of the unity of the faith. In an article called *Prophetic Times*, D. S. Warner wrote: "At the end of the three days and a half, three hundred and fifty years [which added to A.D. 1530 brings us to the year A.D. 1880], the 'Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet' [Revelation 11:11]. This brings us to the present reformation." These were D. S. Warner's own words as he began to expose the errors of sectism and division. He began to lay forth the truth that God's desire was for all people to be gathered together in the unity of the faith, in one visible body of believers. God is against division and sectarian splits. God's desire is for His people to be in unity and harmony. Mark 4:28 teaches us that truth has three portions: "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." The Lutheran era had "the blade," the message on justification. The Wesleyan era had "the ear," with truth concerning holiness. However, Brother Warner had "the full corn in the ear" when all the kernels were together and fruitful in one ear. He understood the message concerning the church.

D. S. Warner was raised as the son of a saloon keeper in Wayne County, Ohio. He had poor health most of his life. He had a lung condition and most of the time his preaching was not much louder than a whisper. Yet, he labored with that condition faithfully, preaching all over the country until the day he died, at a young age of fifty-three. D. S. Warner was in the Winebrennarian Church of God, a sectarian body that has its college in Findlay, Ohio, yet today. He became very disturbed with the Winebrennarians. Though he felt they had a biblical name, he found that their practices, their manner, and methods of operation were sectarian, not biblical. As he was hungering and thirsting after righteousness, God saw his honesty and began to break the light of truth and give him understanding. The message concerning the one visible body of Christ and all believers dwelling together in unity had been lost and obscured from public view since the morning-time apostasy. An apostasy has devastating effects, lasting for generations and generations. When people begin

taking nonchalant attitudes toward God's Word and quit revering truth as precious, truth is on the way out.

In Revelation 8:8 when that mountain burning with fire (picturing a morning-time church) was cast into the sea, it was a goodly number of years (from 270 to 1880) before the message was restored again concerning the Church of God. This truth is priceless and precious. We read in Matthew 13:45-46: "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it." The "one pearl of great price" was the precious message concerning the church and the great price Jesus paid by giving His life for the church.

A literal pearl is formed when a mollusk or an oyster gets an irritating object, such as a granule of sand, in its shell. A pearl is produced at the supreme discomfort of its possessor. That irritating substance causes the oyster to secrete a nacreous fluid, and as the friction continues, that fluid becomes a hardened pearl. The church was produced at the supreme discomfort of its possessor, Jesus Christ. He said, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). The church was produced at a great price. Jesus purchased it with His own blood (Acts 20:28). That nacreous fluid producing a pearl is a picture of the Holy Spirit coming down on the Day of Pentecost, that day when the New Jerusalem came down from God out of Heaven. That is when that pearl, the glorious Church of God, was formed.

A pearl is an organic substance. It is not a gem like a ruby or a topaz; it is not of the earth. It is produced by something living. Also, the church is an organism; it is the body of Christ, and it is produced by Someone living—Jesus Christ. All other stones and jewels, such as diamonds and rubies, are cut by men, but pearls are untouched by man. Just as they are very delicate, the church is a very delicate organism. It cannot operate in every kind of environment. If you put pearls in a box and leave them there, they will lose their luster. The only way a pearl can keep its luster is to be put on. If the church is going to shine, we are going to have to put on the truth and keep it on.

Physical Characteristics of Philadelphia

Let us begin to examine the city of Philadelphia. **Revelation 3:7** says, "**And to the angel of the church** [the Greek says '*congregation*'] **in Philadelphia . . .**" "**Philadelphia**" is located twenty-eight miles southeast of Sardis. The seven cities referred to in these letters began with Ephesus in the morning time. Then we saw a picture of an apostasy, and we moved west and north to Smyrna. Then we moved to Pergamos, the darkest and farthest point from the light, for a total of one hundred miles northwest (west being away from the source of light, and north being away from the source of heat). After that, God gave a gradual restoration of truth. First came the Lutheran era (the Thyatiran age) and then the Wesleyan era (the Sardian age). Now we are down to the Warner era (the Philadelphian age). We went away from light a total of one hundred miles, and now we have come back one hundred and four miles.

"**Philadelphia**" has brought us around the semicircle, and we are farther back now than where we began in the morning time. Thus, the sixth-seal brethren had greater light than the light of the morning. Paul could not preach and give explicit detail on the beast and its image, but D. S. Warner, H. M. Riggle, and other sixth-seal brethren could. Paul had enough insight of prophesy to know the man of sin was coming (2 Thessalonians 2:3) and that after his departure grievous wolves would enter in (Acts 20:29), but he did not know all the details. God has shown light on these conditions down through the previous portions of the Gospel Day. Thus, the light of the evening is greater than the light of the morning.

Notice the difference between "**Philadelphia**" and Ephesus. "**Philadelphia**" is much farther east, which means closer to the source of light, and moving south from Sardis is moving toward the source of warmth and heat. "**Philadelphia**" was covered with deep, black, rich soil. This is the first we have heard of this since Ephesus. This rich soil represents the first fertile ground for truth since the morning time. Matthew 13:23 tells us, "But he that received seed [Luke 8:11 tells us the seed is the Word of God] into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty." God's will is for everyone to bring forth a hundredfold. He would have liked to have given the people of the Lutheran and Wesleyan ages hundredfold truth, but they would not walk in it. So their fold of fruitfulness stopped when they stopped their progress with light.

"**Philadelphia**" was built on the side of a mountain. This represents a spiritual ascent during this era. People were now coming out of the mingled hills of Babylon, coming out of the sectarian organizations, and coming back up to Mount

Zion. Powerful people are produced by a powerful message and a powerful man behind it. These sixth-seal brethren did a great work.

D. S. Warner and the saints would go into a town with a buckboard wagon. They would travel in caravans, and all the singers, the instrument players, and the preacher would ride in the same wagon. When they reached the edge of town, someone would start singing. They would sing all the way through town, and people would ask, "Who are these people?" By the time they got to the end of town, they had many people following them. Then, one of the brethren would take a Bible, stand up on the old buckboard, and start preaching. Often somebody's heart in the audience would be touched, and they would say, "I have a building where you can hold your meeting." That is how congregation after congregation was started. If the message was not received, they would shake the dust off their feet and say, "Truth is too precious and men of God are too scarce to waste time here." Then they would go on.

Hebrews 12:25-28 tells us: "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven: Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved . . ." God is going to have a kingdom that cannot be shaken or moved. Again, verse 27 says, "Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made . . ." Those things that are man-made, those things that are not of God, God is going to shake them out. People must either turn loose of them, or they will go out with them. Either way, those things are not going to be in the kingdom.

When God loosed this evening-time message concerning the church, there were those who, up until then, were holiness brethren. However, when God started trying to shake them loose from their sectarian ideas and their sectarian organizations, they would not let go. Thus, not only were those organizations shaken and removed, but those people were shaken and removed along with it.

The Philadelphian Era Began With an Earthquake

The city of Sardis was destroyed by an earthquake, and the Sardinian age (1730-1880) was also destroyed by an earthquake. Revelation 6:12 speaks of this earthquake, saying, "And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal [the sixth seal is the same period as the sixth letter], and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black [meaning the light, or the New Testament truth, that was within them became darkness] as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood [in other words, they became guilty of the blood of Jesus Christ, just as old Israel did when they refused truth]." Whenever God's Spirit starts moving in and shaking things up, people are going to either take the truth or end up with darkness. This is exactly what happened to the Wesleyan era. At one time the people of the Wesleyan era had light: they had a bright message on holiness, on sinless perfection. However, when God sent the earthquake and started showing them that He was in control and that there was more truth than just the message on holiness, they would not accept that light, and the sun became black. It became dark, and they became guilty of blood. Light brings a tremendous responsibility.

The sun becomes black when people hear truth and walk away from it. There is no greater darkness than having once had light. God only gives light for one reason: to walk in. Truth must be kept up to date or it will grow stale and people will fall by the wayside like every movement in the past. That is where the grave danger lies. People become so familiar and so comfortable with truth that they do not realize there is a great challenge to meet in order to keep the truth.

A literal earthquake upsets things, turns things upside down, and buildings crumble. Spiritually, when things are shaken up and rearranged, it is a symbolic representation of the moving of the power of God. We can read of this in Acts 4:31. It says, "And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness." This shaking is a picture of the power of God moving on the scene. It was a witness to those who had power with God, to those who could pray and move God. In the sixth seal, an earthquake was caused by D. S. Warner and the brethren when they went forth heralding the message concerning the unity of the body of Christ, the unity of the faith, and the message of a visible, working church.

In Acts 16:25-26 we see a picture of a literal earthquake. It says: "And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of

the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed." God revealed who it was that had power with Him and whose prayers He heard. The end of that Scripture says, "And immediately all the doors were opened." If you will turn back to **Revelation 3:7**, you will find that is the same way Christ portrayed Himself to this Philadelphian age. He appeared as **"he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth."** Verse 8 says, **"I have set before thee an open door . . ."** The earthquake opened the door and let the message out to show the world who the men of God were, who had power with God, who had the message and the anointing of God. In Revelation, this earthquake was not a literal earthquake, but it was a figurative expression showing who had the anointing of God and who could move God to do a great and marvelous work.

There are three earthquakes recorded in the Revelation: one in the morning time in A.D. 33; one in A.D. 1880 in the sixth seal; and there is to be one in the seventh seal in which you and I live today. If God's people are ever going to see greater things accomplished, they are going to have to allow God to upset things a little. Sometimes it may take a preacher to upset people to get their attention. This earthquake that took place in the sixth seal did not come on the literal earth, but it came through the ministry, through sons of thunder who thundered forth God's eternal Word.

Let us look at the three earthquakes. In Revelation 8:5 we read, "And the angel [Christ] took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar [the Spirit of Christ], and cast it into [not *on*, but *into*] the earth [Acts, Chapter 2, tells how cloven tongues of fire came down and filled each of them with the Holy Ghost]: and there were voices [they came out of the Upper Room and spoke as the Spirit gave them utterance], and thunderings [when they heralded forth those voices, there was thundering forth of some truth; they heard the Word of God], and lightnings, and an earthquake." When honest people hear the Word of God, their understanding is going to be enlightened, and when that happens, there will be an earthquake.

Notice the lack of adjectives used in Revelation 8:5 describing the morning-time earthquake. It merely says "*an* earthquake." Yet, Revelation 6:12, speaking of the next earthquake in the sixth seal, says, "And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal [1880], and, lo, there was a *great* earthquake." We go from simply "*an* earthquake" to a "*great* earthquake." Why is this? It is because of greater light and understanding. Now, speaking of the seventh seal, Revelation 16:18 says, "And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great." That tells us that the seventh-seal message is to be stronger, the thundering is to be louder, and the light is to be greater than has ever been shown. This earthquake will move and do more than has ever been done in human history.

The True and Holy Christ

Revelation 3:7 tells us, **"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true . . ."** That word "*true*" means *genuine* in the actual Greek. The Apostle Paul talked about there being another Jesus, another spirit, and another gospel (2 Corinthians 11:4). There are a lot of counterfeits, a lot of false Christs, in false religion. Every sectarian body has their own Jesus, but in Revelation 1:13-16 we see the genuine Jesus. This is not some man's conception of what Jesus is, this is the Christ who is stirred with wrong and evil.

The very first thing Christ did in this letter was to identify Himself "*to the angel*" (the Greek word is *aggelos*, which means messenger, minister, or pastor of the congregation) "*in Philadelphia*." He said, **"These things saith he that is holy."** Where the genuine Christ is allowed to work, you will find holiness and a "*holy*" people. He will only be in the midst of "*holy*" people because He is genuine. Too many have a vision of Jesus Christ as a gentle Man who walked the shores of Galilee. However, we need to see Him as the one whose eyes are as flames of fire, who had a sharp two-edged sword coming out of His mouth, whose feet were as fine brass, and whose hair was white as wool (Revelation 1:13-16).

This is the Christ who does not pat everything, everybody, and every organization on the back. This is the Christ who is stirred with wrong; He is especially stirred with *religious* wrong. In this Philadelphian era, there were some brethren who called sin *sin*, and one of the sins that they strongly denounced was the sin of religion. They heralded the truth concerning the sin of division. Every sectarian organization was prompted by the sin of division.

Revelation 3:8 says, **"I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength,** [No man did shut the door from 1880 to 1930. For those fifty years, God set before them (the Church of God or what is known today as the Anderson Movement) '*an open door*.' They arose and awoke the world

with their message. They were a great power for God. They went around the globe with the message, yet they fell after only fifty years.] **and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name."**

Verse 9 says, "**Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie;** [Romans 2:28-29 tells us what the measure of a Jew is today: 'For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit . . .'] The Apostle Paul was saying that those who *say* they have the experience but do not, do not belong to God's church but to '*the synagogue of Satan.*' You are either in one or the other. That is quite fine, but that is right where Jesus put it. Many religions say they are close to the Church of God, but there is nothing close. She is the only one of her mother (Song of Solomon 6:9).] **behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee."** To ever get help, those in spiritual Babylon are going to have to own up to the fact that their system is merely a religion, and that they need to come where the truth is sounded forth. They are going to have to humble down and worship or be willing to leave the stiffness of religion, get down at their brother's feet, take biblical truth, and be true disciples (John 13:4-16). In other words, they must own up to the fact that the message of the Church of God is the message of truth.

What was this powerful message that God used to bring such an earthquake that Protestantism (or Sardis) was destroyed? In **Revelation 3:8** Jesus said, "**I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it:** [Why did He set before them an open door? Look at the message they had.] **for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name."** The message entrusted to the brethren in Warner's era, which God considered so vital, was the message concerning the truth of the church. Jesus said, "**Thou . . . hast not denied my name"** (verse 8). *Jesus* was His given name; His family name was *God*. Revelation 2:18 says, "These things saith the Son of God . . ." What was His name? Son of God.

John 1:1 reads, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Verse 14 says, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." Who is this only begotten of the Father who brought grace and truth? Verse 17 tells us, "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." Who was the Word that verse 1 says was God? It was Jesus Christ. His name is Jesus Christ God. He is eternal; He is everlasting; He was in existence in the beginning, long before His incarnation. Jesus said in John 17:5, "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." Christ was God before the world was created. He is second in the Triune Godhead: God the Son.

Verse 24 says, "Father . . . thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." Christ was preexistent. In Micah's prophecy, we find that Christ is not only everlasting in the future, but from everlasting past. Micah 5:2 says, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." Although Christ was the Word from the beginning or in eternity past, He was not Jesus. Jesus was the physical form that He took on, and it was the name that was given. We read in Isaiah 9:6, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given . . ." There is a distinction between the child (the physical form) who was born and the eternal, everlasting Son given by God from Heaven.

The angel, speaking in Matthew 1:21, said, "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS [which means *Jehovah salvation*]: for he shall save his people from their sins." When the Son took on an earthly body, His given name was Jesus. As with all Hebrew names, it had a portrayal of His nature, His characteristics, and His traits. His name portrayed the work He came to do. He came to be Jehovah's salvation to mankind. The word *Christ* portrays His office. The word *Christos* in the Greek is the same word as the Hebrew *Messiah*, both meaning "the anointed one." Luke 4:17-18 states: "And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias [this is the Greek spelling for the Hebrew word *Isaiah*]. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written [Isaiah 61:1], The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel . . ."

Jesus was His given name, Christ (the anointed One) was His office, but God was His family name. He is Jesus Christ God, the Son of God, and the Word, which was God. When He said in **Revelation 3:8**, "**Thou . . . hast not denied my name,"** He was not talking about the name *Jesus* or the name *Christ*, but He was talking about the "**name**" *God*. Notice how He introduced Himself in Revelation 2:18. He said, "And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God . . ." He identified Himself by the family name—God. In **Revelation 3:12** Jesus made it plain. He said, "**Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out:**

and I will write upon him *the name of my God*, and the name of the city of *my God*, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from *my God*: and I will write upon him my new name." The emphasis is on "*God*." Therefore, the message the Philadelphian era brethren had was the message concerning the name of the church—the Church of God.

The New Jerusalem

In verse 12 Jesus plainly told us, "*The name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem*," but what is the "*new Jerusalem*"? Keep in mind that we are dealing in figures. Hebrews 12:22-23 states: "But ye are [present tense] come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn . . ." Revelation speaks of "*the city of my God*," and in Hebrews we read of "the city of the living God." Revelation speaks of the "*new Jerusalem*," and Hebrews says, "the heavenly Jerusalem." All these are figurative expressions concerning the church. Different figures such as "mount Zion" and "the heavenly Jerusalem" are employed because each figure portrays another divine attribute of the church. Ephesians 4:5 tells us that there is only "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." There is only one Christ in the true sense, yet we call Him Shepherd, Lord, Savior, and Redeemer. Each title portrays various facets of His divinity. It is the same with the church. These various figures—Mount Zion, city of the living God, heavenly Jerusalem, an innumerable company of angels—portray a different attribute concerning the church, but they are all speaking of the church of the firstborn.

To know what is the church of the firstborn, first, we need to know who is the firstborn. Romans 8:29 tells us, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed [or the Greek says '*to be made copies*'] to the image of his Son, that he [the Son] might be the firstborn among many brethren." So we see that the Firstborn is the Son—Jesus Christ. Now, what is the church that the Firstborn purchased by His blood? Acts 20:28 tells us, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed *the church of God*, which he hath purchased with his own blood." The church that the Firstborn purchased is the Church of God, the new Jerusalem.

Revelation 3:12 speaks of the "*new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God*." Also, in Revelation 21:1-2 we read of the "*new Jerusalem*" coming down "*out of heaven from . . . God*." Verse 1 says, "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away." Here is a picture of the experience of conversion. You can read of it throughout the Book of Acts. In the past, people held things in exalted positions in their minds (that is what the word *heaven* here is typifying), and they had their earthen vessels following those old ways. However, when truth came, the first heaven and the first earth passed away. The old man, that old body of sin (Romans 6:6), that one who lived on the earthen level, was crucified with Christ and has become a new creature in Christ Jesus. They took on new priorities and things were lifted up in accordance with God's Word.

Verse 2 says, "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven . . ." This happened in Acts, Chapter 2. There was a new heaven and a new earth. The people in that upper room had old ways of doing things, but when the Holy Ghost came down from God out of Heaven, those same men who were barred up in the room for fear of the Jews, said, "Open the door. We are going out." They went out into the streets of the same city, right into the midst of the same mob who crucified the Lord fifty days earlier. Peter stood and said, "Ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23). Peter was a changed man—the first earth was passed away. He was the same Peter who had a sword ready in the garden, the same Peter who crouched in fear and denied and cursed and lied before he had the Holy Ghost, but when he became a new creature, when the first heaven and earth passed away, he came out of that upper room preaching with boldness.

The "*new Jerusalem*" came down "*out of heaven from . . . God*." Acts 2:1-4 says: "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost. . ." When the Holy Ghost filled them, there was a *new heaven* and a *new earth*; they were now new creatures in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:6). This "*new Jerusalem*" is symbolic of the church.

The Bible Name of the Church

In **Revelation 3:12** there is a great emphasis placed on the name. It says, "**Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.**" The Bible name of the church is "**the name of my God**"—the Church of God. When it comes to ownership, control, and inheritance, the "**name**" is very important! The "**name**" of the church establishes its ownership, its origin, and whom the proprietor and operator is. It also portrays its nature and its character. Jesus prayed in John 17:11-12: "And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, [How? In the Father's name. The Church of God is the one that holds the truth. Ephesians 4:4 says that there is *one* body.] as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name." God's people take God's name.

Ephesians 3:14-15 says: "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." The Father is God, and the family is in the name of the Father. We read in Acts 20:28, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." The Bible name of the church is the Church of God. God runs the true church, therefore, His name is on it.

In 1 Corinthians 1:1-2 we read: "Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, Unto the *church of God* which is at Corinth . . ." Second Corinthians 1:1 says, "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the *church of God* which is at Corinth . . ." The Apostle Paul said in Galatians 1:13, "For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the *church of God*, and wasted it." Why did he not persecute some of these other organizations? There were none back in his day. It was just Church of God or synagogue of Satan. The message that D. S. Warner and the other sixth-seal brethren had was strong. They preached to people in sectism, telling them that they were in Babylon and it was sin. They taught that Babylon was founded on division, sin, and error. It is a synagogue of Satan motivated by seducing spirits that teach doctrines of devils. The sixth-seal message was "come out of her my people" (Revelation 18:4). Anything short of that message was considered compromise.

The Bible uses many figures to speak of the Church of God. In **Revelation 3:12** Jesus employed the phrase "**the temple of my God.**" In the Old Testament, a temple was a great edifice or building, but let us see what the Bible calls this New Testament "**temple of my God.**" In 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 Paul wrote: "Know ye not that ye [people] are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." Paul said that the temple of God is *people*. Again, 1 Corinthians 1:2 tells us he was addressing "the *church of God* which is at Corinth." Thus, the temple of God is the Church of God—not an individual but a gathering of people.

Second Corinthians 6:16 says, "And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said [Paul was quoting Leviticus 26:12], I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." When he said, "Ye are the temple of God," whom was he addressing? Second Corinthians tells us it was "unto the *church of God.*" We read in Ephesians 2:19-22: "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets [the foundation is not the apostles and prophets, but you are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets], Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building [here we have gone from 'the household of God' in verse 19 to a 'building' in verse 21] fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple [now we find out that the *building* is the temple] in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

The temple represents people who have gained an experience, people whom the Spirit inhabits. The Spirit brings the members together, by the power of God through the Word of God, as a habitation of the Spirit. The church of the Living God is a spiritual temple. According to verse 19, the temple is "the household of God." Let us look at what the household, or the house of God is. First Timothy 3:15 reads, "But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God . . ." The house, the building, and the temple are all interchangeable terms for the same thing—the church.

"Come Out of Her, My People"

Another part of the Philadelphian message is found in **verse 12**, which states, "**Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out . . .**" In the periods of the past, after receiving the truth, people always ended up by going into sectism, a system of man. However, if they would heed this truth, continue to be an overcomer, and hold fast to God's Word, they need never be in sectarian bondage again. They could remain free. There was no truth in the era of sectism that kept people from going "**no more out**" because they were in man-made systems that they needed to *come out* of.

Let us look at what is called the reformation message, or more appropriately the restoration message, by reading some of the Scriptures the sixth-seal brethren used to enlighten people. Ezekiel 11:17 says, "Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel." Here is a prophetic truth the brethren received understanding of: just as literal Israel was scattered in Babylonian captivity, God's people were scattered through the dark night of Romanism and the cloudy day of Protestantism. However, through this evening-time message concerning the church, God gathered a people out from those systems, those countries or nations (we could say *denominations*) and brought them back to the land of Israel, Mount Zion, the new Jerusalem, the church of the Living God, where they could be fed spiritually.

Ezekiel 34:11-13 tells us: "For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out [He is doing that yet today]. As a shepherd [John 10:14 tells us the Shepherd is Jesus] seeketh out his flock [Acts 20:28 tells us the flock is the Church of God] in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country."

Here we have a picture in prophetic language of Christ as the Shepherd seeking out His flock or members of the church who have been scattered. In verse 12 He said, "So will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day." The cloudy day was part dark and part light, representing Protestantism. The dark day is Roman Catholicism. In this era, Christ was seeking to bring people out of false systems that were not based on truth.

When verse 13 says "bring them to their own land," it is referring to "the mountains of Israel." We know that this is a spiritual meaning when we read what the flock on this mountain was fed. Verse 16 says, "I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with *judgment*." As one does not feed literal sheep with judgment, then this is a spiritual picture. Ezekiel was not speaking of a literal day, of literal sheep, or of a literal mountain, but he was speaking of a spiritual condition, a time when God would turn His judgment loose so that people could be fed the truth instead of the teachings of men.

Let us find out where this judgment is. First Peter 4:17 says, "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God [or the Church of God]." So, this place where people are going to be fed judgment is the Church of God. This is what the brethren were declaring. When Ezekiel said, "And gather them from the countries" (Ezekiel 34:13), he was talking about the same thing Christ spoke of in Revelation 2:26, when He said, "And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations." The countries or nations are various sectarian denominations, and God is calling His people out of those systems.

Ezekiel 34:23 says, "And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David." Who is this servant David? Matthew 1:1 tells us, "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David . . ." The word *David* in the Hebrew actually means "*beloved*." More than once God said, "This is my beloved" (Matthew 17:5), or in other words, "This is My David, hear Him [speaking of Christ]."

In Jeremiah 23:3-4 God said: "And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the LORD." Again, here is a prophetic expression of our day, of God calling His people out of countries (denominations) and setting up shepherds (pastors) to feed them, as Jeremiah 3:15 says, "with knowledge and understanding."

In John 10:16 Jesus said, "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall

hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd." This message of *one fold* and *one shepherd* was lost through the dark and cloudy day. There became many folds and many shepherds. Nevertheless, in the evening of time, a message of truth—one church, one shepherd, one fold—was restored. We read in Revelation 18:4, "And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." The message that the brethren had was, "Come out of that north country."

Jeremiah 31:6 reads, "For there shall be a day [that day had been lost throughout the dark and cloudy day, but in this sixth period of the Gospel Day there came a day], that the watchmen upon the mount Ephraim shall cry [God got hold of a ministry who could preach the truth, and the cry was], Arise ye, and let us go up to Zion unto the LORD our God." That is where God is—in Zion. Revelation 14:1 says that "a Lamb stood on the mount Sion." God is in Zion, the Lamb is in Zion, and that is why He wants His people in Zion. He is not down in Babylon.

Jeremiah 31:7-8 goes on to say: "For thus saith the LORD; Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations: publish ye, praise ye, and say, O LORD, save *thy* people, the remnant of Israel. Behold, I [God] will bring them from the north country [that cold place—Roman Catholicism], and gather them from the coasts of the earth [Protestantism], and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together: a great company shall return thither [speaking of the evening time]."

We need to understand how damaging false religion is. Revelation 18:4 says to "come out of her, my people." Jeremiah cried, "Save thy people." God actually has people down in Babylon who are saved. However, the message is to come out "that ye be not partakers of her sins, that ye receive not of her plagues" (Revelation 18:4). When people stay in false religion, they become what they eat spiritually. People who sit under a ministry that has bad spirits eventually pick up those spirits. In Jeremiah 51:6 the cry was, "Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul: be not cut off in her iniquity." If people stay in it, they will become just like it. This is why the cry was, "Flee, run for your life!"

Come Into the Unity of the Faith

Ephesians 4:5 says that there is "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." Verse 13 says, "Till we all come in the unity of the faith . . ." God not only wants His people to come out of Babylon, but He wants them to come into the unity. Too many people will come into a Church of God congregation bodily, sit, and hear the message, but spiritually they have never come out of Babylon; they have never come into the faith. That is why they do not stay. The message of these sixth-seal brethren was "he brought us out . . . that he might bring us in" (Deuteronomy 6:23). This message was the message of the one body. Ephesians 4:4 tells us "there is *one* body," and verse 5 says, "*one* faith." It is all exclusive. God's people need to lay everything else down and, as verse 13 says, "come in the unity."

God's people were scattered through the dark and cloudy day. It was a terrible time, but there came a day when light broke and understanding came. Until that light came, God worked through men who were walking in all the light they saw. When the trumpet sounded, the dark and cloudy day was broken and the evening brought light. In Joel 2:1-2 we read: "Blow ye the trumpet [the trumpet is an alarm to awaken people] in Zion [the church], and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand; A day of darkness and of gloominess [speaking of the Dark Ages and the cloudy day], a day of clouds [the cloudy day] and of thick darkness [the Dark Ages], as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations."

Today, God is heralding the call of Revelation 18:2, which states, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen." Notice the words that the writer employed, "Babylon *is* fallen." That is not correct grammar. If you are dealing in tenses, it should be, "Babylon *has* fallen" (past tense) or "Babylon *is falling*" (present tense). However, he mixes two tenses: "Babylon *is* (present tense) fallen (past tense)." She already fell, but she continues to sink lower and lower. This is why she is referred to as a bottomless pit condition (Revelation 11:7). Babylon is nothing more than man's organizations. There is nothing divine about her; she is on the same level as fallen, unregenerate man.

How do we know that Catholicism and Protestantism are Babylon? In Genesis, Chapter 11, we see another picture of the Gospel Day. Verses 1-3 read: "And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech [a picture of the original morning-time unity]. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east [in other words, they moved away from the light, a picture of the apostasy], that they found a plain [they moved from a high place to a low place; that is

always the result of an apostasy] in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. And they said one to another [if you come down off that high mountain where God rules, then you begin to use human reasoning, concocting and devising things yourself], Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, [Only God can make stone; brick is man-made. The stone is Jesus Christ. This is a picture of what an apostasy brings. They made man-made things instead of doing what God had ordained.] and slime had they for mortar." *Slime* portrays the spirits that motivated and produced these systems.

Verse 4 says, "And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; [They wanted to get to Heaven their own way, and that is what Babylon is doing yet today. They use church membership, card signing, hand shaking, baby christening, confirmation classes, catechisms, and many other ways, trying to get to Heaven other than God's way.] and let us make us a name, [They will not take God's name—Church of God—any more. Now it is Lutheran and Wesleyan and many others.] lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth."

Verses 5-8 say: "And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do [when they are all together, it is a type of Roman Catholicism, a picture of the Dark Ages, when there was only one institution]. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the LORD scattered them . . ." The people speaking different languages is a type of different, sectarian organizations (Protestantism). When the people built the Tower of Babel, they were manufacturing something of their own design just as spiritual Babylon does. They used *their* materials, trying to get to God's Heaven through their organization. The Philadelphian message was, "Come out of Babylon and come into the unity of the faith." The message these brethren had was the message of the Church of God. The following is an excerpt from one of D. S. Warner's messages:

"Sectarianism is the greatest foe to the exhibition of love that God has ever suffered Satan to beget. It hinders brotherly love among Christians, and regard for the souls of men. It is vain for brethren in Christ to talk about the duty of loving one another, and to try to feel love for one another, while they refuse to act as love dictates by separating into parties. Can it be said of professors of holiness that they have one heart and one mind while some have a mind to be Presbyterians; others, Baptists; and others, United Brethren?"

"**Philadelphia**" is a Greek word that means "*brotherly love*." This era showed that true brotherly love yearns for unity. Through the message of the one true church and through the precious evening light shining, it showed that the church was restored. In the morning time, they turned away from Zion. The mountain burning with fire (Revelation 8:8) was cast into the sea, and there was a morning-time apostasy. However, in the evening time, Isaiah 35:10 says, "And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Zechariah 14:7 says, "But it shall be one day which shall be known to the LORD, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light." Truth was being restored, not only the messages of the previous eras—justification and holiness—but the truth of the one true flock, the Church of God. This is the truth that Solomon prophesied of in Song of Solomon 6:9, which says, "My dove, my undefiled is but *one*; she is the only *one* of her mother, she is the choice *one* of her that bare her [*her*' is singular not plural]. The daughters saw *her*, and blessed *her*; yea, the queens and the concubines, and they praised *her*." Here is the picture of the exclusiveness of the church.

Songs Portray the Sixth-Seal Message

This letter to the Philadelphian age is one of only two letters where no charge was made against them. In every one of the other letters except Smyrna, Christ laid a fault to them. One reason that He laid no charge to the Philadelphian brethren was because they faced such opposition in proclaiming this precious message. When the message was heralded, the door was opened. We can see through their songs a portrayal of their message. The song *The Reformation Glory*, written by C. W. Naylor and A. L. Byers, says:

There's a mighty reformation sweeping o'er the land, God is gathering his people by his mighty hand; For the cloudy day is ending and the evening sun is bright, With a shout of joy we hail the light. When the voice from heaven sounded, warning all to flee From the darksome courts of Babel back to Zion free; Glad my heart to hear

the message, and I hastened to obey, And I'm standing in the truth today. Zion's walls again are building as in days of yore, And the scattered hosts returning to their land once more Are rejoicing in their freedom, pledging evermore to stand In the reformation truths so grand. Christians all should dwell together in the bonds of peace, All the clashing of opinions, all the strife should cease; Let divisions be forsaken, all the holy join in one, And the will of God in all be done. Oh, the reformation glory! Let it shine to ev'ry land: We will tell the blessed story; In its truth we e'er shall stand.

These preachers took one through the whole message in a song. Another song, *Light Breaks at Last*, written by D. O. Teasley, says:

In the morning of grace, when the Sun first arose, And the gospel divine put to flight all its foes, The nations rejoiced, but forsook it so soon, For the Sun in his strength was darkened at noon. Long years have we dwelt in confusion and strife, And groped where contention and error were rife; But now we have found what we sought for so long, That the people of God unite in one throng. Behold, now we see by the evening's fair light, As it gleams from mount Zion in radiance bright, That the mist of confusion is passing away, As the darkness recedes at breaking of day. We have found it at last, the one holy flock, 'Tis the church of the Lord, and it stands on the rock; Spread the news far and wide, till it reaches each shore, That the Sun in his strength shall shine evermore. Light breaks at last! Hallelujah to God! Darkness is past, let us shout it aloud: From the mountains and hills let us gather the few Who will stand for the right and dare to be true.

Yet another song, *The Church's Jubilee* written by C. W. Naylor and A. L. Byers, says:

The light of eventide now shines the darkness to dispel, The glories of fair Zion's state ten thousand voices tell; For out of Babel God doth call his scattered saints in one, Together all one church compose, the body of his Son. The Bible is our rule of faith and Christ alone is Lord, All we are equal in his sight when we obey his word; No earthly master do we know, to man rule will not bow, But to each other and to God eternal trueness vow. The day of sects and creeds for us forevermore is past, Our brotherhood are all the saints upon the world so vast; We reach our hands in fellowship to ev'ry blood-washed one, While love entwines about each heart in which God's will is done. Oh, blessed truth that broke our bands! in it we now rejoice, While in the holy church of God we hear our Savior's voice; And gladly to his blessed will submissive we shall be, And from the yokes of Babel's lords from henceforth we are free. O church of God, the day of jubilee Has dawned so bright and glorious for thee: Rejoice, be glad! thy Shepherd has begun His long divided flock again to gather into one.

The Church Triumphant, written by Daniel S. Warner and Barney E. Warren in 1893, says:

Men speak of a "church triumphant" As something on earth unknown, They think us beneath the tyrant Until we shall reach our home. O cannot the great Redeemer Prevail over Satan here? Or must we remain yet under Confusion, pressed down in fear? He built on a sure foundation, And said that the gates of hell Against her divine munition Can never indeed prevail. 'Tis not in the church of Jesus That people yet live in sin; But in the dark creeds they're joining, And vainly are trusting in. God's church is alone triumphant, In holiness all complete; And all the dark pow'rs of Satan She tramples beneath her feet. Thank God for a church triumphant, All pure in this world below! For the kingdom that Jesus founded Does triumph o'er every foe.

The message was unity, the oneness of believers, and freedom from sectism. Look at the words of the song *O Church of God* written by Charles W. Naylor and Andrew L. Byers:

The church of God one body is, One Spirit dwells within; And all her members are redeemed, And triumph over sin. Divinely built, divinely ruled, To God she doth submit; His will her law, his truth her guide, Her path is glory lit. God sets her members each in place, According to his will—Apostles, prophets, teachers, all, His purpose to fulfill. Salvation is her holy walls, The cross her sign of pow'r; Her captain is the mighty God, Who

guards her every hour. In beauty stand, O Church of God, With righteousness arrayed; Put on thy strength and face thy foes With courage undismayed. O Church of God! I love thy courts, Thou mother of the free; Thou blessed home of all the saved, I dwell content in thee.

Evening Apostasy

This period ended in 1930. By then, the people, who had so faithfully contended for the faith of the Gospel, slipped from being ruled by God to being ruled by man. Its general assemblies and meetings gave way to an earthly headquarters, and men began to take the place of the Holy Spirit, pointing out who was to preach and what subjects they were to preach on. Rules and bylaws were adopted to govern this democratic body or assembly. No one was given a part who was not in sympathy with such a movement. The ministers who stood for the practices set forth by D. S. Warner and the others were left out of the program and branded old-fashioned and division makers. H. M. Riggle, one of the greatest men of the sixth-seal era, lived to see this happen. When he tried to speak in a minister's meeting and tell them they were veering off the path, they rudely told him, in so many words, "Old man, sit down and shut up."

W. F. Chappell from Kentucky was one of the old pioneer preachers. He was straightlaced but loved by many. He came to the Winchester State Camp Meeting in Kentucky, and the people kept pressuring the brethren in charge, asking, "When is Brother Chappell going to preach?" However, the ministers were afraid to turn W. F. Chappell loose because he would burn them up. The pressure became so great that finally, toward the end of the camp meeting, they called on W. F. Chappell to pray. He began to pray, and two hours and fifteen minutes later, he said, "Amen." By then, the altars and the front seats were lined with people; people were bowing in prayer all over the tabernacle. Every preacher in the building was gone. In prayer, W. F. Chappell still preached a message. The preachers could not take it, and they disappeared. Yet, the saints still took the truth and humbled themselves. Men like W. F. Chappell were set aside. They did not get too many calls to preach because they stirred and upset things.

Anderson, Indiana, became the headquarters of the sixth-seal brethren. Now they mail the messages a month or two ahead to all the pastors. If a minister is on vacation, he can visit another congregation and not miss a lesson in a series. He can hear the same thing that he would have preached in his home congregation. There is no Holy Ghost in that! The spiritual needs in one place may not be the same as the needs in another place that same week.

God had to set His hand again and get a second remnant (Isaiah 11:11). Even in their own magazine, we can see the change. The centennial issue (1980) of *Vital Christianity* says, "When C. E. Brown came on the scene as editor-in-chief in the early 1930's, another very important transition occurred. Brown did some *reinterpreting* of the significance of the movement that helped many to see the movement in the light of the sweep of church history. He also brought a new measure of *democracy* and scholarship to the editorial office." So we find that there was another fall, another apostasy, and the seventh-seal age began.

Anderson is now teaching, in its college, that the Resurrection, the Ascension, and the Second Coming of Christ are myths. I have seen excerpts from Anderson college text books, used in mixed classes of unmarried people, teaching sexual intercourse, sexual techniques, and positions of intercourse. There are nude pictures right in these text books. When people turn away from light, how great is that darkness! They now teach homosexuality as an alternate lifestyle, that the church should be compassionate with those who practice it. This is why Jesus said to walk in the light while you have it lest darkness come upon you (John 12:35). Truth is nothing to trifle with! Today the movement is a participating affiliate in the World Council of Churches—the eighth beast—that is working right against the camp of the saints. They no longer want this truth. They have turned against it.

So that concluded the sixth-seal era. God had to find another ministry who would take these same blazing truths that D. S. Warner and the brethren started out with. In 1930, God reached down and got hold of a brother by the name of Walter S. Goodnight. He was the first known man to begin preaching the seventh-seal message. Now, many believe the seventh seal is out in eternity. However, in the seal series all seven of the seals were opened while Christ was still a Lamb. When time reels into eternity, He will not be a Lamb because there will be no more sacrifice for sins in eternity. Thus, all seven of the seals were loosed while He was a Lamb, which means they have their time setting in this time world.

On the chart, you can see the he goat turning and smiting the ram (Daniel 8:5-7) and the stars falling from heaven. This is a picture of this evening-time apostasy in the sixth seal. A ministry who had once stood for the Church of God

message fell from that exalted position, and the same ministry who had once heralded the message started working against the people who had taken hold of the message they had at one time preached. Saints have had to walk right over the top of a fallen ministry to come out of the Anderson movement. Anderson tells them, "You are leaving the church," but in truth they are leaving something that is backslidden to follow the Lamb! Thus, the letter to Philadelphia represents the first portion of this evening time, the period from A.D. 1880 to 1930.

THE LAODICEAN AGE (1930 – The Consummation)

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

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

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

17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

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

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

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

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

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

The Seventh Letter Is the Final Letter

The seven letters in Revelation, Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, are merely vehicles in symbolic form taking the church down through the seven periods of time that comprise the Gospel Day. This is the final letter, which corresponds with the seventh period of time, beginning approximately in A.D. 1930 and consummating with the end of time. The Philadelphian era (or the Anderson movement) began to fall away in such a predominate manner that God had to reach down His hand, and get hold of a brother named W. S. Goodnight, whom He enlightened and inspired to begin preaching the seventh-seal message.

How do we know that the seventh period of time is the final one? Revelation 10:7 says, "But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished . . ." The seventh seal is the final period of time because this is when the message is going to be completed. There are no more seals to be opened. After this is the end. Another way we know that the seventh letter is the final period of time is that seven is a biblical number denoting completeness. There are seven letters, seven trumpets, and seven seals.

There are definite time figures all the way down through this Gospel Day for every period of time except this seventh-seal period. We can find when it commences, but we cannot tell when it will end. This is because it concludes with the Second Advent of Christ, and no man knows the day nor the hour (Matthew 24:36). Another Gospel account tells us not only do the angels not know, but the Son does not even know the hour of His coming (Mark 13:32).

Matthew 24:37 says, "But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." Here Christ gave a parallel or a comparison to the era of time that is prior to the Second Advent of Christ. Jesus was saying, "To discern the spirit of the age, take a look at how the world was in Noah's day." Verse 38 reads, "For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark." Notice that Jesus never brought up one sinful activity; He did not bring up a charge of vile, repugnant sin. When He spoke of the antediluvians, He only spoke of the normal activities of life. It is startling that when we look at the

Laodicean epistle, we also see that Christ did not lay one sinful charge to them. Yet, He did in other eras. To the Thyatiran era, He said, "Thou sufferest that woman Jezebel . . . to teach" (Revelation 2:20). He told Pergamos, "Thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam" (Revelation 2:14). He told Ephesus, "I have somewhat against thee, because . . . thou art fallen" (Revelation 2:4-5).

The Laodicean epistle was the only letter in which there was no commendation, and it was the only era that had the audacity to talk back to Christ (**Revelation 3:17**). In each of the other six letters, Christ commended them on some attribute before He brought the charge. Laodicea received no commendation, only charges.

Parallels Between Noah's Day and the End of Time

Notice the nature of the charges compared to the other letters: "**Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing and knowest not . . .**" (**Revelation 3:17**). Matthew 24:39 says, "And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." Noah had preached for a hundred years, yet they knew not. Today, in this day preceding the coming of the Son of man, many people "**knowest not**" just as they *knew not* in Noah's day. There is a parallel between Noah's day and our day.

In Genesis 6:14 and 18 God said: "Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark" God gave Noah a covenant and an ark. The ark is emblematic of continuity—it enabled the human race to continue. It is a picture of preservation and safety. In this ark, the seed of man was safe. Today, just as Noah, we have an ark and a covenant. It is a picture of the continuity or preservation of truth, and it is a place of spiritual safety where if man will enter in, he can continue to live spiritually. We read in Revelation 11:19, "And the temple of God [This is figurative of the Church of God. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, 'Ye are the temple of the living God' (2 Corinthians 6:16), he was addressing the Church of God (2 Corinthians 1:1).] was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament [or covenant]" So, we have a covenant and an ark.

When Noah and his family came out of the ark, they were told to multiply and replenish the earth (Genesis 9:1). This guaranteed the continuity of the seed of humanity. It is our responsibility, in this seventh-seal era, to enter into a place of safety from the onslaught of the enemy, a place where the seeds of truth can be preserved and continue on. We have been entrusted with an ark and with a covenant so that the truth may be lovingly preserved and replenished as long as time stands. It is necessary to be very cautious to preserve this truth. It has eternal consequences. Hebrews 13:20 says, "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant." Our covenant is everlasting. That is why it is vital that we get people into the ark, into the presence of God, and into a safe, secure position.

We read in Genesis 7:7 and 10: "And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark, because of the waters of the flood And it came to pass after seven days, that the waters of the flood were upon the earth." The ark was finished, and God gave Noah seven days to get man in. At the end of seven days, the door was shut. As it was in the days of Noah so it is in the days of the coming of the Son of man. The ark was finished on Calvary, and Jesus has given seven days, or seven periods of the Gospel Day, to get man on board. At the end of these seven days, the door will be shut. Genesis 7:15-16 says: "And they went in unto Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh, wherein is the breath of life. And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him: and the LORD shut him in." God shut the door. No doubt if Noah had shut the door, when the people began beating on it, Noah would have opened it.

The Revelation writer said that God shuts and no man opens (Revelation 3:7). Everyone will repent; it is just that some will repent too late to do any good. The Scripture says that "every knee shall bow" and "every tongue shall confess" (Romans 14:11). People tried to get to that door in Noah's day, but once it was shut, they were sealed out. That has a parallel to our day. In Matthew, Chapter 25, Jesus gave the lesson of the ten virgins, speaking of conditions preceding the end of time. All ten of the virgins slumbered and slept. That portrays the spirit of the age. They did not all sleep; some slumbered. There is a distinction there. That is the charge to the Laodiceans, "You are just lukewarm. You are not hot or cold. You are just indifferent; you are caught up with the spirit of the age—just going with the flow."

Matthew 25:10 says, "And while they went to buy [portraying right before the end of time], the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut." At the end of time, the door will be

shut just as the Lord shut it in Noah's day. There will be universal destruction just as there was in the days of Noah.

Read again those very startling words in Genesis 7:16. The last phrase says, "And the LORD shut him in." After that, no one could get in. When the flood waters were rising, people were doing everything imaginable to get that door open. However, when God shuts people out, they are out. It makes no difference if a dozen preachers say you are in. When God puts you out, you are out.

We are now in the seventh period of the Gospel Day, and we need to be very careful that the spirit of the age does not move in on us like it moved in on those antediluvians. With all the preaching that God sent, they did not know their spiritual condition. That is terribly dangerous!

Matthew 24:38 does not speak of sinful activities. We read that "they were eating and drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage." They were busy with the program of life; too busy to give much attention to the message; too busy to pay much attention to what the preacher said. They became forgetful hearers (James 1:25). This is the very spirit that is working on God's people today. It is a spirit that allows everything but God to occupy our minds. Often people sit in a church service and give more thought to what they are going to eat after service than they do to what they are spiritually eating during service. If somebody would ask them about the service, they would not remember what was preached. This is a grave danger.

After Noah preached to the antediluvians for a hundred years, they still did not "know." Why? It was because their minds were taken up with everything else. That is why people should not pass notes, draw pictures, write letters, or balance their checkbook during the church service. A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways (James 1:8). Often right while people are doing those things, God is sending what they need, but it sails right over their heads. They go out "not knowing." Their spirit is not really into the service when they are involved in those kinds of activities.

Having Need of Nothing

Revelation 3:17 says, "**Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.**" Today, too many people who have heard Gospel preaching do not "know" their spiritual condition. Many have a Laodicean attitude: "I am fine; I do not need anything." When you think you "**need nothing**," you will get just that—"nothing." Every one of us is a needy creature. People who take the attitude, "I know all of that" are hard to teach. We must realize that we are needy. The Psalmist David said, "I am poor and needy" (Psalm 109:22). He was not needy of this world's goods. He was a king, a rich man, but he felt a poverty in spirit. Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit [those who know they have a need]" (Matthew 5:3). Hudson Taylor and D. S. Warner were frail men. Many great men have been frail physically. The Lord often uses someone who is weak physically because they "know" they are weak and that they need God.

Jesus told us in Matthew 24:42, "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come." Verse 44 says, "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." He was telling us to watch for the time is approaching. If we are not careful, we will get so caught up in the cares of life and fail to watch for spiritual realities. Jesus, again speaking of conditions prior to His advent, said in Luke 17:26-30: "And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.

"Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed." Even when Jesus brought up Sodom, He did not bring up sodomy. He only brought up the affairs and cares of life, telling us that this was going to be the predominate pitfall in the day in which we live. The conditions Jesus brought up in Revelation for our day are very similar to what Jesus said about our day in the Gospel accounts. In **Revelation 3:17** Jesus said, "**Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.**" Notice that He did not bring up anything sinful. The picture here is of people caught up with the thought of being "**rich**" and "**increased with goods.**" They felt they had "**need of nothing.**" However, Jesus went on to say, "**And knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.**" When He spoke to Smyrna in Revelation 2:9, He said, "I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich)" In contrast, Laodicea was a very wealthy city, but spiritually it was poor.

Laodicea put more effort into acquiring "**goods**" than acquiring God. They were "**increased with goods**" because

that was where their efforts were. Often people have new houses, cars, and clothes; yet their souls are neglected. It is because they put more emphasis on "**goods**" than they do in God. Spiritually, today is the brightest point in human history. However, in too many cases we accomplish less than those in the ages that preceded us. They had a depth of commitment to God, but today too many are committed to acquiring "**goods**." Many do better financially and materially than they do spiritually because that is where they are putting their efforts. That is the danger of this day! In the Dark Ages, the devil tried torturing and killing God's people. Now, in the evening time, he is not out to light the fires of persecution; he is out to install spiritual rocking chairs, an attitude of ease, indifference, complacency, lukewarmness, and idleness. In this seventh-seal era, God's people have a glorious message, but too often the glorious message is becoming obscured because people are tied up in other things.

There was a positive side to this Laodicean letter. It is because there is such a positive side to it, such glorious truth to our age, that the enemy is so working against us. We are living in a lazy age. Many organizations want preachers who will entertain. People want to hear the kind of preaching in which they do not have to employ their minds. If they cannot be spoon-fed the message, they do not want it. However, solid truth makes one chew a little, and there will be a few times when solid truth will make one swallow hard!

First Peter 4:17 says, "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" Noah preached for a hundred years, "Judgment is coming. People, you had better straighten up. You had better start living right." Noah was a preacher of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5). In Noah's day, there was preliminary judgment. Then that preliminary judgment ended, and a final judgment came. In our day, there is an era of preliminary judgment, a time when God is heralding forth this seventh and last trumpet. The message is, "This is the way, walk ye in it" (Isaiah 30:21). "Make straight paths for your feet" (Hebrews 12:13). There is coming a day when time will be no more, a time when every man will appear before the judgment seat of Christ (Romans 14:10).

The Seventh Seal Is Opened

All seven seals were opened while Christ was still a Lamb, but in eternity He will not be the Lamb of God. There will be no more sacrifice for sin in eternity. He will be a Lamb no longer. Go back with me to Revelation 5:1-5, which reads: "And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon.

"And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof." The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, was the One who loosed the seals (all seven of them). Verse 6 says, "And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain . . ." This Lamb was a picture of Jesus Christ. John 1:29 tells us that Jesus is the Lamb of God. Notice that He was a Lamb when all seven seals were opened. Revelation 6:1 says, "And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see."

All seven of these seals were opened in a very plain manner by the Lamb. Revelation 8:1 tells us, "And when he [Revelation 6:1 tells us that the antecedent of 'he' is 'the Lamb'] had opened the seventh seal . . ." So we see that Jesus opened all seven seals while He was a Lamb, while time was yet standing. Revelation 10:7 says, "But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel . . ." When the end of time comes, there is only going to be one last day. So, this thought is portraying a period of time, because in the last day there will not be *days*; time shall be no more. Jesus plainly taught in John 6:39, "And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day [singular]." Verse 40 tells us, "And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day." Verse 44 says, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day."

Another example is in verse 54, which states, "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day." When that day comes, it is going to be the last day—time will be no more. So, when

Revelation 10:7 talks about "in the days," it is speaking of a period of time. The message of this Laodicean age is as the light of seven days. Isaiah 30:26 says, "Moreover the light of the moon [a figure of the Old Testament—the lesser light] shall be as the light of the sun [a figure of the New Testament], and the light of the sun [the light of the New Testament] shall be sevenfold [the seven periods that comprise this Gospel Day], as the light of seven days [when?], in the day that the LORD bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound." That is the seventh-seal period in which we live, the day that has the light and understanding of all seven days. We have understanding of all the messages of every era of the past, plus the message that God has given in our day. That is why it is a bright day! We are living in a time of spiritual light, an evening of time that is light.

Zechariah 14:7 tells us, "But it shall be one day [we are in the 'one day'] which shall be known to the LORD, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light." Contrary to nature, instead of being darkness, it is going to be light and be the light of all seven days combined. That is why the devil is fighting so feverishly. What he cannot take away from God's people in knowledge and understanding, he is taking away in zeal and fervency. If the brethren of previous eras had the light we have with the zeal they had, they would have conquered the then-known world. We have the greatest light of any period in human history! This age has a complete message. The message on justification was restored in the Lutheran era; the message on holiness in the Wesleyan era; and the message on unity in the Warner era. However, in our day, we have the light of *all* the previous days; we have justification, holiness, and unity, plus what the seven thunders (Revelation 10:3-4) are uttering, all in the message that God has given to us.

Physical Characteristics of Laodicea

Verse 14 speaks of Laodicea. Let us consider what this symbol reveals to us. Laodicea is located forty miles east of Ephesus. That tells us that in this evening time we are closer to the source of light (east); we have greater intensity of light than what they had in the morning time. The Apostle Paul was a great man, but did he have victory over the beast, the image, the mark, and over the number? No, he did not. In this evening of time, we have a greater understanding of the truth than any period in human history.

Laodicea is located approximately ten miles further south than Ephesus. South represents the source of heat, and in this evening of time, we are closer to the source of heat, thus we should be more fervent than those brethren were in the morning-time church. They were ignorant and unlearned men (Acts 4:13). Today, we know what God has done; we have thousands of years to look back on what God has done for His people, to see how He has honored His word and kept His promises. Since it is a bright day with more intense light than any other period, how does the enemy work on us? Jesus said in **verse 15**, "**Thou art neither cold nor hot.**" In other words, "You are just contented." We have more reason to be fervent than any period in the Gospel Day. However, the enemy has turned up the cool winds of indifference to get us to be satisfied.

Of all seven church ages, we are the farthest south and farthest east. We have the least excuse of any people in human history for not being on fire. That is why Christ said, in essence, "If you are not going to be fervent when you have the most opportunity of any people in human history, **I will spue thee out of my mouth.**" To be spued out of Christ's mouth is to no longer be in the body; you are no longer part of the church. There are many who have been spued out, people who were once a part of the body of Christ, but now they are just on the wayside.

During the apostasy, the church went a total of a hundred miles north in the darkest age (the Pergamene Age), but now we are back a total of one hundred and forty-four miles. One hundred and forty-four is a multiple of twelve—a picture of perfection. This tells us that in our day we have *perfect* light.

Laodicea was watered and drained by two streams. This is the first time we have seen this since Ephesus. Those two streams represent the Word and the Spirit. That is another reason why we have less excuse for not being what we ought to be. Concerning our day the songwriter said, "Brighter days are sweetly dawning, Oh, the glory looms in sight! For the cloudy day is waning, And the evening shall be light." That light brings tremendous responsibility. So, the enemy is working as hard as he can to get Christians to be lukewarm and indifferent. Christians do not intentionally get caught up with things; it is a move of the enemy. Jesus said in Luke 21:35, "For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth." A snare is not something you willingly step into; it is something you get caught up in. One snare is the cares of life. The enemy tries to work them in and tie you up until you are more like Martha than Mary. Mary had singleness of heart. Jesus said, "But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part" (Luke 10:42).

Saint, if you are not careful, you will be like Martha—cumbered, caught up with making a living—until with all the knowledge and understanding that God has so graciously entrusted to you, you will be too busy to do anything with it.

Laodicea was founded in 250 B.C. by Antiochus II. The city was called Laodicea after Antiochus' wife, Laodice. Antiochus and Laodice were both heathens. Today, much of what at one time was the bride of Christ has changed until it is more like the wife of a heathen. So-called Christians act more like heathens than Christians. Thus, the name of this age conveys the message that now, in the time of the most enlightened period in human history, we have a danger of being modern heathens. Paul described the attributes of a modern heathendom in 2 Timothy 3:1, when he said, "This know also, that in the last days [the last days commenced with Pentecost] perilous times shall come." Notice that Paul said "perilous *times* [plural]." Throughout the course of this Gospel Day there have been more than one perilous time, and we are in one of them right now. Everything that he described down through these verses as the earmarks of a perilous time are taking place in the world today. Sadly, many of them are taking place right among Church of God congregations today. Many people who are regarded as Christians are guilty of the root of it: selfishness.

Let us read 2 Timothy 3:2-4: "For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents [that is an element of heathendom], unthankful, unholy, [When one can be these things yet be accepted in good standing, something is wrong. That is perilous. People have gone from power to peril when that has happened.] Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, [People who are high-minded think they know how everything ought to be done. They think they know as much as the pastor knows. When anyone feels that they are on par with the watchman on the wall, that is a perilous time.] lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God." When these things work their way into one's experience or into a congregation, people move from the position of being the bride to being a heathen.

Laodicea had a commanding geographical position. The church in the seventh seal has unlimited opportunity. God has lifted us to a strategic position. If we will avail ourselves of it, if we will take what we know and put it into practice, we have an opportunity unparalleled in history. The problem is not what we do or do not know, but what we do with what we know.

Laodicea was a town of great commercial prosperity. It controlled the trade that flowed down the river valley toward the sea coast. Today the Church of God controls the eternal destiny of many people's souls by how fervent we are. No business person is successful in the trade market who just stays in the house and hopes they can sell something. They have zeal and fervency. They get out and talk to people. Thus, we can see the souls of men and women prosper if the church will spiritually get on fire and go forth to tell others.

Laodicea had three great roads that came to the center of the city. In this evening time, God is emptying out three great roads into the Church of God: paganism, papalism, and Protestantism. God leads every honest heart on these roads right to Mount Zion—the church of the Living God. He wants to lead every one of them out of Babylon and lead them into the truth. Literal Laodicea was built on seven hills representing this seventh-seal period of time. Today, we have the light of the seven periods, the understanding of every previous period, and the light of our day.

What is the message of the seventh seal? In the sixth seal, that which started out as a great move of God ended up as a movement of men (the Anderson Movement). At the end of the sixth seal, God had to loose another seal (the seal is the Spirit—Ephesians 1:13). He set His hand a second time and got a second remnant. The first remnant (from 1880 to 1930) was those who came out of Babylon, but they let down on the message. Isaiah 11:11 tells us, "And it shall come to pass in that day [a prophetic expression of this day], that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people" This second remnant is you and me in this seventh-seal period of time.

"These Things Saith the Amen"

Christ introduced Himself by a different attribute to every period of the Gospel Day. In **Revelation 3:14** Jesus said, "**And unto the angel** [the messenger or pastor] **of the church of the Laodiceans write** [notice how He identified Himself]; **These things saith the Amen . . .**" That word "**amen**" is the same Greek word that is translated in the Gospel as "verily, verily." Many times Jesus started out a lesson with "verily, verily"—meaning "amen, amen." This word actually means "unchangeable truth." Jesus said "Verily, verily," because what followed was unchangeable, certain truth. So, when He introduced Himself here as the "**Amen**," He was introducing Himself as the unchangeable One.

Why would Jesus introduce Himself that way? One reason is because today people have a lot of different ideas about

Jesus. Things that have been wrong for thirty years, all of a sudden people do not see anything wrong with them. Jesus was saying, "John, take a letter to that period of time. They are changing, but I am not!" The Bible talks about "another Jesus." There is another spirit working in our day and time. We read in Galatians 1:6-7: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: [Many gospels are preached today, but they are 'another gospel.' What is this 'another gospel?'] Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ." This *another gospel* is a perverted gospel. It lets people live as they please and not be accountable; they do not hold any standard, or have any requirements put on their lives.

What is that perverted gospel produced by? Second Corinthians 11:2-4 says: "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus [when one's concept of Jesus begins to change, then the concept of the Gospel requirements begins to change, and that produces another gospel], whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit . . ." Another Jesus and another gospel are produced when people take on another spirit. This is what causes people to build again the things they once destroyed (Galatians 2:18), yet not see a thing wrong with it. So, Jesus, realizing this would take place, said in our text, "I am the Amen." In other words, He was saying: "I am the unchangeable. People's concept of Me is changing, but I am not changing!"

God will not tell you something was wrong months or years ago and then turn around and say, "It's okay now. Go ahead and do it." If He does, you had better be very fearful because you have done what Jude 11 says. You have committed the error of Balaam. You have prayed about it until you heard what you finally wanted to hear. Truth does not change. God is not going to tell you to take off that makeup and jewelry and then the next month tell you it is all right. He is not going to tell you one thing today and tell you the opposite a few days later. People change, but Christ does not change. Here is why, with all the light and understanding we have, we are not seeing the world evangelized as earlier periods who had much less light.

Next, notice that Jesus revealed Himself to this age as "***the faithful and true witness***" (**Revelation 3:14**). This was because of the multitude of false witnesses. When the Lord has revealed unto you a truth, often there will be people who will try to tell you that it is not necessary. Nevertheless, when you get on your face before God or get back in the Book, "***the faithful and true,***" unchangeable "***witness***" will come right back with the same thing. Christ is the "***witness***" who is true to your soul.

God's people need to understand the foes and the powers they are battling against today. Christ identified Himself in **verse 14** as "***the beginning of the creation of God.***" He was not saying that He was a created being, but that He was the agent who instituted "***creation.***" He depicted Himself as the "Ancient of days" to Daniel. Daniel 7:9 says, "I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days [a figurative expression of Christ] did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool [the same picture John saw in Revelation, Chapter 1]: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire." In essence, Christ was saying: "I started this; I run this; and I am going to finish it. It is in My control." People today think they have control of things, but Jesus was saying, "I started it; I had the first say, and I am going to have the last say."

We read in Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God [the Father—the originator and the administrator of the plan] created . . ." How did He do this creative work? Ephesians 3:9 says, "And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things [how?] by Jesus Christ." Colossians 1:13-15 states: "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature." All the way through here Paul was talking about God's dear Son. Verses 16-18 tell us: "For by him [His dear Son] were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he [the Son] is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he [the Son] is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead."

Thus, it is very clear that God's Agent in "***creation***" was the Son—Jesus Christ. John's Gospel refers to the incarnation of Christ. John 1:1 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Verse 14 tells us, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." Verse 17 tells us who that is: "For the law was given by Moses, but grace

and truth came by Jesus Christ." John 1:10 reads, "He was in the world, and the world was made by him [Jesus Christ], and the world knew him not." Christ is not only the Agent in "**creation**," but He also is the Agent in preservation. The only reason that things are held in store right now is because of Jesus Christ.

Second Peter 3:4-7 says: "And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water [all these things were created by the Word of God]: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store . . ." What keeps them in store? Jesus Christ, that same Word who created this world, is holding them right there. Peter talked about how the world is going to end in verse 10. He said, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." Colossians tells us that "by him all things consist." Then Peter said that by the same Word these things are held in store. Science teaches that the air is full of molecular structures, but the Word of God keeps them in their proper sphere. Nevertheless, one of these days Christ is going to say, "That is enough," and all of those things that have been held in place will melt and dissolve. Christ is the Agent in "**creation**," the agent in preservation, and at the end of time, He will finish it. He is still in control. First Thessalonians 4:16, speaking of the Advent, teaches us, "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first." Here Paul wrote that the Lord Himself is going to be the agent to bring this world to an end.

Elements of the Seventh-Seal Message

Let us look a little closer into this Laodicean letter and see what the actual seventh-seal message is composed of. **Revelation 3:18** begins, "**I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire . . .**" Job also talked about "**gold**" being "**tried**." In Job 23:10 he said, "But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." Job likened an individual experience being tried to gold refined in the fire. What is being tried? First Peter 1:7 says, "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold . . ." Our faith is being tried. Faith is one of the elements of this seventh-seal message.

After the truth became obscured through the Dark Ages and God began a gradual restoration of truth, light came in three major parts. Mark 4:28 says, ". . . first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." The Lutheran era saw the message on justification by faith (the blade), the Wesleyan era on holiness (the ear), and the Warner era on the unity of the church (full corn). In this seventh-seal age, we have all the messages of the previous ages combined. The thought of the gold being "**tried**" brings up the thought of faith. We have a tried, tested, and proven message of truth concerning faith. When Luther stepped out on faith, he did not know how *well* it would work or whether it *would* work, but we have a "**gold**" that is "**tried**." **Revelation 3:18** tells us, "**I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire . . .**" The message on faith has been tried and proven down through the years of time.

The next portion of the message of truth was holiness. **Verse 18** continues, ". . . **that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed . . .**" To understand what this "**white raiment**" is, go to Revelation 19:8. It says, "And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." So, this "**white raiment**" mentioned in **Revelation 3:18** represents the message on righteousness or holiness. In this seventh-seal era, we have the truth the Wesleyan brothers had concerning holiness.

Next is the message on unity. **Revelation 3:21** states, "**To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne . . .**" In other words, we can possess an experience of living and worshiping right in the presence of God, an experience where we can truly have unity. The age in which you and I live is to be a victorious age!

I have dealt much with the negative side—lukewarmness and heathenism—of the Laodicean era, but there is another side to this age. **Revelation 3:21** says, "**To him that overcometh** [there were overcomers in every age, and there are overcomers in our age] **will I grant to sit with me in my throne . . .**" If you are sitting with Christ in His "**throne**," you have an experience where you are reigning. In this day and time, God's people are overcomers. We do not have to be overcome, but we can sit with Christ and reign. That is a picture of a victorious experience.

In Matthew 19:28 Jesus said, "Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones . . ." Jesus was teaching that there are thrones, or victories, for every one of us who has been regenerated. Jesus spoke of "**twelve** thrones," and twelve is

the biblical number of perfection, letting us know that those who have been regenerated may have a perfect reign. We can sit on a "**throne**" just as He does. In Revelation 20:4 Jesus brought up more than twelve thrones. He said, "And I saw thrones [plural—there is no number given them], and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." Here was a multiplicity of people who reigned upon thrones without number. What is the lesson? Everyone can have an experience where they are on the "**throne**," reigning.

Paul taught in Romans 5:17 that we can reign. He wrote, "For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." If we will receive this abundance of grace, then we can be overcomers and sit or reign with Christ. In other words, just as He is in an exalted position on a "**throne**" and reigning, we also can reign in this life.

Revelation 16:17 tells us, "And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air." This seventh-vial angel did not fool around with a lot of things; he went straight to the air. In comparison, look at the other vial angels. Revelation 16:2 says, "And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth [Protestantism]." Verse 3 says, "And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea [papalism]." They dealt with systems (the first three vials were in the sixth seal), but in our day we do not deal just with the systems, but also with the spirits that produced those systems. In our day, God is using the sword of truth to cut very fine.

When the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air, he went right to the source. Let us go to Ephesians to find out what the air represents. Ephesians 2:1-2 says: "And you hath he quickened [the Greek says '*made alive*'], who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air [the devil], the spirit that now worketh [that prince of the power of the air is a spirit] in the children of disobedience." If that spirit produces children, then who is it? In John 8:44 Jesus said, "Ye are of your father the devil . . ." If this spirit produces children, then the father is the devil. This seventh-vial angel does not deal only with systems, but he pours out his vial on the very spirit that produced these systems. In our day, God's ministry has realized that if we do not deal with these spirits, the systems that were produced back then are going to be duplicated today. Spirits produced those systems. Those "three unclean spirits like frogs" mentioned in Revelation 16:13 have gone out, and they are producing the same thing. Today, they may not be called by the same name, but the spirit that is motivating them is the exact same spirit that produced those systems. This beastly spirit is still around today. All of the popes are not in Rome. When a Church of God pastor tells his people to stay away from another Church of God congregation because they do not do everything like he thinks they should, a beastly spirit, a cut-offish spirit is working. These spirits that produced Roman Catholicism and Protestantism are still producing systems and congregations today. Only it is more deceptive in our day for many leave the name "Church of God" hanging over the door.

Many Church of God congregations have built an image to the beast and become just like it. They have become just as sectish as Protestantism. There are spirits constantly working to pull the man of God down, to pull the message down, and to cause you to keep quiet about the truth, telling you, "Do not be so straight." The ministry in our day who are in touch with God like they ought to be will do just like this vial angel in Revelation 16:17 did: they are going to get past the system and pour out their vial (judgment) on the very spirit that produced that thing. All of the devil's spirits are not down in Babylon. There the devil is content for he has them. Thus, those spirits are trying to move up to the true church to start working on you and me. He wants us to settle down, back off, cool down, and go easy.

When people will take the truth the way it is, let us look at what it will do. Revelation 16:17-18 says: "And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air [the air is the spirit of the devil himself]; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. And there were voices . . ." A parallel to this is the Day of Pentecost. When they came out of that upper room, there were voices (just as Revelation 16:18), and every man heard them in his own language. Yet, not only were there voices and testimonies, but also thunders. Peter had to stand up and thunder out the truth before anybody got saved. When thundering goes forth, the next thing you will see is lightning—when truth sounds forth, people get light and understanding. Once they received light and understanding and they responded in a proper way to the message, it says there was a "great earthquake." When people get light and understanding, they will start rearranging some things. They will start cleaning up; some will start shedding things off; some will start putting things on.

Two Cups of Wrath Poured Out

Let us read Revelation 16:19, which says, "And the great city [Revelation 18:10 tells us that 'great city' is Babylon] was divided into three parts [the three parts of Babylon are made up paganism, papalism, and Protestantism], and the cities of the nations fell: [What makes Babylon fall in the eyes of the people? It is when truth is thundered out, and people get light. Babylon has already fallen, but now the cities of the nations have fallen. The nations are the denominations, and the cities are what makes up the denominations—congregations and individuals.] and great Babylon came into remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath."

In the evening time, Babylon is to have the second cup poured out on her. One cup was poured out in the sixth seal, and the second cup is to be poured out in the seventh seal. We read of this in Revelation 18:4-6. It states: "And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double." This tells us that Babylon had a cup of judgment, a cup of God's fierceness poured out in the sixth seal, and in the seventh seal we are to render unto her double. We are to pour out the second cup. God does not want us to have sympathy on Babylon. Babylon is damning more souls to hell than the bar stools. God does not want us to spare Babylon.

The second cup of the Lord's fury holds not only the truths of the prior periods, but also the light and understanding of this period. If we will walk in the light, allow the truth to be thundered forth, and live up to that truth, we will see a great move of God in this period of time, a move such as men have never seen before. Revelation 19:11-13 says: "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God." Verse 12 says that He had a name that no man knew. Then verse 13 tells us after it has been dipped in blood, the name is called the Word of God. What is the lesson? Natural man cannot truly know Christ until he has gone through the blood. Verse 14 says, "And the armies [plural] which were in heaven followed him upon white horses . . ." Back in Revelation 6:2 we read of only *one* white horse, portraying the morning-time church era going forth conquering and to conquer. However, in this evening time we read of horses and armies. What is this telling us? Just like the prophet said in Haggai 2:9, "The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former [house]." The power, the work that God wants to do in this evening time far exceeds what He did in the morning time. Saint, great things lay out ahead if you will not get lukewarm.

Let us read more about the armies. Revelation 19:14-20 reads: "And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. [These were a holiness people. Holiness is still what keeps one clean and in the army.] And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword [the Word of God], that with it he should smite the nations [truth still smites the denominational world]: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron [another symbol of the Word of God]: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, [The reason that it was written on His thigh is found in the Old Testament. When Abraham and the other patriarchs were ready to die and they had someone swear an oath, they would make them put their hand under their thigh (Genesis 24:2). It was a symbol of loyalty, allegiance, and truthfulness of the oath.] KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. And I saw an angel standing in the sun; [That is a very strong angel, and that is the kind of ministry God has today—men who can stand right in the heat, in the sun, and still cry it out. Yet, they never get scorched or burnt.] and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly [These fowls represent a false ministry. Revelation 18:2 tells us that Babylon is made up of fowls. She is 'a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.'] in the midst of heaven [a heavenly position (Ephesians 2:6)], Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone."

Christ and the armies who follow Him are going to win this war. The beast and the image are going down into

perdition. God has given unto us the victory, but we are going to have to have an experience that can stand the heat of the sun, that can take this seventh-seal message. If we do not live our own message, we are not going to be able to put the judgment or heat on anyone else. We are living in a time when we have a powerful message! The Revelation portrays a beautiful picture of an overcoming church in our age. We live in a glorious period of time. Yet, while it is glorious, it is also a very fearful time, because light and understanding bring an awesome responsibility.

Zephaniah 1:12 says, "And it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with candles [we are living in that time when God has the light, and He is searching Jerusalem, the church], and punish the men that are settled on their lees . . ." The New International Version says, "Those who are complacent." There are great things out ahead of us, and the devil is also aware of that. The move that he is making today is to try to get us to just settle down, calm down. If true revival breaks out, it will upset everything! If you study the Welsh revivals, you will read how people coming out of the coal mines were getting saved right on the sidewalks. They had to shut the businesses and the towns down because there was such a stir. Many today are just too bound by their program of life to let it be upset.

The Judgment of the People

Out of the seven letters to the seven congregations, the Laodicean epistle is the only letter addressed to the church of the people rather than the locality. Look at it with me:

Revelation 2:1—"Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write."
Revelation 2:8—"And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write."
Revelation 2:12—"And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write."
Revelation 2:18—"And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write."
Revelation 3:1—"And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write."
Revelation 3:7—"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write."
Revelation 3:14—"And unto the angel of the church **of the Laodiceans** write."

Every one of the other letters was addressed to the locality. This seventh-seal letter was addressed to the people because of the prevailing, adverse spiritual conditions. They were not just *in* Laodicea, but they had *become* "**Laodiceans.**"

The word *Laodicea* literally means "the judgment of the people." We have never seen a time when instead of men taking the oversight that God has given them and using their God-given authority, they are constantly trying to get the judgment of the people. They ask others: "Well, what do you think I ought to do? How do you think I ought to handle it? Do you think everybody would go along with that? I do not want to upset anybody." Thus, the people are trying to operate by the judgment of the people what is supposed to be the church. That is Babylon! God never ordained His church to be run by the people. The Church of God is not the people's church. It is God's church. It is not a democracy where everyone has a say, but it is a theocracy run by God, Christ, and the under shepherd (the pastor and the ministry). Yet, the spirit today is to operate by the judgment of the people.

Let us learn a little bit about the congregation in Laodicea. Spiritual trouble does not come overnight. The "**Laodiceans**" were in trouble thirty years before this letter in Revelation was penned. The Revelation was penned in A.D. 96, and the Apostle Paul was martyred approximately A.D. 66. Yet, in Colossians 4:15-17 Paul wrote: "Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house [many of them were started just this way]. And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans [the same phrase]; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea. And say to Archippus [the pastor in Laodicea], Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it." Paul would have never written that if there had not been a problem.

Evidently Archippus did not fulfil his position correctly, because thirty years later God sent him a letter, saying, "You are lukewarm." The charge was given to the angel of the congregation. Archippus was the one who received the blame. That is why a pastor has to keep his skirts clean and preach the truth whether people like it or not; whether the people are all with him or against him. The pastor not only has to answer for himself, but he also has to answer for how faithful

he was to the congregation. Archippus did not do well fulfilling his ministry. He let the judgment of the people take over. The Church of God cannot be run that way. When you have a group of people, you are never going to come to an agreement on everything.

Revelation 3:14 was addressed to "*the church of the Laodiceans*," because they were not just *in* Laodicea, but they had *become* "*Laodiceans*." There is a difference. Daniel was down *in* Babylon, but he was not a Babylonian. Daniel 1:8 says, "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself." Daniel asked in verse 12, "Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse [unmixed seed—a type of the Word of God] to eat, and water to drink." They would not eat the king's meat; they would not eat what Babylon had to dish out.

John 17:15-16 tells us that we can be *in* the world, but not *of* it. It says, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." No matter how bad it is, that is just a chance for your light to shine brighter. The darker the night, the brighter the light shines.

The Spirit of the Age Is Lukewarmness

The prevailing condition of Laodicea was that people had become spiritually complacent (lukewarm) with an empty profession. They were resting in their own judgment. Of the seven letters, this is the only congregation that talked back to Christ. Christ gave them His judgment, and they raised right up and gave Him their judgment—the judgment of the people. "**Because thou sayest, I am rich . . .**" (**Revelation 3:17**). When you look at this letter, you see that there was nothing overtly sinful laid to their charge. Christ did not bring up sinful things such as He brought up in the other letters. In Revelation 2:14, speaking to Pergamos, Christ said, "But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication." Here were terrible charges! In Revelation 2:20, talking to Thyatira, Christ said, "Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols." Again, these were terrible charges, but no overtly sinful charges were brought up to our day. **Revelation 3:15-16** states: "**I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.**" Here they were in a warm climate, close to the source of light and heat, yet they settled back and took it for granted.

What kind of thinking causes people to become "*lukewarm*"? It is such thinking as, "We have all the truth." When you accept that thought and allow it to grow, it will cause you to cease reaching out for more. It leads to such thinking as: "I know the truth. Do not worry about me, preacher. I know the way." That is a self-sufficient spirit, an earmark of lukewarmness. A saint can be corrected and rebuked without talking back as Laodicea did to Christ. When the ministry gives people judgment and they give judgment right back, that is a Laodicean spirit. When Christ laid His judgment down, this is the only epistle where the people rose up and laid *their* judgment down. In Egypt when Moses laid down his rod, all of the sorcerers and soothsayers laid their rods down also. So God had Moses' rod eat their rods to show whose rod was God's (Exodus 7:10-12).

Many people say, "I am Church of God, and I have been Church of God for years." You cannot rest in that. That is no guarantee! Jeremiah 7:4 says, "Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, are these." They were saying the same thing back then. "We are Church of God—the temple of the Lord." Whenever one takes hold of a thought like that and rests in the fact that they are Church of God, they are giving vent to a "*lukewarm*," take-it-easy spirit. People who raise up and say: "Do not worry about me. I am doing all right. I do not need anything," have the same spirit that had taken hold of the Laodiceans.

We are living in a time when, with greatness right out on the horizon, people are losing their vision of truth. In **Revelation 3:18** Jesus said, "*Anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.*" Laodicea was world famous for its medical school. They had a world-renowned "*eye salve*" that was sent out all over the world. In essence, Jesus was saying: "You, who are so famous for helping people to see, need to understand that you are going blind yourself. You are losing your vision." Today, we are living in a time when, with all the brightness and brilliance and radiance of truth, people are losing their spiritual vision at an unprecedented rate. Proverbs 29:18 tells us, "Where there is no vision, the

people perish" God's people need to have their eyes anointed with the Holy Ghost so they can have a real vision of truth, of the church, and of the victory that is available in this day.

What really stirred and burdened Christ in this letter was that people had all the ingredients of truth, but they lost the reality and the fervency of it out of their hearts and lives. Just as in every age, there have been battles to face. We have our battles, and one of the biggest battles we have is not with light and understanding, but being able to take it as divine. Many times when the Gospel gets close and searching, people try to discredit it by saying, "Well, that was just his idea." They discredit the divine with their own human judgment. That is one of the gravest dangers we are facing today!

Christ said He would come and catch some sleeping, because they have become so relaxed and indifferent that they have fallen completely asleep spiritually. There are great things that lay ahead for the people of God as a whole. That is why the devil is fighting feverishly. To see these things we must be overcomers, sit with Christ in His throne, and reign over these things instead of letting these things reign over us. If we will take the message personally and put it on, we can be a part of those armies on white horses who conquer with Christ and cause a great earthquake. Our message is a brilliant message, a bright message of a glorious age, an age that though confronted with "lukewarmness" still has people who are overcomers.

Epilogue

It is our hope that through the study of these seven letters incorporated in Revelation, Chapters 2 and 3, that "the eyes of your understanding [have been] . . . enlightened" (Ephesians 1:18) concerning their prophetic application. With an understanding of the ways the enemy has assaulted the truth in the past ages, it enables us to "not [be] ignorant of his devices" (2 Corinthians 2:11) and "sanctify yourselves against tomorrow" (Joshua 7:13). It is also our desire that by having an appropriate understanding of the prophetic aspect of these texts that when practical application is heralded from the pulpit, that you may grasp and apply the truth in a more ready manner.

I trust that these writings have been beneficial to your spiritual growth. It is our burden that you gain an understanding of these truths, embrace them, stand for them, and perpetuate these truths by imparting them to others until "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven" (1 Thessalonians 4:16) and time shall reel into eternity.