

## LESSON 1 – THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST      REVELATION 1:1-3

**(1:1) “THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST”** – *“Revelation”* means an uncovering of the mysteries of God’s purpose and plan as revealed in His Word. This book is an uncovering of truth given in seven visions to the Apostle John who was exiled on the Isle of Patmos, just off the coast of Asia Minor, probably around A.D. 94-96. These visions describe from various points of view the glory *“of Jesus Christ,”* the victorious Messiah, saving and preserving His church throughout the entire New Covenant (Testament) age. The New Covenant age began with the accomplishment of redemption by the death of Jesus Christ in His establishment of *“the righteousness of God”* (*Romans 1:16-17; 3:21-25; 10:1-4; 2 Corinthians 5:21*), the merit of Christ’s whole work of redemption freely imputed to His people and received by them through God-given faith. Christ’s righteousness imputed is the one and only ground upon which God justifies all His chosen people. The success of this was signified by the resurrection of Christ (*Rom. 4:23-25*) and His ascension unto the Father in heaven. This was the beginning of the New Covenant, and it was inaugurated at Pentecost (*Acts 2*).

-- **“WHICH GOD GAVE UNTO HIM”** – This *“revelation”* was given to Jesus Christ by His Father. This does not mean He is inferior to the Father in the essence of His deity. As God the Son He is equal with the Father and the Holy Spirit in His nature as God. But as Godman, the one Mediator between God and men, He became submissive as the Servant of the covenant, becoming obedient unto death (*Philippians 2:5-11*) for the purpose of saving His people from sin (*Matthew 1:21-23*). Some believe this is in line with what the Lord Himself stated in speaking of His return in *Mark 13:32* – *“But that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.”* Many believe the Father revealed this to the Son when He ascended unto glory.

-- **“TO SHEW UNTO HIS SERVANTS THINGS WHICH MUST SHORTLY COME TO PASS”** – This revelation was to be revealed by Jesus Christ to His bond-servants, His true disciples, and it concerned things which must soon take place, not just events that would take place at the end of the church age. Remember, the term *“the last days”* describes the entire New Covenant age. This is the final age of human history which includes the destruction of this present evil world and the creation of the new heavens and new earth (*2 Peter 3:11-13*).

-- **“AND HE SENT AND SIGNIFIED IT BY HIS ANGEL UNTO HIS SERVANT JOHN”** – This revelation comes from Christ Himself by means of *“His angel,”* (messenger) to the Apostle John.

**(1:2) – “WHO BARE RECORD OF THE WORD OF GOD, AND OF THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS CHRIST, AND OF ALL THINGS THAT HE SAW.”** John was not to keep these things to himself. He was to testify of everything Christ revealed to him. This is in line with the great commission given to the church to go into the world and preach the Gospel and teach the Word for the edification of the church. These are not secret things only to be heard and understood by an elite few.

**(1:3) – “BLESSED IS HE THAT READETH, AND THEY THAT HEAR THE WORDS OF THIS PROPHECY, AND KEEP THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE WRITTEN THEREIN:”** – These things were to be read to and heard by the people of God. The natural man will not receive the things of the Spirit of God, but God gives His people spiritual life from Christ, and this includes spiritual eyes, ears,

and a heart to receive and believe these things of God's glory in Christ Jesus (*cf. Ezekiel 36:26-27*). Those who "*readeth,*" "*hear,*" and "*keep*" "*the words of this prophecy*" are truly "*blessed*" of God (*Matthew 13:16*). We are to read these things with a Christ-centered view. We hear them as the Word of God in Christ. We are to keep them, take them to heart, believe, cherish, and obey them as they bring us closer to Christ and cause us to cling to Him more and more for salvation, righteousness, forgiveness, eternal life, and glory.

-- "**FOR THE TIME IS AT HAND**" – There is an urgency given here because the time for the fulfillment of all these things will come about shortly, not only at the end of the church age, but throughout.

As stated at the beginning, the Lord reveals the events of the last days to the Apostle John in seven visions. We need to emphasize how these visions are basically different viewpoints showing these events as they develop throughout the New Covenant age. Consider the following outline:

<b>FIRST VISION (Chapters 1 – 3)</b>	Christ in the midst of His churches, the seven golden candlesticks, in this world.
<b>SECOND VISION (Chapters 4 – 7)</b>	Christ opening and fulfilling the seven sealed book of God's sovereign, eternal purpose.
<b>THIRD VISION (Chapters 8 – 11)</b>	Christ answering the prayers of His people, protecting them from their enemies, and vindicating them by executing the seven trumpets of judgment in His providential rule of the universe.
<b>FOURTH VISION (Chapters 12 – 14)</b>	Christ and His church persecuted by Satan, world government, and false religion.
<b>FIFTH VISION (Chapters 15 – 16)</b>	Christ sending His angels to pour out the seven vials (bowls) of wrath upon the earth.
<b>SIXTH VISION (Chapters 17 – 19)</b>	Christ's conquest over Babylon, the beast, and the false prophet.
<b>SEVENTH VISION (Chapters 20 – 22)</b>	Christ's dominion over and destruction of Satan and the glory of the New Jerusalem.

These seven visions cover the whole New Covenant age from the first to the second coming of Jesus Christ. They tell us what the Lord has done, is doing, and will do for the complete salvation of all whom God chose before the foundation of the world, all whom Christ redeemed on the cross, and all whom the Holy Spirit gives life and calls unto Christ. It is the story of complete victory of Jesus Christ and His church through Him. The repetition of the number "seven" sets forth the number of perfection, completion for the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, all based on God's grace and power through Christ. He has perfectly and completely put away our sins by the sacrifice of Himself. He has perfectly and completely made us righteous before God. He will perfectly and completely bring all of His people to final victory in glory.

## LESSON 2 - OUR GREAT GOD AND SAVIOR

## Revelation 1:4-8

**(1:4)** – The Apostle “**JOHN**” wrote “**TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES WHICH ARE IN ASIA**” – Seven local churches in Asia Minor founded on the true Gospel of God’s grace in Christ Jesus.

-- “**GRACE BE UNTO YOU, AND PEACE**” – Grace is God’s way of salvation for sinners through Jesus Christ along with all blessings and benefits of grace. Peace is reconciliation between God and His elect through Jesus Christ, based on His righteousness imputed alone (*cf. 2 Cor. 5:20-21; Col. 1:19-23*).

-- “**FROM HIM WHICH IS, AND WHICH WAS, AND WHICH IS TO COME**” – God the Father is the one true and eternal God Who never changes (*cf. Mal. 3:6*).

-- “**AND FROM THE SEVEN SPIRITS WHICH ARE BEFORE HIS THRONE**” is a figurative way of describing God the Holy Spirit in the perfection and fullness of His work (*cf. Isa. 11:2; Zech. 4:1-10*). God the Holy Spirit in the new birth brings God’s elect to see and rest in Jesus Christ for all grace and peace before God’s throne. This is grace and peace established by and upon righteousness through Jesus Christ.

**(1:5a)** – All grace and peace from the Father and applied to us by the Holy Spirit is founded upon the glorious Person and finished work of “**Jesus Christ**” the eternal Son of God incarnate.

-- “**THE FAITHFUL WITNESS**” speaks of Christ’s accomplishing the work of redemption by His death on the cross. The word for “**witness**” is the same word used for a “*martyr*.” Christ was no mere martyr in the sense that He died only for what He believed. He died as a Substitute, a sin-bearer, for His church, not merely as an example of faith, but as a Redeemer for His people. Christ is also the perfect “**witness**” of the Word of God as the Word incarnate (*John 1:1-3,14*), and He is the One Who reveals the Word to His people (*Matt. 11:27; John 17; Heb. 2:12*).

-- “**AND THE FIRST BEGOTTEN OF THE DEAD**” – This speaks of His resurrection. In His death for our sins, He produced an everlasting righteousness of infinite value by which He was raised from the dead. As our great high priest, He opened for us the way of life, giving us access to and acceptance with God (*1 Pet. 1:1-3*). This means more than simply He was the first one to be resurrected. It means that He has the preeminence as Lord of glory among all who will be resurrected in the last day. Christ is the Savior and spiritual Head of His family.

-- “**AND THE PRINCE OF THE KINGS OF THE EARTH**” – Christ is the King of kings and Lord of lords. He rules and reigns over all earthly kings (*1 Tim. 6:13-16; Rev. 17:14; 19:16*). He is exalted to a throne of dominion over all flesh as the reward of His humiliation (*Php. 2:5-11*). All will bow to His sovereign authority either now in faith or later at judgment under His just wrath. But the MAIN work of His kingly office is to glorify His Father in giving salvation to all that the Father has given Him (*John 17:2*).

**(1:5b)** – This begins John’s doxology – expression of praise – “**UNTO HIM THAT LOVED US, AND WASHED US FROM OUR SINS IN HIS OWN BLOOD**” – Christ loves His people such as we are (*Rom. 5:6-10; 1 Tim. 1:15*). His love is unconditional towards us and insures our salvation (*1 John 4:10*). His death on the cross is the result of His love and insures that all whom He loves shall be saved (*John 3:14-17*). The love of Christ for His sheep brought Him to die for our sins (*John 10:11,14-16; 13:1*). “**Washed**” is literally “*freed*” or “*loosed*” us from sin. The guilt that arose from sin was totally removed from and justice was fully satisfied by Christ’s one sacrifice for the sins of all His people. We who are IN CHRIST, who believe and rest in Him, have been fully absolved and justified from all our

sin. We stand IN CHRIST as forgiven and righteous in God's sight because Christ died for our sins (**Rom. 8:33-34**). Christ was made sin as the sins of His people were imputed to Him, and we are made righteous as the merit of His obedience unto death has been imputed to us.

**(1:6) – “AND HATH MADE US KINGS AND PRIESTS UNTO GOD AND HIS FATHER; TO HIM BE GLORY AND DOMINION FOR EVER AND EVER. AMEN.”** This would better be translated as Christ “*has established us as a kingdom of priests*” meaning by His work of redemption Christ Himself established the kingdom of God, His church, and has “*made us ... priests unto God and His Father*” in that through Him we now have free, unhindered, and open access to the holy presence of God (**Heb. 10:19-22**). We offer spiritual sacrifices unto God, all acceptable unto God by Jesus Christ (**1 Pet. 2:5**). We who are in Christ “*are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that [we] should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called [us] out of darkness into His marvellous light*” (**1 Pet. 2:9**).

**(1:7) – “BEHOLD HE COMETH WITH CLOUDS”** describes the second coming of Christ. He will come from heaven where He is now seated at the right hand of the Father making intercession for His people. As salvation is from heaven, by the grace of God in Christ who first came from heaven to save us from our sins (**Gal. 4:4-6**), the final gathering and glorification of His people, as well as the final judgment of the wicked, will come from heaven. It is an assured fact that Christ will come again (**John 14:1-6**), and as He ascended in a cloud (**Acts 1:9**), He shall return in like manner (**Acts 1:11**).

-- **“AND EVERY EYE SHALL SEE HIM”** – Christ will eclipse heaven as He is our heaven, and it will not be a secret rapture. It will be a very public appearance. It will be a time of great comfort and excitement for the people of God, all who trust in Christ, but a time of terror for the wicked (**2 Cor. 5:10-11**).

-- **“AND THEY ALSO WHICH PIERCED HIM”** speaks of those who were instrumental in the death of Christ, such as Pilate, Caiaphas, the religious Jews, and the Roman soldiers, but it also speaks generally of all who stand in opposition to Christ and who, as evidenced by their unbelief, would crucify Him again. **“AND ALL KINDREDS OF THE EARTH SHALL WAIL BECAUSE OF HIM”** describes all who are in unbelief, ignorant of or not submitted to Christ and His righteousness as the only way of salvation. They are tied to and consumed with the world in opposition to Christ (**John 15:19; 16:33**). **“EVEN SO, AMEN”** – This is certain. So be it!

**(1:8) –** This is one of the most glaring statements in the Bible proving the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is equivalent to all the **“I AM”** statements beginning with **Exodus 3:14** where the Lord God identifies and distinguishes Himself as one true and living God. **“ALPHA AND OMEGA”** are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet and show how Christ is **“THE BEGINNING AND THE ENDING”** and everything in between. His Word is the first word and the last word in all matters, and He stands as **“the Author and Finisher”** of the complete salvation of His people. **“WHICH IS, AND WHICH WAS, AND WHICH IS TO COME, THE ALMIGHTY”** – In the nature of His deity He is eternal, immutable, and omnipotent. These are traits that could only be attributed to one who is God in His very nature and essence. This assures us of His ability to fulfill all conditions of our complete salvation and victory over sin, Satan, and the world, to the praise of the glory of God's grace (**Matt. 1:21,23**). Christ is God in human flesh without sin (**John 1:1-3,14**).

**(1:9)** – John identifies himself as a **“BROTHER”** in Christ and **“COMPANION IN TRIBULATION”** (*cf. Heb. 12:1-8; Rom. 8:17; John 15:18—16:3*). Domitian (A.D. 96), the Roman emperor, had John exiled on the Isle of Patmos. This brotherhood and persecution over the Gospel of Christ identified him as a citizen of the **“KINGDOM”** of God (*Php. 1:27-30*), and one whom Christ preserved by His grace and power. John states his exile was not punishment but for spreading forth **“THE WORD OF GOD, AND FOR THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS CHRIST”** (*cp. Php. 1:12-14*).

**(1:10)** – **“I WAS IN THE SPIRIT”** – John’s vision was revealed to him by God the Holy Spirit. It is a vision of the glorified Christ and a panoramic view of the New Covenant age. **“THE LORD’S DAY”** is the first day of the week in commemoration of the Lord’s resurrection. It is not speaking of a “sabbath” day as was commanded under the Old Covenant. Christ and His finished work of redemption is the believer’s Sabbath (*Heb. 4:1-11*). **“AND HEARD BEHIND ME A GREAT VOICE, AS OF A TRUMPET”** – This describes the majesty, glory, power, and authority of Christ and this great announcement of glorious things.

**(1:11)** – **“SAYING, I AM ALPHA AND OMEGA, THE FIRST AND THE LAST”** – Christ identifies Himself as the eternal, self-existent, omnipotent God. He is God in human flesh, our Creator and our Redeemer. He is the Lord our Righteousness, and we who believe are secure in Him. He instructs John **TO “WRITE IN A BOOK”** the things revealed herein and send them to the seven churches in Asia Minor. This is the book we are now studying, **The Book of Revelation**.

**(1:12)** – John turned to see the Person who spoke with him. The churches are described as **“SEVEN GOLDEN CANDLESTICKS.”** This goes back to the candlestick in the holy place of the tabernacle which was a type of Christ the light of the world. A true church in this sense is a local body of believers who witness the light of the Gospel of God’s grace in Christ Jesus (*Matt. 5:14-16; Eph. 5:8-14; Php. 2:15; 1 Thess. 5:5*). Where the light of Christ is missing, there is no true church but only a false religious gathering of men lost in darkness. The Gospel is the revelation of Christ and the righteousness He established to enable God to be both just and Justifier of His people (*Rom. 1:1-5, 16-17*).

**(1:13)** – Christ is the center (heart and life) of His churches. **“ONE LIKE UNTO THE SON OF MAN”** identifies Him as Messiah, the Savior and Builder of His church (*Matt. 16:18; Acts 20:28*). This goes back to *Daniel 7:13-14* where God gave Daniel a vision of the glorified Christ. Christ appears as the one Who fulfills all righteousness for His people (*John 17:1-4*). **“CLOTHED WITH A GARMENT DOWN TO THE FOOT”** – This is the robe of the Priest-King (*cf., Exod. 28:2-4*), which represents the righteousness of God worked out by Christ’s obedience unto death for His people. Its length indicates the work of redemption is complete and finished. It covers His whole body showing how His body, the church, is covered in His righteousness imputed for complete justification before God. **“AND GIRT ABOUT THE PAPS WITH A GOLDEN GIRDLE”** – This golden band around His chest is symbolic of the dignity and majesty of His Person in His lordship and His strength both for the salvation and preservation of all whom He saves and victory over all who oppose Him.

**(1:14) – “HIS HEAD AND HIS HAIRS WERE WHITE LIKE WOOL, AS WHITE AS SNOW”** describes His eternal nature, wisdom, and purity. His is the eternal wisdom of God, and He is pure in all that He is and does. **“AND HIS EYES WERE AS A FLAME OF FIRE”** describes, not only His omniscience, but also His judgment. He knows all, and He judges all according to truth (*Heb. 4:12-13*). As one writer stated, "His eyes burn with love for His sheep to melt their hearts; also, burn with wrath and vengeance against His enemies and the enemies of His church."

**(1:15) – “AND HIS FEET LIKE UNTO FINE BRASS”** describes His power to save, preserve, support, and defend His people. It alludes to the brass or brazen altar that typified Christ's work on the cross where He bore our judgment for sin. **“BURNED IN A FURNACE”** describes His sufferings under the wrath of God as He bore our sins, suffered, bled, and died to establish the only righteousness by which God justifies His people. Christ has feet of brass, not feet of clay as we do. This also assures us that where righteousness is established (as it is by virtue of Christ's obedience and death) justification and eternal life must follow. No sinner for whom He died will perish. **“AND HIS VOICE AS THE SOUND OF MANY WATERS”** describes the preaching of the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit. Christ is the water of life, a fountain of living waters, to a sin-parched, thirsty soul (*John 4:10-15; 7:37-39*).

**(1:16) – “AND HE HAD IN HIS RIGHT HAND SEVEN STARS”** – These are ministers of Christ who shine with the light of HIS glory and truth, pointing sinners to Christ (*John 3:27-31; 1 Cor. 2:1-2; 2 Cor. 4:5-6*). They preach by HIS power, for He is the one who holds them **“IN HIS RIGHT HAND,”** the right hand of acceptance in HIM and of judgment by HIM. **“AND OUT OF HIS MOUTH WENT A SHARP TWOEDGED SWORD”** – The Word of Christ (*Heb. 4:12*) cuts to the heart of His people in conviction and drives them to Christ for all salvation. It cuts in judgment for all who oppose Him and exposes their sin. **“AND HIS COUNTENANCE WAS AS THE SUN SHINETH IN HIS STRENGTH”** – This describes the glory of His Person as He shines forth in the salvation of His people and in the condemnation of the wicked. His greatest glory is in His power to save His people from sin as He conquered death and hell.

**(1:17) –** John was so overwhelmed that he **“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”** – This is His right hand of acceptance based on law and justice satisfied by His obedience unto death for His people. He spoke words of comfort expressing His power and willingness to save His people (*John 13:1*). **“I AM THE FIRST AND THE LAST”** again speaks of His deity and His preeminence as Godman/Mediator.

**(1:18) –** This speaks of the power of His blood and righteousness to bring forth life. He died on the cross, but He arose from the dead and lives forever to save His people and give us eternal life. He has **“THE KEYS OF HELL AND OF DEATH.”** He alone is the way of salvation from **“HELL AND OF DEATH.”** He alone has power over hell death (*1 Cor. 15:54-57*).

**(1:19-20) –** Christ commands John to write these things revealed to him of the past, present, and future. He then reveals the **“MYSTERY OF THE SEVEN STARS”** and the **“SEVEN GOLDEN CANDLESTICKS.”** The **“SEVEN STARS”** are messengers (pastors) **“OF THE SEVEN CHURCHES,”** which He identifies as the Gospel assemblies mentioned in **v. 11**.

Read **Revelation 1:11**. These were seven local assemblies located in Asia Minor. Christ called them **“seven golden candlesticks”** (**Rev. 1:12**) because they, at least in their beginning, shined forth with the light of Gospel truth. Before we study each letter, consider some phrases common to all of them.

-- **“UNTO THE ANGEL OF THE CHURCH”** (**2:1,8,12,18; 3:1,7,14**). **“ANGEL”** is messenger of the church, probably the pastor. Christ Himself is the Head of the church (*1 Pet. 2:25*). All pastors true to God’s calling are under-shepherds and point sinners to Christ and to His Word for spiritual guidance and authority. In the Bible we have both the word **“CHURCH”** (singular) and the word **“CHURCHES”** (plural). Here are **“seven churches”** (**1:20**), each one a local assembly of professing believers, each identified by location. The Bible also speaks of the **“CHURCH”** as the universal body of Christ, chosen by God before the foundation of the world, redeemed by the blood of Christ, justified by His righteousness imputed, and called out of the world in the new birth by the Holy Spirit. This is the **“church”** of which Christ spoke in **Matthew 16:18**, **“Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”** (*cf. Acts 20:28*). The word **“church”** literally means “called out.” The church is the body of people who, by the effectual and invincible calling of the Holy Spirit under the preaching of the true Gospel, have been called out of the world into the body of Christ.

Until Christ comes again, there are local Gospel assemblies called **“CHURCHES”** (**Rev. 1:4,11,20**) throughout the world. In the last days these **“churches”** will be mixed with true believers and false professors. Christ taught this in the parable of the sower and the seed (**Matt. 13:3-23**). Also in these last days, Christ will sow His good seed, true churches, where the Gospel is faithfully preached. Satan, however, will sow his **“tares,”** false churches where he spreads his lies of false religion – salvation by the works and wills of men. Christ taught this in the parable of wheat and tares (**Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43**). It is then necessary for us to: (1) make certain that we are in a church where the true Gospel is preached, and (2) be diligent to examine ourselves whether we are in the faith. Christ’s true churches stand for and preach HIS truth of salvation by sovereign grace based solely upon His shed blood and righteousness imputed, along with all the truth of Scripture as it supports salvation by grace, and as it unites and inspires believers under the headship and love of Christ and love for one another (*1 Tim. 3:15-16*).

In the **Book of Revelation** we see the continual decline of many true churches. They had a good beginning but as time passed they lapsed either into indifference and unconcern or compromise of the truth. To such Christ says unless repentance is found He will **“remove thy candlestick”** (**Rev. 2:5**). We also see in **Revelation** as we near the second coming of Christ there will be more of Satan’s tares and less of Christ’s true churches, the wheat. This is God’s judgment upon the world as He sets Satan loose to deceive the nations (**Rev. 20:7-8**). This does not mean that any of God’s elect will perish. All whom Christ redeemed, whom the Holy Spirit gives life and calls to faith in Christ, will persevere and be preserved to the end. Christ will have the victory over Satan and the world. Satan and the world will think at times that victory is theirs, but they are deceived.

-- **“I KNOW THY WORKS”** (**2:2,9,13,19; 3:1,8,15**) – *“For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward His name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister”* (*Heb. 6:10*). The works of God’s people are the work of Christ through them by His power and grace (*Gal. 2:20-21*), the fruit and evidence of His power and grace in salvation (*Matt. 5:16; John 3:21; 15:1-8; Rom. 7:4-6; Eph. 2:8-10*). They prove the genuineness of faith in and love for Christ

(James 2:14-26). Christ takes notice of our works, not as having merit before God. Such works do not make us righteous or holy, nor do they earn blessings or rewards from God. We who are saved are completely saved “*not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost*” (Titus 3:5).

The Lord also takes notice of our sins, failings, and short-comings, not as a judge to condemn us, but as a loving Father sometimes to chastise and teach us. In His court of justice, God never charges us with sin because Christ has been charged with and has paid for our sins (Rom. 8:31-34). The true child of God is always righteous before God in Christ and can never justly be charged with sin. In this sense the Lord says He remembers our sins no more (Heb. 8:12; 10:17). But God does deal with us as children who need correction. God always takes notice of the works of unbelievers who never come to faith in Christ because these sinful works are charged to them and will be counted against them in God’s judgment. Sometimes such works expose the false professions of false believers.

-- **“HE THAT HATH AN EAR, LET HIM HEAR WHAT THE SPIRIT SAITH UNTO THE CHURCHES; (Rev. 1:7; cf., 11, 17,29; 2:6,13,22).** As stated, even true Gospel churches, while here on earth, will include both true believers and false professors. And as this final age comes to its close, what the world commonly knows in the world as “*the church*” will be in decline, even apostasy (2 Thess. 2:3). This apostasy is described in Revelation 2–3 in all but two of the seven churches. Each local assembly, except Smyrna and Philadelphia, is admonished because they fell into particular heresies and ungodly attitudes that, if left without repentance, would bring them to destruction. We must remember, however, that the purpose of this whole book and these seven letters is to assure and encourage us as Christ’s true disciples of our salvation and security in Christ, and to encourage us to persevere against such heresies and ungodly attitudes that would bring local assemblies into apostasy. **CHRIST AND HIS TRUE CHURCH WILL BE VICTORIOUS IN ALL THINGS.** All true members of His body, the true church, will persevere unto the end as they all will be preserved by Him (Jude 24-25).

However, the preservation and perseverance of the true church of the Lord Jesus Christ is a great testimony of His glory, power, and grace in saving His people to the uttermost. Therefore, it all comes about by His appointed and provided means – attending to and hearing His Word, being diligent in worship, prayer, and promoting the fellowship of His people. If we have been born again by the Holy Spirit, we have been given spiritual ears to hear (listen intently to and heed) what Christ says to us in this book as well as the whole Word of God. This Word of encouragement and warning is not just for these seven congregations in that day. It is for this congregation in our day. We know that if we are saved, it is by God’s grace in Christ. We know that if we persevere unto the end, it is by God’s grace in Christ. But we also know that all who are preserved by His grace, and all who persevere in His grace, hear and heed what the Holy Spirit says to us. As the Holy Spirit spoke by the apostle Paul – “*Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure* (Php. 2:12-13).



## LESSON 5 – THE NECESSITY OF ZEAL AND LOVE

Revelation 2:1-7

**(2:1) – “UNTO THE ANGEL OF THE CHURCH OF EPHESUS WRITE”** – Ephesus was a port on the Aegean Sea, famous for its temple to the goddess, Diana. Paul first visited Ephesus on his second missionary journey with Aquila and Priscilla (*Acts 18:18-26*). He returned two years later and stayed for three years teaching them the Word of God (*Acts 19*). His last words to the elders of this church are recorded in *Acts 20:16-38*, but later, while under house arrest in Rome, he wrote *The Epistle to the Ephesians* (A.D. 60-62). It is also believed the Apostle John, after being freed from exile in Patmos, spent his last years here. This letter is addressed to the pastor and to be read to the church. **“HE THAT HOLDETH THE SEVEN STARS IN HIS RIGHT HAND”** – The **“seven stars”** are the messengers of the churches, and Christ preserves them **“in His right hand”** of grace and power (*2 Cor. 2:14-17; 3:1-6; 4:5-14*). **“WHO WALKETH IN THE MIDST OF THE SEVEN GOLDEN CANDLESTICKS”** – Christ is the heart and soul of His church.

**(2:2)** – Christ commends them for zeal in **“WORKS,” “LABOR,”** and **“PATIENCE”** (endurance) as evidence of HIS power and grace. These are the fruit of His power, grace, and love (*Gal. 5:22-23*). They would not tolerate **“THEM WHICH ARE EVIL,”** who either in doctrine or conduct walked contrary to Gospel. They put all who claimed to be **“APOSTLES”** to the test of Scripture. All who do not preach the Gospel of Christ wherein *“the righteousness of God is revealed”* (*Rom. 1:16-17; 3:21-28; 10:1-4*), are to be rejected as **“LIARS”** (*cf., Isa. 8:20; Rom. 16:17-19; Gal. 1:6-9; 2 Cor. 11:1-4; 1 John 4:1-3; 2 John 9-11*).

**(2:3)** – By the grace of God and for the glory of God they had **“BORNE”** (carried the burden), had **“PATIENCE”** (endured), and **“LABORED”** (worked to exhaustion), and not **“FAINTED”** (given up, quit) under persecutions over their identification with Christ and testimony of the Gospel of His grace as the only way of salvation. It was all for His **“NAME’S SAKE,”** (His glory). None of these efforts were done by believers in order to work out their own righteousness before God, but it was all to the praise of the glory of His grace in Christ Jesus. It was the labor of willing, loving bond-servants of Christ motivated by grace, love, and gratitude. Religious zeal means nothing in and of itself (*Rom. 9:31–10:3*), but zeal in the grace of God glorifies Him and exalts Christ Jesus (*Rom. 10:4*).

**(2:4)** – **“NEVERTHELESS I HAVE SOMEWHAT AGAINST THEE”** – We must always understand that as true believers, the Lord does not impute sin to us, or have anything **“against”** us in a legal, judicial way of condemnation. We are all righteous in His sight based on Christ’s righteousness imputed, and this never changes (*Rom. 8:31-39*). But as to our state here on earth as sinners saved by grace and in struggling through the warfare of the flesh and Spirit, the Lord will reprove and chastise us for our sins. We are always in need of correction and repentance.

**“THOU HAST LEFT THY FIRST LOVE”** – Two views: (1) They **“LEFT”** their zeal and fervent love that marked their initial calling into the body of Christ and had grown cold and tired in their passion and enthusiasm for the Gospel, evangelism, personal growth, and zeal for worship and service. This is certainly possible for true believers, and we are told by the Lord not to fall into such a state of spiritual apathy. (2) They became negligent in love for fellow-believers who suffered for righteousness’ sake. Love not only binds us together in the fellowship of grace and truth, but also motivates and empowers us to help fellow-believers who are suffering (*1 John 3:10-18*). Sometimes in our zeal to stand

for truth and in being involved in our own suffering persecution we can neglect the needs of our brethren. This seems to have become the prevailing attitude and practice of this church.

**(2:5) – “REMEMBER THEREFORE FROM WHENCE THOU ART FALLEN”** – This is similar to the exhortation in *1 John 4:7-13*. Recall the love God has toward us in Christ Jesus. Whenever we neglect our brethren, this is the love from which we fall. He is not saying we fall out of God’s love or the love of God within us by the work of the Holy Spirit is totally absent. Nothing can separate us from God’s love in Christ. But we can fall away concern for brethren and expressing love for them as we stand together in the Gospel ministry and stand against a fallen world that hates us.

**“REPENT, AND DO THE FIRST WORKS”** – If we have fallen into this state of mind, we as believers must realize this and change our minds in getting back to the works you did at the first when you helped and supported true brothers and sisters when they suffered for their testimony of Christ and His truth.

**“OR ELSE I WILL COME UNTO THEE QUICKLY, AND WILL REMOVE THY CANDLESTICK OUT OF HIS PLACE, EXCEPT THOU REPENT”** – Christ’s true church will never die, but He will remove the witness of a local church from a community. We know God is sovereign, and He will save His people, but He has ordained the means to bring His elect to Christ through the preaching of the Gospel. We know God’s elect will be saved, but we also know they will hear and believe the Gospel (*2 Thess. 2:13-14*).

**(2:6)** – We do not know for certain who the **“NICOLAITANS”** were. It is a compound word – *“nikao”* (“to conquer”), and *“laos”* (“the people”). This could refer to an attempt to divide and make an unnatural distinction between the clergy and laity, creating a division in which the clergy exercised rulership over the laity. This is when men seek to promote themselves and their own authority over the Word of God. Another theory is that there was a man named Nicolaus of Antioch, who apostatized from the truth and formed an antinomian gnostic cult which taught (among other things) that one must indulge in sin in order to understand it. Either way, Christ and His people **“HATE THE DEEDS OF THE NICOLAITANS.”**

**(2:7) – “HE THAT HATH AN EAR, LET HIM HEAR WHAT THE SPIRIT SAITH UNTO THE CHURCHES”** – Every man has an ear naturally, but only those who have been born of God have been given spiritual ears (*Matt. 13:10-16*). The hearing ear is the work of the Holy Spirit imparting spiritual life and grace, the circumcised heart and ears enabling a sinner to believe in Christ, submit to His righteousness as the only ground of salvation, repent of every false way, and to heed, embrace, and believe the Word of God.

**“TO HIM THAT OVERCOMETH”** – Overcomers are true believers who have victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil through the Lord Jesus Christ. This overcoming involves looking to Jesus Christ as the Author and Finisher of our faith, resting in Him alone for complete victory and is evidenced by hearing and believing *“what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”* This is evidence of spiritual and eternal life in Christ and signified by **“WILL I GIVE TO EAT OF THE TREE OF LIFE, WHICH IS IN THE MIDST OF THE PARADISE OF GOD.”** This is a direct reference to the *“tree of life”* first mentioned in *Genesis 2:9*. It is a symbol of spiritual and eternal life from which man fallen in sin is barred (*Gen. 3:22-24*). Christ is the believer’s *“tree of life”* as He is the only way of spiritual and eternal life (*John 14:6; 17:1-4*). His righteousness imputed and received by God-given faith is the ground of spiritual and eternal life, and there is no other way of life but Him (*Rom. 5:21*).

**(2:8) – “SMYRNA”** means “myrrh,” the substance used for perfume and often used to anoint a dead body. It is a symbol of suffering, and the church at Smyrna was not only a church suffering persecution for the Gospel but an example of the whole church as persecuted by the world for righteousness’s sake throughout the last age. Smyrna was called the crown of Asia as it was considered the most beautiful city in Asia Minor and a center of science and medicine. **“THESE THINGS SAID THE FIRST AND THE LAST, WHICH WAS DEAD, AND IS ALIVE”** – These words were from the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal, Lord and Savior, Who died for their sins and arose again unto eternal life because of their justification. This would bring comfort to believers going through severe persecutions even unto death. Remember Christ Who died is now alive. His death is our life because as our sins imputed to Him demanded His death as our Redeemer, His righteousness imputed to us demands our spiritual and eternal life (*Rom. 5:21*).

**(2:9) – “I KNOW THY WORKS”** – These works were the fruit and evidence of God’s power and grace in Christ. The particular works of which Christ takes notice are **“TRIBULATION, AND POVERTY”** they were suffering over their testimony of the Gospel. The church in the last days will go through a severe time of tribulation, not just seven years, but throughout the New Covenant age up to the return of our Savior. This persecution is common to all believers in all generations to some degree. If we follow Christ and seek His righteousness and God’s glory, denying any possibility of salvation based on any other ground, we will suffer some form of persecution. This suffering for Christ is a strong testimony of genuine faith (*cf. Matt. 5:10-12; John 3:19-20; 15:18—16:4; Rom. 8:16-18; Php. 1:27-30; Heb. 12:1-13*).

**“(BUT YOU ARE RICH)”** – No matter what believers go through in this life in persecution and poverty, this does not reflect their standing before God and state of eternal blessedness and the eternal riches we possess by virtue of our union with Christ by the grace of God. In Christ we have the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God in Christ (*Rom. 11:33*). In Christ, we are blessed with ALL spiritual blessings (*Eph. 1:3*), the riches of God’s grace (*Eph. 1:7*), the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints (*Eph. 1:18*), and the unsearchable riches of Christ (*Eph. 3:8*). This wealth of salvation, eternal life, righteousness, and glory is summed up as *“an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you”* (*1 Pet. 1:4*). What a great contrast between this church and the church at Laodicea to whom Christ, in essence, said, “You think you’re rich, but you are not” (*Rev. 3:17*).

**“AND I KNOW THE BLASPHEMY OF THEM WHICH SAY THEY ARE JEWS, AND ARE NOT, BUT ARE THE SYNAGOGUE OF SATAN”** – This involves the Jews in the congregation who claimed to be the people of God based on their physical connection to Abraham. Here, the distinction is made between Abraham’s natural seed, the ethnic Jews, and Abraham’s spiritual seed, heirs of the promise of salvation by the grace of God in Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul made this distinction as to who are the true people of God (*Rom. 2:28-29; 9:6-8; Gal. 3:6-9; 6:14-16; Phil. 3:1-3*). Paul describes SPIRITUAL Israel saved by grace and under the headship of Christ. Notice how John identifies these unbelieving Jews as **“the synagogue of Satan”** (*cf., John 8:44*). They claimed to be followers of Jesus Christ, but they were not submitted to His righteousness alone as the way of salvation and justification before God (*Rom. 9:31—10:4*). We must understand that all who seek salvation, or any part of it, by their works or by anything other than the grace and mercy of God in Christ are following a desire inspired by Satan (*2 Cor. 4:3-6*).

**(2:10) – “FEAR NONE OF THOSE THINGS WHICH THOU SHALT SUFFER”** – The Lord encourages believers suffering persecution and poverty. This trouble could not separate them from the love and grace of God in Christ (*Rom. 8:31-39*). **“BEHOLD, THE DEVIL SHALL CAST SOME OF YOU INTO PRISON, THAT YE MAY BE TRIED”** – Christ would allow Satan to persecute the church, even to the point of casting many of them *“into prison,”* but there are three things to keep in mind:

(1) **“THAT YE MAY BE TRIED”** – Even though Satan and his followers are the unholy instruments of persecution, the ultimate cause of these things is God Himself Who sends them as tests of our faith (*James 1:1-4; 1 Pet. 4:12-16*). Trials do not create faith; they reveal faith in Christ. All things God sends our way are ultimately for His glory and our spiritual and eternal good.

(2) **“AND YOU SHALL HAVE TRIBULATION TEN DAYS”** – This is not literally **“ten days”** but symbolic way of a short period of time. Christ insures His church that persecution would only be a brief span of time, but that the glory to come is an eternity (*Psa. 30:5; Rom. 8:17-18; Heb. 12:1-3*). In *Daniel 1:12-14* Daniel and seven others asked to endure a 10-day time of testing to demonstrate to the Babylonians that Daniel and the others had God’s blessings. The number **“ten”** symbolizes Divine perfection showing that whatever period of time the church on earth goes through persecution, at the end it will be completed, and the church will never be persecuted again. After those **“ten days”** it will be apparent to all God’s enemies that all who belong to Jesus Christ are blessed and have been vindicated by God.

(3) **“BE YE FAITHFUL TO DEATH, AND I WILL GIVE YOU A CROWN OF LIFE”** – The end goal of being **“faithful to death,”** enduring the trials of persecution and poverty, is the gift of **“a crown of life,”** eternal life and glory in Christ. Death for the true believer is not the end. No matter what Satan and the world try to do to persecute us, even kill us, Christ has overcome Satan and the world. The Lord said, *“And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell”* (*Matt. 10:28*). Christ has conquered death and hell. We will live forever with Him. It is also important to remember this **“crown of life”** is not a **“crown”** we earn from God by our endurance. First, we only endure by the grace and power of God in Christ, not by our own power (*Php. 1:6; 2:12-13; 2 Tim. 1:12; Jude 24-25*). Secondly, our perseverance in the faith does not earn our salvation. It only proves and evidences our salvation by the grace of God in Christ.

**(2:11)** – Christ closes this letter to the church at Smyrna with an encouragement to listen and heed what He has taught. These words of Christ are communicated to His people by the Holy Spirit Who has given us ears to hear and obey in faith what the Lord has said. This is a message to the regenerate child of God who has ears to hear, who has been born again by the Holy Spirit. The unregenerate, the natural man, will not hear, receive, believe, and obey these truths. He closes with a promise that meets their situation. Many of Christ’s true disciples may be killed by the enemies of Christ and His truth, but they **“SHALL NOT BE HURT OF THE SECOND DEATH,”** which is eternal death. Eternal death has no claim upon God’s elect in Christ (*Rom. 8:1,33-34; 1 Cor. 15:55-58*). This promise is again to **“HE THAT OVERCOMETH,”** the believer who perseveres in the faith unto the end. Again, all who persevere unto the end do so by the grace and power of God in Christ. We overcome, have victory over sin, Satan, the world, and death, because Christ has won the victory by His power and goodness to save us (*John 16:33; 1 John 5:4-5*).

**(2:12) – “PERGAMOS”** or “*Pergamum*” means exalted, lofty, elevated. It was located on a huge rocky hill. Rome had made it the capital of the province of Asia. It was a place of idol worship where the pagan god of healing was worshiped, and there was a great temple to Caesar Augustus, along with many pagan altars and the great altar of Zeus. Like the others, this letter was addressed to the “**ANGEL**” (messenger) of the church. Christ identifies Himself here as “**HE WHICH HATH THE SHARP SWORD WITH TWO EDGES,**” a direct reference to the Word of God (*Heb. 4:12-13*). The Holy Spirit uses the Word of God, the Gospel of God’s grace in Christ, both to convict us of sin and to drive us to Christ for salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, and glory. This is also Christ’s Word of judgment and discernment – “*the word of righteousness*” by which we as believers can “*discern good and evil*” (*Heb. 5:12-14*).

**(2:13) – “I KNOW THY WORKS”** – Christ recognized their works as the fruit of His power and grace and as the result of faith and love in the obedience of grace. “**AND WHERE THOU DWELLEST**” – The church at Pergamos was in a very difficult place – “**EVEN WHERE SATAN’S SEAT (throne) IS.**” It was a place of idolatry, where Satan’s deception was very popular. He commends them for standing firm in His “**NAME,**” for His glory and truth. “**AND HAST NOT DENIED MY FAITH**” – By the grace of God, they had not denied Christ and His truth in the face of much opposition. A brother named “**ANTIPAS**” had given his life for the cause of Christ, but, by the grace of God, this church still stood firm for the faith.

**(2:14)** – In Smyrna we saw an example of Satan persecuting the true church of Jesus Christ. Here in Pergamos we see an example of Satan seducing the church (*1 John 2:26*). This seduction is intended to draw the church away from Christ, away from complete loyalty and for Him and His truth (*2 Thess. 2:9-10*). Christ rebuked them because they tolerated false professors who held “**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.**” This is the sin of compromise. When Balac (king of Moab) called for Balaam (a false prophet) to curse Israel, God restrained him. Much to Balac's disgust, God forced Balaam to bless His people (*Num. 22-24*). Yet, Israel listened to Balaam’s advice and compromised becoming involved in Baal worship (*Num. 25:1-3; 31:16*). The “*doctrine of Balaam*” is compromise with false religion. Balaam did not urge Israel to deny God explicitly, but he advised them to tolerate Baal worship by eating “*things sacrificed to idols*” when offered to them to keep peace with their neighbors. As is always the case, a little compromise leads to more as Balaam advised the Israelite men to “*commit fornication*” by intermarrying with pagan women.

Compromise is the way of least resistance, approved of by the world, and easiest on the flesh. But any compromise of God's truth is an open denial of Christ (*2 Cor. 6:14-18*). The only way to get along with false religion is to remove “*offence of the cross*” (*Gal. 5:11*), to remove the plain light of truth in Christ that men by nature hate (*John 3:19-20; 15:18—16:3*). False religion that comes in the name of Christianity but which preaches and promotes salvation by works, that which denies the sovereignty of God, exalts the will of man, that which denies or diminishes the power of the finished work of Christ to save all He came to save, is totally opposed to the true Gospel of God’s grace in Christ. We must never seek agreement with such, not even in the name of peace and brotherly love.

**(2:15)** – Another rebuke the Lord had for this church was their holding (embracing, laying hold of, holding fast) **“THE DOCTRINE OF THE NICOLAITANS.”** See comments on *Revelation 2:6*. **“Nicolaitans”** were heretics who claimed to be “Christian” but who promoted ungodly doctrines, practices, and attitudes. Some believe they promoted open immorality, such as sexual sins, which may be indicated by the mention of **“fornication”** in **2:14**. The truth of God’s grace never excuses or promotes open immorality. Those who promote and excuse such things deny the truth and power of God’s grace. I believe it is more likely that the **“Nicolaitans”** were those who sought to rule over people so as to have clerical authority so as to seduce believers to follow them instead of Christ and His Word. This is what leads the church into compromise and ungodly doctrines and practices, even false gospels (*Gal. 1:6-9*).

**(2:16)** – **“REPENT”** – The only cure for such compromise and evil practices is repentance which is the gift of God in His people (*cf. 2 Cor. 7:8-11*). We must be continually brought to Godly sorrow over our sin as we war against the flesh, and in light of the matchless grace of God in Christ Who died and paid the penalty of all our sins. Christ has freely forgiven us and justified us by His righteousness alone. We owe Him our love and obedience as we are motivated by His grace and love toward us and by our love and gratitude to Him. If repentance did not come, Christ would **“COME UNTO THEE QUICKLY”** and **“FIGHT AGAINST THEM WITH THE SWORD”** of His Word – the sharp, two-edged sword of truth. God’s truth is the weapon of our warfare to fight against all compromise, heresy, and evil (*2 Cor. 10:1-6*). We need to understand that the Lord Jesus Christ never fights against His true people. He always preserves, protects, and cares for them. God is always FOR His true children (*Rom. 8:31-39*). Even when He chastens us, it is for His glory and our good. However, lack of repentance in the areas described above proves one to be a false professor of Christianity.

**(2:17)** – This is to all of us today to whom God has given spiritual ears to hear (heed) and obey His Word. These are the words of God the Holy Spirit to the churches in John’s day and in our day. **“TO HIM THAT OVERCOMETH”** again describes the true believer who perseveres in the faith unto the end. All who persevere unto the end do so by the grace and power of God in Christ. We overcome, have victory over sin, Satan, the world, and death, because Christ has won the victory by His power and goodness to save us (*John 16:33; 1 John 5:4-5*). **“WILL I GIVE TO EAT OF THE HIDDEN MANNA”** – This is a symbol of Christ and eternal life for His people by the power of His blood and righteousness imputed (*Rom. 5:21*). Christ is our **“manna,”** our Bread from heaven, and He is hidden from all who do not believe and live upon Him (*John 6:32-58*). **“AND WILL GIVE HIM A WHITE STONE, AND IN THE STONE A NEW NAME WRITTEN, WHICH NO MAN KNOWETH SAVING HE THAT RECEIVETH IT”** – In the Roman courts between the judges and the accused was an urn. After hearing the evidence, if the judges found the accused guilty, they would place a black stone in the urn. If they found him not guilty, they would place there a white stone. This is the justified sinner’s eternal state and standing before God based solely upon the merits of Christ’s blood and righteousness. We are eternally justified, washed, sanctified, eternally accepted before God through Christ, our Surety. Our **“new name written”** is the name that identifies us with Christ our Savior (*cf. Jer. 23:5-6; 33:15-16*).

## LESSON 8 – THE DANGER OF UNGODLY TOLERATION      REVELATION 2:18-29

**(2:18)** – “**THYATIRA**” was a smaller city famous for trade-guilds connected in business with idolatry. Lydia was from Thyatira (*Acts 16:13-15*). Each trade-guild had its own guardian idol. To be successful in business, one had to belong to one of these guilds, and membership implied he worshipped the idol. Obviously, this was a major problem for a believer. If they left the guild, he could not support his family. If he stayed and refused to join the pagan practices, he would be persecuted. If he participated in the feasts, he sinned against God and his own conscience as well as openly denying Christ.

The Lord identifies Himself as the “**SON OF GOD**,” which speaks of His deity and His sovereign right to sit in judgment of all men. “**HIS EYES LIKE UNTO A FLAME OF FIRE**” speaks of His ability to see and judge according to truth (*Rom. 2:2*). Whatever profession men make, Christ knows the reality of the hearts and motives. To those who are not found IN HIM, God is a consuming fire. To those who stand IN HIM, washed in His blood and clothed in His righteousness, He is the light of glory. All who are in Him have new hearts, broken and contrite over sin, hearts of faith in Christ and love for Him and His people.

“**HIS FEET ARE LIKE FINE BRASS**” which speaks of His power both to conquer His enemies and save His people from sin. It could be a direct reference to *Daniel 3* when the Lord appeared in the fiery furnace with the three Hebrew children and saved them from death. He Himself, like refined brass burned in a furnace, went under the judgment of God for His people to suffer unto death and satisfy the wrath of God against them. He put away our sins and established righteousness whereby God could be just to justify us. We who are in Christ have nothing to fear from judgment because there is no condemnation in Him (*Rom. 8:1,33-34*).

**(2:19)** – “**I KNOW THY WORKS**” – This is the fruit of His power and grace in their lives. They bore the fruit of grace and faith in Him (*Eph. 2:8-10*). “**CHARITY**” is love for Christ, His truth, and His people. Like faith, this love is the gift of God shed abroad within our hearts by the Holy Spirit as He shows us God’s love for us in Christ (*1 John 4:10*). “**SERVICE**” is their work and endeavors to spread the Gospel truth to be used of God as instruments of gathering His elect. “**FAITH**” is faithfulness to Christ and His Word in service and worship. “**PATIENCE**” is endurance under trials in the face of opposition and persecution. This is all by the power and grace of God in Christ, not by human power and determination. “**AND THE LAST TO BE MORE THAN THE FIRST**” is continual growth in grace and in knowledge of Christ, which is the way of all who are truly in Christ (*John 15:1-8; 2 Pet. 3:18*).

**(2:20)** – A danger to be avoided by the church in the last days is ungodly toleration. As believers we are to be tolerant of many things, but not anything that denies the glory and truth of Christ in the salvation of sinners by God’s grace. Apparently there was a woman in the church claiming to be a **PROPHETESS**.” Our Lord calls her “**JEZEBEL**” after Ahab's wife, who had brought idolatry into Israel. This woman whose real name we do not know brought in false doctrine. The Word of God clearly forbids women to be pastors or preachers in the church (*1 Tim. 2:11-12*). They allowed this woman to seduce the people with her doctrine – “**TO COMMIT FORNICATION, AND TO EAT THINGS SACRIFICED UNTO IDOLS**.” She promoted tolerance of and participation in the pagan practices in order to get along with idolaters. By allowing her to do this, the church became a partner with her in her evil deeds (*2 John 9-11*).

**(2:21)** – This is the longsuffering of God toward the wicked (*Rom. 9:22*). God did not bring judgment upon her immediately but warned her through the preaching of His Word to repent. Because of her own self-righteousness, pride, self-love, and unbelief, she refused to repent. Do not ever doubt that even though God is sovereign, He still holds people accountable and responsible to believe and repent. **“AND SHE REPENTED NOT”** describes not only the natural sin and depravity of this woman, but the natural sin and depravity of all of us by nature. If left to ourselves, none of us would repent (*Rom. 3:10-12*). A repentant sinners is a miracle of God’s grace and power through Jesus Christ.

**(2:22-23)** – This is God’s judgment against all who refuse to believe and repent. **“ADULTERY”** is spiritual adultery against Christ whom such false professors claim as their spiritual husband (*cf. 2 Cor. 11:2-3*). They claim to have been washed in His blood and clothed in His righteousness imputed, but they defile that pure garment with sin. **“HER CHILDREN”** are all who follow her in her wicked ways. Christ will search **“THE REINS AND HEARTS”** and expose them for what they are – false professors. He will give them what they have earned according to their works which is eternal death. Our only hope of eternal salvation and life is to receive, not what we have earned according to our works, but only that which Christ has earned for us according to HIS work – the righteousness of God revealed in the Gospel (*Rom. 1:16-17; 3:21-26*). Do we really trust HIM and submit to HIM and HIS righteousness as the only ground of salvation? The only way to know for sure is to submit to the judgment of the Lord (*Jer. 17:5-13*).

**(2:24-25)** – Christ has a message of grace and love, encouragement, for His people. The **“BURDEN”** of condemnation has been lifted from us completely by the work of Jesus Christ as Surety and Substitute. It has been lifted from our conscience by the Holy Spirit when He convinced us of sin and brought us to Christ for all salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, eternal life and glory. Notice how Christ links knowing **“THE DEPTHS OF SATAN”** with having the **“DOCTRINE”** of Satan (*cf. John 8:44; 2 Cor. 4:3-4; 11:3-4*). We are commanded to **“HOLD FAST”** the simplicity of Christ, the liberty we have in Christ, the singleness of purpose and truth revealed in Christ till He comes again. We do so only by God’s grace.

**(2:26-28)** – Again Christ promises victory to those who overcome and keep His **“WORKS UNTO THE END.”** This is perseverance in the faith according to the will, power, and grace of God in Christ Who has overcome our enemies. Notice how true believers hold on to HIS works, not their own. Our hope is built on the works of Christ, not our works. **“TO HIM WILL I GIVE POWER OVER THE NATIONS”** – This speaks of the judgment of the nations as the enemies of Christ. All who persevere in the faith of the Gospel shall sit as kings with Christ upon His throne and rule over all things with Him forever (*Matt. 19:28; Luke 22:29; Rev. 3:21; 20:4*). All believers will sit with Christ in judgment over all His enemies. Every unbeliever, and Satan himself, shall be judged and condemned by our Lord. We will be witnesses in the judgment (*1 Cor. 6:3; Heb. 13:17; Ps. 2:8-9*). The Lord Jesus Christ will give us Himself. He is our souls’ eternal **“MORNING STAR”** (*2 Pet. 1:19; Rev. 22:16*). The Day Star which will introduce us into glory is Christ himself! He is our glory. He is our crown. He is our heaven (*Ps. 73:25-26*).

**(2:29)** – The children of Jezebel will not hear and heed these words, but the children of the Lord Jesus Christ will hear because God the Holy Spirit opens their ears and pours the Word of God within.



## LESSON 9 – THE DANGER OF NO REPENTANCE

## Revelation 3:1-6

**(3:1)** – Sardis was the proud capital of Lydia situated on a hill the people considered impregnable. They were a proud, over-confident people. In AD 17 it was partly destroyed by an earthquake, and by the time this epistle was written, it had been conquered a few times. As one writer put it, "Again and again, the self-satisfied and boastful inhabitants of Sardis had seen destruction coming upon them 'as a thief in the night,' most suddenly and unexpectedly." (Hendrickson) This Gospel church had been established in a decaying city which was facing a slow death. Sadly, the condition of the city as a whole reflected the condition of the church here.

Christ identifies Himself as the One **“THAT HATH THE SEVEN SPIRITS OF GOD, AND THE SEVEN STARS.”** The **“seven Spirits of God”** symbolizes the complete work of the Holy Spirit in giving life from Christ to dead sinners. The **“seven stars”** are ministers of the Gospel which is the Word of life when empowered by the Holy Spirit (*Rom. 1:16-17*). This was very appropriate for this church as their problem was spiritual deadness – **“I KNOW THY WORKS, THAT THOU HAST A NAME THAT THOU LIVEST, AND ART DEAD.”** Their works revealed they were Christian in name only. They had a reputation of being “Christian,” but no spiritual life, no real commitment to Christ and His truth. Their faith was mere profession and not the confession of faith that leads to *“repentance unto life”* (*Acts 11:18*) and a real love of Christ and His truth.

**(3:2)** – Christ tells them to wake up, take notice, and be diligent to **“STRENGTHEN”** (cultivate and grow), **“THE THINGS THAT REMAIN THAT ARE READY TO DIE.”** They had the truth of the Gospel and its doctrines, but they did not have the life of the Gospel. Whenever truth continues to fall on deaf ears, it will eventually die out. This admonition is for them to consider and heed the truth instead of settling for a mere profession of truth. Seek the conviction that only God can give by His Spirit. Seek true faith and repentance both of which are gifts from God. **“FOR I HAVE NOT FOUND THY WORKS PERFECT BEFORE GOD”** – Christ is not speaking of sinless perfection here. None of us are perfectly sinless within ourselves, and none of us bring forth works that are perfectly sinless. The only sinless perfection we as believers can and must claim is our perfection in Christ based on His blood and righteousness imputed alone. **“Perfect”** here carries the idea of completion, of reaching an intended and desired goal – the goal of repentance of dead works and love of Christ and His truth so as to see it and guard it as our very life. It is God’s will that all His elect come to repentance (*2 Pet. 3:9*), which is the goal of faith in Christ (*Php. 3:3-9*). From this comes growth in grace and in knowledge of Christ as we seek to cultivate the fruit of the Spirit and fight the warfare of flesh and the Spirit. This is a testimony that Christ is the only way of salvation, righteousness, eternal life, and glory, and that every other way is a false way, a way of death and damnation.

**(3:3)** – **“REMEMBER THEREFORE HOW THOU HAST RECEIVED AND HEARD, AND HOLD FAST, AND REPENT”** – To consider the Word of God in the Gospel lightly or as something less than life and death is to court death and damnation. He calls on them to **“remember”** the great truths of God’s grace in Christ, the doctrines that honor God, bring us to conviction of our depravity and sin, exalt Christ and drive us to Him and His righteousness alone for all salvation, and which motivate us unto love and obedience in the faith. **“Hold fast, and repent”** means to believe Christ, believe His Word, and live by this Word unto repentance of dead works and all sin. The only other alternative is eternal death.

**(3:4)** – There were a few true believers in this church, a remnant according to the election of grace, who had truly received and submitted to Christ and His righteousness imputed as the only ground of salvation (*Rom. 10:1-4*). They had not **“DEFILED THEIR GARMENTS”** – They had not polluted the perfect robe of Christ’s righteousness imputed to them by a mere outward profession of truth without true repentance of dead works. Whenever men claim to know, believe, love, and follow Christ, but who refuse to repent, and even give some credit to other ways of salvation (works, free-willism), they defile the perfect garment they claim to have by the grace of God in Christ. **“THEY SHALL WALK WITH ME IN WHITE: FOR THEY ARE WORTHY”** – They are truly saved, justified in and by Christ. They truly believe in Him and have His *“white”* robe of righteousness imputed to them. They truly walk with Christ and are *“worthy”* of all the blessings of salvation and eternal life IN and BY HIM. Their worthiness is not in themselves and not their own but that which they have in Christ (*Eph. 1:6-7; Rev. 5*).

**(3:5)** – All who by the power and grace of God in Christ overcome this sad spiritual condition, **“SHALL BE CLOTHED IN WHITE RAIMENT.”** They are truly justified before God in Christ. Their salvation is real and not merely a claim that cannot be supported and will not hold at Judgment. Christ **“WILL NOT BLOT OUT HIS NAME OUT OF THE BOOK OF LIFE.”** These have eternal life and cannot perish. Their names were written in the Lamb’s book of life before the foundation of the world. To be blotted out of the book of life does not mean it is possible to lose salvation. If that were the case then Christ would never have said of His sheep, *“And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand”* (*John 10:28*). Those whose names were written in the Lamb’s book of life (*Rev. 13:8; 21:27*) can never perish or have their names erased from that book. If the Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ, has died for them, they can never perish. This is said here in the context of those who claim to be saved, to be in the book of life, but who are not really saved. It is simply a way of stating that those who had no more than an outward profession of salvation, of being in the book of life, have never had any part in it at all (*Rev. 17:8; 20:15*). Christ will **“CONFESS HIS NAME BEFORE MY FATHER, AND BEFORE HIS ANGELS”** – Christ will publicly confess them as His own, and they will enter the eternal bliss of glory in and by Christ.

**(3:6)** – All who have been born again by the Spirit of God will hear and obey what the Holy Spirit has said to the churches. We know that it is by the power of God alone that any sinner will hear and believe these warnings of Scripture.

**(3:7)** – Philadelphia was located in a valley on a very important road. It was originally established to be a center for spreading Greek culture to other cities. This church was a small group of believers who stood firm for the Gospel of God's grace in Christ. They boldly confessed Christ as the only way of salvation and that any other way was false and deadly to the souls of men. They were not great in number, but they, by the grace of God, were great in faith. They were not admired by men, nor were they influential rich in material things, but they were rich in the grace and truth of God in Christ. They represent the true church of Christ remaining faithful to Him and His Word in the face of opposition. Christ had no rebuke or reproof for them, not because they were perfect. There is no such thing as a perfect church here on earth. But they were an example of a church being faithful and diligent in the things of Christ. God honors His Word, and He blesses those who remain faithful to Him in the ministry of the Word.

Again, this letter is addressed to the minister or pastor of the church to be delivered to the whole church. Christ identifies Himself as **“HE THAT IS HOLY,”** which expresses not only His purity but also His separateness from all others (*Heb. 7:26*). There is none like our God and Savior. It is our identification with Him, our separation unto Him, and our holiness in Him that separates us, the true church, from the world. **“HE THAT IS TRUE”** describes His truth and faithfulness to save all His people and bring us to final glory by His power and grace, based on His blood and righteousness alone. Christ is the way, the truth, and the life (*John 14:6*). **“HE THAT HATH THE KEY OF DAVID, HE THAT OPENETH, AND NO MAN SHUTTETH; AND SHUTTETH, AND NO MAN OPENETH”** describes His supreme authority in the kingdom of God and the government of grace (*Luke 1:32-33*). He Himself is the **“key”** of salvation for His people. He Himself is the **“key”** to open the Scriptures. He alone opens the way to God for sinners by the merits of His finished work on the cross as revealed to us by the Holy Spirit in the preaching of the Gospel. No man can shut that door and keep His people from entering in. He alone shuts that way to any and all who seek to enter by their own works, will, and efforts. No man can open that door for sinners who seek salvation any other way but Christ (*Acts 4:10-12; 1 Cor. 3:11*).

**(3:8)** – **“I KNOW THY WORKS”** as they are evidence and fruit of God's power and grace given them through the Lord Jesus Christ. **“BEHOLD, I HAVE SET BEFORE THEE AN OPEN DOOR, AND NO MAN CAN SHUT IT”** – We know Christ Himself is the one and only door of salvation, the way to God for sinners. Here it speaks of the liberty and opportunity to preach the Gospel of His grace to the lost. This is a gift from God. He does not tell us exactly what this open door is, but it usually describes a God-given opportunity to preach the Gospel to the lost (*2 Cor. 2:12*). Christ will have His sheep, and He brings them into the fold by sending out His witnesses to preach the Gospel to them. No man can shut the door of grace and keep them out. **“FOR THOU HAST A LITTLE STRENGTH, AND HAST KEPT MY WORD, AND HAST NOT DENIED MY NAME”** – They had little power. This group of believers did not have great numbers, buildings, or programs, but they had the grace and power of God to accomplish His goals and to stand against all opposition. Therefore they had been faithful to His Word and did not deny Him and His glory (*Php. 2:12-13; 2 Cor. 12:10*).

**(3:9)** – Some of the most adamant enemies of the Gospel of God's grace in Christ have been Jews who claim to be the people of God but who deny and hate Christ, His truth, and His church. They are again described as **“THE SYNAGOGUE OF SATAN”** (*cf. John 8:44*). They claim to be children of God, but

they lie. Only those who are IN CHRIST are the true children of God (*Rom. 9:6-8; Gal. 3:26-29; Php. 3:3*). Any who seek salvation, forgiveness, and/or justification before God based on anything other than the righteousness of Christ imputed and received by faith are fulfilling an evil desire inspired by Satan (*Rom. 9:31—10:4*). Christ says that in the end the true children of God who are despised of men will be exalted over all our enemies. He **“WILL MAKE THEM TO COME AND WORSHIP BEFORE THY FEET, AND TO KNOW THAT I HAVE LOVED THEE.”** This does not mean they will worship us, but that they will be forced to acknowledge and agree that we are the true children of God and that God loves us in Christ.

**(3:10)** – Christ will preserve all His people. None of them shall perish. The evidence of being one of His people is the fact that by His grace and power, we keep (hold on to, grasp firmly) **“THE WORD OF MY PATIENCE”** which is the Gospel of His finished work wherein He endured even unto the death of the cross to accomplish all for us (*Heb. 12:1-3*). It includes His endurance as our Mediator and Intercessor to keep us unto the time of His second coming. He will also preserve His people in that great and final **“HOUR OF TEMPTATION”** where the whole world without Christ will be exposed and judged guilty and sentenced to perish eternally. Those **“THAT DWELL UPON THE EARTH”** describes not everyone who will be living on earth at the time of Christ’s second coming, but all who are OF the earth, spiritually connected to the world in opposition to Christ. The only hope for any sinner now and forever is to be found IN CHRIST, washed in His blood and clothed in His righteousness.

**(3:11)** – Christ is coming soon. He commands them **“HOLD THAT FAST WHICH THOU HAST, THAT NO MAN TAKE THY CROWN.”** We know our perseverance in the faith is not due to our own strength but to Christ who preserves us by His grace and power (*2 Tim. 1:12; Jude 24-25*). God uses means to preserve His people, and one of the means is our continuation in His Word by which we persevere. Our **“crown”** is the crown of everlasting life and glory which is given to us through Christ who is our life and glory.

**(2:12)** – All who overcome in victory over the world by the grace and power of God, He will **“MAKE A PILLAR IN THE TEMPLE OF MY GOD.”** This does not mean that any of us will have a greater reward or position over other believers in the temple of God, the true church glorified. It does not mean that it is up to us to hold up the church. Christ is our foundation and strength. It means we will be monuments to the glory of God in Christ and His grace to save us to uttermost, and all of us will have a permanent, immoveable position in the glorified church.

**“AND HE SHALL GO NO MORE OUT”** – There will be none who leave this true church. **“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”** – Christ will make it evident that we belong to God, to the New Jerusalem, and to Him, and that all blessings and privileges of the sons of God are ours forever. Our Savior’s new name, His acquired name, which He promises to write upon His people is Jehovah-tsidkenu, **“THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS”** (*Jer. 23:6 & 33:16*).

**(2:13)** – All who have been born again by the Holy Spirit, all who have ears to hear, listen to and heed what the Holy Spirit says to the churches.

**(3:14)** – Laodicea was a wealthy financial center in Asia Minor. The Lord had established a Gospel church in this city. It had a good beginning (*Col. 2:1-2; 4:13-16*), but had degenerated into an awful spiritual state. Christ identifies Himself as **“THE AMEN”** – He who is Judge of all has the last and final word in all things. He is the fulfillment and completion of all things in salvation (*2 Cor. 1:20*). He identifies Himself as **“THE FAITHFUL AND TRUE WITNESS,”** perfectly loyal, trustworthy, and honest in all things. This would particularly pertain to His office as the Judge of all. He is **“THE BEGINNING OF THE CREATION OF GOD”** – He is God Himself, the source of all life and the goal of all life, especially in the salvation of His people (*John 1:1-4; Col. 1:15-20*).

**(3:15-16)** – The **“WORKS”** did not evidence spiritual life, but the evil state of their hearts as lukewarm. **“NEITHER COLD NOR HOT”** describes an awful condition of a professing Christian who has no real conviction of truth in the Lord. He halts between two opinions and compromises the Gospel of Christ when convenient to do so. It is the opposite of zeal and firm stand in the truth of God’s grace in Christ against the world. **“I WOULD THOU WERT COLD OR HOT”** – Lukewarm water is considered useless, but **“cold”** water quenches the thirst. **“Hot”** water is cleansing and useful in healing. The Gospel is like a drink of cold water to a thirsty soul. It has the cleansing properties of hot water to the sin-stained soul. The Laodiceans had rendered themselves useless because of their lack of zeal and conviction. **“I WILL SPUE THEE OUT OF MY MOUTH”** – This expresses the Lord’s utter disgust for their **“LUKEWARM”** condition. Christ hates religion without truth, grace, and heart (*cf. Isa. 1:11-14*).

**(3:17)** – The church at Laodicea in general was unaware of their poor condition. They boasted of being **“RICH, AND INCREASED WITH GOODS, AND HAVE NEED OF NOTHING.”** This is the state of the natural man. He is evil, poor, and dead, but he thinks himself to be righteous, rich, and full of life. He judges by wrong standards, such as material wealth, physical health, numbers, etc. Christ who is **“the faithful and true witness”** tells the truth, that they are **“WRETCHED, AND MISERABLE, AND POOR, AND BLIND, AND NAKED.”** This is why the natural man hates the truth. It exposes him for what he is (*John 3:19-20*).

**(3:18)** – This is symbolic language to encourage them to seek grace, salvation, eternal life, righteousness, eternal riches, and glory in Christ as commanded in the Gospel of His grace. **“BUY OF ME GOLD TRIED IN THE FIRE”** – Salvation is not for sale, but it is described as a treasure for which a convicted sinner would readily and willingly give all he has to obtain it (*Isa. 55:1-3*). The Laodiceans judged themselves rich because they could buy the things of the world, but they were poor. The riches of God’s grace in Christ are like gold, but, as gold is refined by fire, so the grace of God comes to sinners only through the blood of Christ Who endured the fire of God’s wrath for us. Grace is gold that was refined in the oven of God’s infinite wrath and justice at Calvary. Like gold, the grace of God in Christ makes poor sinners rich before God. **“WHITE RAIMENT”** symbolizes the perfect righteousness of Christ imputed to His people and received by God-given faith (*Rom. 10:4; 2 Cor. 5:21*). This is our justification and acceptance before God. All who stand before God are clothed in Christ’s righteousness and shall not be ashamed (*Php. 3:7-10*). **“EYESALVE”** is the Gospel of God’s grace in Christ by which the Holy Spirit gives life and opens the eyes of blind sinners to see the glory and value of Christ and His blood and righteousness.

**(3:19) – “AS MANY AS I LOVE”** – This is the free, sovereign, redemptive love of God for His chosen people (*1 John 4:10*). If we are His true children, objects of His love, and not found in the end to be false professors, He will without fail, because He loves us, **“REBUKE AND CHASTEN”** us (*Heb. 12:5-11*). Thank God, He will not leave His children to themselves. He will not leave or forsake us. He will not withdraw His love from us, and His love insures our complete salvation and final glory in Jesus Christ (*Rom. 8:33-39*). The remedy is to **“BE ZEALOUS”** for the Word and worship of God and to **“REPENT”** of being luke warm. This zeal and repentance are both gifts of God’s grace through Christ.

**(3:20) – “BEHOLD, I STAND AT THE DOOR, AND KNOCK”** – This is not the Lord standing at the door of our hearts begging us to let Him in. Man left to his own natural desires and will would never open his heart to Christ (*John 3:19-20; Rom. 3:10-12*). In salvation by His power and grace God must give us a new heart and a new spirit. We must be born again by the Holy Spirit and brought to conviction of sin giving us the desire to receive Him as Lord and Savior (*Ezek. 36:26-27; John 3:3-7*). This is not the message of evangelism but of judgment to those who claim to be Christians but who are in an awful state of mind. It is like the **“door”** of judgment in the parable of the ten virgins (*Matt. 25:1-13*), where Christ spoke of five foolish virgins who had lamps without oil, a profession of faith without conviction. When the Bridegroom came to receive His bride, the door of salvation was shut against the five foolish virgins because they had not been diligent and zealous in the Gospel, revealing they never believed. Christ calls the Laodiceans to examine themselves (*2 Cor. 13:5-6*) and repent of this awful state of mind.

**“IF ANY MAN HEAR MY VOICE, AND OPEN THE DOOR”** – All who hear His voice are those whom the Holy Spirit has given life – spiritual ears to hear, love, and obey the truth. His voice is not only the Gospel of grace, the glory of God and the righteousness of Christ revealed (*Rom. 1:16-17*), but also the word of His commandment to repent. To all who heed His command He says, **“I WILL COME IN TO HIM, AND WILL SUP WITH HIM, AND HE WITH ME”** – To **“SUP”** means to have close, unbreakable fellowship with the true people of God. The Pharisees were offended when the Lord and His disciples ate with sinners and Gentiles (*Matt. 9:10-11; Luke 15:2; Acts 11:1-3*). By the grace of God, we who believe are legally, spiritually, and eternally in union with Christ. We partake of all the spiritual blessings He has for us. When He sups with us, He is eating with sinners, but our sins have been totally and eternally removed by His precious blood. We are clothed in His white robe of righteousness imputed to us.

**(3:21) –** As in the other letters, he **“THAT OVERCOMETH”** describes the sinner saved by the grace of God in Christ. We can never overcome in our own power and goodness, but only by the power and goodness of Christ as our Lord and Savior. All whom God saves in Christ are made kings and priests together with Him (*Rev. 1:6; 5:10*), as He is alone is our sovereign King and Great High Priest.

**(3:22) –** All to whom God the Holy Spirit has given spiritual ears will hear, heed, and obey the Word of the Lord.

**(4:1)** – This begins the second vision which showing the last days viewed from God’s throne. From here to **Chapter 7** we will see Christ opening and fulfilling the seven sealed book of God’s sovereign purpose. Christ the Lamb of God slain for the sins of His people is the only one worthy to open this book.

**“AFTER THIS I LOOKED, AND, BEHOLD, A DOOR WAS OPENED IN HEAVEN”** – This symbolizes the one way into heaven, JESUS CHRIST AND HIM CRUCIFIED, for He is the doorway to heaven (*John 10:7,9; 14:6*). **“AND THE FIRST VOICE WHICH I HEARD WAS AS IT WERE OF A TRUMPET TALKING WITH ME”** – The *“trumpet”* calls John to **“COME UP”** to the throne of God where God would reveal **“THINGS WHICH MUST BE HEREAFTER,”** i.e. throughout the last days.

**(4:2)** – John was **“IMMEDIATELY”** filled with the Holy Spirit Who gave him this revelation. **“A THRONE WAS SET IN HEAVEN, AND ONE SAT ON THE THRONE”** – The *“throne”* is an emblem of God’s power and sovereignty in the salvation of His people (*1 Cor. 15:24-28*). While the church on earth is plagued with problems within and without, God’s true people are assured of victory because GOD IS ON THE THRONE AND IN CONTROL. This has always been a great source of peace and comfort to God’s people – **“THE LORD REIGNETH”** (*1 Chron. 16:31; Psa. 93:1; 96:10; 97:1; 99:1; Rev. 19:6*). No matter what happens on earth in the last days, God works *“all things after the counsel of His own will”* (*Eph. 1:11*). Another source of comfort for God’s people is that for us this is a *“throne”* of grace and mercy as we stand in Christ, washed in His blood and clothed in His righteousness (*Heb. 4:14-16*). His scepter is a scepter of righteousness as His kingdom was and is established with righteousness (*Psa. 45:6-7; Heb. 1:8*).

**(4:3)** – These precious stones symbolize the glorious character of God as both a just God and a Savior (*cf. Ezek. 1:26-28*). **“JASPER”** stones come in many colors, but this is the same as recorded in *Revelation 21:11* as a clear transparent stone symbolizing the holiness and purity God’s nature. *“Jasper”* was the last stone in the breastplate of the high priest (*Exod. 28:20*). It represented the tribe of Benjamin whom Jacob called *“the son of my right hand”* (*Gen. 35:18*), and represents Jesus Christ as He finished the work of our redemption, was raised from the dead, and ascended to the right hand of the Father.

The **“SARDINE STONE,”** sometimes *“carnelian,”* is blood red and symbolizes the holy justice of God. He will never deny or pervert His justice, neither in the punishment of the wicked nor in the salvation of His elect. For God’s elect this symbolizes the blood of Christ, the Lamb of God, and the redemption He accomplished to save us from our sins (*Acts 20:28*). God is both *“a just God AND a Savior”* (*Isa. 45:21-22*). It was the first stone in the breastplate of the high priest (*Exod. 28:17*) and represented Reuben, the first born of Jacob. Christ is *“the firstborn from the dead”* (*Col. 1:17-20*). Both these stones are part of the foundation of the New Jerusalem (*Rev. 21:19-20*), and *“jasper”* makes up the walls of the New Jerusalem (*Rev. 21:18*), which is the church of the living God built by Christ.

The **“RAINBOW”** is a reminder of God’s covenant promise of mercy in Jesus Christ (*Psa. 107:1; Lam. 3:22; Mal. 3:6*). It reminds us of Noah’s ark when God destroyed the earth but saved His people from wrath. The ark separated God’s people from the condemned world. Jesus Christ, our Ark, separates us as sinners saved by grace from the condemned world. Just as God’s wrath in the flood fell upon Noah’s ark, His wrath against our sin fell upon Christ. When God’s wrath comes down upon this world in the end, we will still be safe in our Ark, Christ Jesus. As this *“rainbow”* encircles **“the throne”**

it reminds us of how Jesus Christ is the only way of approach to and acceptance with God on this throne (*Heb. 4:14-16*). So it is a beautiful reminder that we who have fled to Christ are safe in Him (*Psa. 2:12*). He will keep His promises to us (*2 Cor. 1:20*). This **“rainbow”** shines forth **“LIKE AN EMERALD,”** which is green. Green symbolizes healing and life. All spiritual and eternal life comes from Christ Who is our life. It symbolizes resurrection from the dead and the new creation. After the storm of condemnation and death comes resurrection and life for God’s people in and by the Lord Jesus Christ.

**(4:4)** – Twenty-four **“ELDERS”** represent the church. Chapters 1-3 showed the church on earth in its earthly struggles. Here we see the identity of the church in heaven assuring us that all the struggles on earth in the last age will not defeat God’s people (*Matt. 16:18*). The church here on earth must find its true identity with the church in heaven where God and the Lamb are worshipped in spirit and in truth. What is done in Christ’s church here on earth must be conducted in light of what is being done now in heaven. The number twenty-four is twelve times two symbolizing the true church in both the Old and New Testaments (*Rev. 21:9-14*). The twelve patriarchs (sons of Jacob and tribes of Israel) represent the church in the Old Testament, and the twelve apostles represent the church in the New Testament. The church is built *“upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone”* (*Eph. 2:20*). All the redeemed, both Old and New Testament, are gathered within the true church under the headship of Christ. They are sitting upon *“thrones”* but smaller and subordinate to the greater throne of God. We are subjects of the King and have authority from Him as we have His Word (*2 Cor. 5:20*). Notice there are no vacant seats in the kingdom of God. All whom God chose before the foundation of the world, whose name were written in the Lamb’s book of life, all whom Christ redeemed by His blood and called into the kingdom, shall be saved.

**“CLOTHED IN WHITE RAIMENT”** – This is the priestly white robe which represents the righteousness of Christ imputed (charged, accounted) to His people who are also priests unto God in that we have free access to the holiest by the blood of Christ (*Heb. 10:19-22; Rev. 19:7-9*). These are the robes that have been washed in the blood of the Lamb (*Rev. 3:5; 7:13-14; Isa. 1:18*). Our standing before God is eternally secure in the righteousness of Christ which is the entire merit of His obedience unto death as our Substitute and Surety (*Rom. 1:16-17; 3:21-26; 10:4; 2 Cor. 5:21*).

**“THEY HAD ON THEIR HEADS CROWNS OF GOLD”** – By authority and power of Christ, we who are His subjects rule earth and heaven under Him (*Rev. 5:10*). These are not **“crowns”** we earn but belong to us by grace. They are incorruptible (*1 Cor. 9:25*), and are crowns of righteousness reserved for us (*2 Tim. 4:8*), of life promised in Christ (*James 1:12*), of glory that cannot be taken away (*1 Pet. 5:4*).

**(4:5)** – **“LIGHTNINGS AND THUNDERINGS AND VOICES”** represent the majesty and power of God as He works and speaks from heaven to earth. This is the power of God as He works all things after the council of His own will (*Isa. 46:9-11; Dan. 4:34-35; Rom. 8:28; Eph. 1:11*). God is not removed from the affairs of this world. He is not an absentee landlord. He is on the throne and in control of all things. **“AND THERE WERE SEVEN LAMPS OF FIRE BURNING BEFORE THE THRONE, WHICH ARE THE SEVEN SPIRITS OF GOD”** – This teaches that throughout the last days God the Holy Spirit is active working the sovereign will of God both in the judgments of God against sin and in the salvation of His elect. This is the complete work of the Holy Spirit in bringing God’s elect under the Gospel of God’s grace in Christ and in giving them life from Christ in the new birth (*cf. Isa. 11:2; Zech. 4:1-10*). He calls God’s people to faith in Christ.



**(4:6) – “AND BEFORE THE THRONE THERE WAS A SEA OF GLASS LIKE UNTO CRYSTAL”**

– In ancient times and literature the sea generally brought to mind trouble, storms, mysterious and dark, fear and death. The sea sometimes portrays man’s storm of rebellion against God. In *Revelation 13:1* we see “a beast rise up out of the sea” who leads men astray speaking “blasphemy against God” (*Rev. 13:6*). But here we see “A SEA OF GLASS LIKE UNTO CRYSTAL,” calm, smooth, pure, and clear. It shows God in control, truly working all things for His glory and the eternal good of His people in Christ. It is like the tapestry analogy where when one looks up at the bottom of the tapestry, he sees only the confused mixture of various colored threads. But when he views the tapestry from the top, he sees how all these threads come together to make clear, distinct, and beautiful patterns. Life on earth in the last days is full of trials, turmoil, but the heavenly “sea” is tranquil, calm, and clear. Christ is the one who conquers and calms the “sea” (*cf. Mark 4:35-41*). We have one other reference to the “sea” in *Revelation 15:2* where it is “mingled with fire” and where God’s people stand singing the song of Moses and the Lamb (*Rev. 15:3*) in victory over antichrist. It is “mingled with fire” showing God’s righteous wrath upon all His enemies as well as the salvation of His people through the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is worth noting also that some commentators say this has reference to the brazen laver filled with water in the holy place of the tabernacle where the priests were required to wash (*Exod. 30:18; 2 Kings 25:13*). We are washed clean by the blood of Christ (*Heb. 10:22; Rev. 1:5; 17:14*). It can also speak of the “washing of water by the Word” (*Eph. 5:26*) and the “washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost” (*Titus 3:5*). This is the fruit and evidence of salvation in the new birth. The “sea of glass” then could symbolize the ministry of the Word in the power of the Holy Spirit to bring sinners to Christ. It is a “sea” because this Word of salvation goes out all over the world (*Mark 13:10; 16:15*). It is deep as the ocean in that it contains the “deep things of God” (*1 Cor. 2:10*) – how God can be just and justify the ungodly; the things of Christ, His glorious Person as Godman, His finished work to put away sin and establish righteousness for His people. Only the Holy Spirit can reveal these things to us.

**“AND IN THE MIDST OF THE THRONE, AND ROUND ABOUT THE THRONE, WERE FOUR BEASTS FULL OF EYES BEFORE AND BEHIND”** – “Beasts” describes “living creatures.” They are not wild, untamed “beasts” as those described later in *Revelation 13*. They represent ministers of the Gospel, servants (willing, loving bondslaves) of Christ, spreading the Gospel of His grace throughout the world. Like the “sea of glass” covers the whole earth because God has a people out of every nation, these go into all the world preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They resemble both the cherubim of *Ezekiel 1:5-10; 10:12-20*, and the seraphim of *Isaiah 6:2-3*. These angelic creatures were servants and messengers of God in the Old Covenant (*Heb. 1:4-14*). They proclaimed the glory of God in Christ, the promised Messiah. These beings do not appear in the New Testament except as referenced in *Hebrews 9:5*. They, like God’s preachers today, were instruments of His power, mercy, and grace in pointing sinners to Christ for all salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, eternal life, and glory. The “eyes before and behind” show how by the power of the Holy Spirit in the Word of God, they see God’s works past, present, and the future as God works His sovereign will to glorify Himself in the salvation of His elect by Christ.

**(4:7) –** These ministers are identified with the Gospel of Christ as He is revealed in the wholeness of His Person and finished work: (1) **“THE FIRST BEAST WAS LIKE A LION”** as Christ was born, lived,

died, arose again, and is coming again as the King. The *Gospel of Matthew* emphasizes His kingship. Remember that God said the tribe of Judah was like a lion, that the King, the Ruler, would come from that tribe, and the scepter would not depart from Judah until Shiloh came (*Gen. 49:9-10; Rev. 5:5*). (2) **“THE SECOND BEAST LIKE A CALF”** (an ox) – As an ox is a beast of burden to serve, Christ is the Servant of the Father. The *Gospel of Mark* emphasizes His work as the Servant of God to redeem His people from their sins by His obedience unto death, even the death of the cross (*Php. 5:5-10*). (3) **“THE THIRD BEAST HAD A FACE AS A MAN”** – Christ is both God and man in one person. The *Gospel of Luke* emphasizes His perfect, sinless humanity united to His deity – “*For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people*” (*Heb. 2:16-17*). (4) **“THE FOURTH BEAST WAS LIKE A FLYING EAGLE”** – This symbolizes the deity of Christ as emphasized in the *Gospel of John*. He Who is our Savior is God in human flesh. He could not be the Lord our Righteousness if He were not God (*John 1:1-4,14*).

As these symbolize the totality of the Gospel message for each living creature, they also tell us something of the character of all true ministers of Christ, all by the power and grace of God. They are bold in the truth as a lion. They are servants, willing, loving bondslaves, of Christ and the church. They are men called, equipped, and sent of God to proclaim the truth, but men like those to whom they preach – sinners saved by the grace of God in Christ. They are given wisdom and ability to proclaim the Word of God by the authority of God to whomever and wherever God sends them.

**(4:8)** – Just like the seraphim described in *Isaiah 6:1-2*, each of the Gospel ministers had **“SIX WINGS ABOUT HIM”** – As described by Isaiah, with two, they cover their faces in reverence before God. With two, they cover their feet with humility, knowing themselves to be nothing but sinners saved by grace and knowing themselves to be insufficient in of themselves for the task. With two, they fly to preach the Gospel of God’s grace in Christ wherever they are sent. **“AND THEY WERE FULL OF EYES WITHIN,”** meaning they constantly examine themselves by the Word of God to see their own sin, to see the glory of Christ, and to know the truth they are to preach. **“AND THEY REST NOT DAY AND NIGHT, SAYING, HOLY, HOLY, HOLY, LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, WHICH WAS, AND IS, AND IS TO COME”** – They continually rejoice in the Lord and glorify God in His holiness, power, and eternity.

**(4:9-11)** – All worship is focused upon God revealed in the fullness of Christ. The goal of a true minister of God is to point sinners to Christ, not to themselves, and this is the goal of salvation – to worship God in Christ (*John 4:23-24*). This kind of worship comes only under the preaching of the Gospel of Christ. All who truly worship God **“CAST THEIR CROWNS BEFORE THE THRONE,”** meaning they return these **“crowns”** to their proper owner, God Himself. These are the crowns that all the redeemed of the Lord have and wear by virtue of our union with Christ. These are crowns that Christ earned for us, not that we earned for ourselves. This is proven by song of praise in v. 11 – **“THOU ART WORTHY, O LORD.”** We ascribe glory, honor, and power to God our Lord and Savior alone. He has **“created all things,”** even the church (*Eph. 2:8-10*), **“FOR THY PLEASURE,”** meaning, for His glory in Christ.

## LESSON 14 – WORTHY IS THE LAMB (1)

## Revelation 5:1-5

**(5:1)** – This continues the second vision begun in *chapter 4* where we see the last age from the view of God's sovereign throne. Almighty God from His **"THRONE"** of glory shows John a **"BOOK."** This **"book"** is in God's **"RIGHT HAND,"** the hand of judgment and power as God is shown to be *"working all things after the counsel of His own will"* (*Ephesians 1:11*). This **"book"** is **"WRITTEN WITHIN AND ON THE BACKSIDE,"** showing it to be full and complete, nothing can to be added or subtracted (*cf. Rev. 22:18-19*). This is the **"book"** of the perfect decrees, the will, plan, and purpose of God showing how redemptive history will continue throughout these last day and be finalized with the second coming of Jesus Christ. This **"book"** is **"SEALED WITH SEVEN SEALS."** As this is the **"book"** of God's perfect work throughout the last days, both to save His people, His elect, and to conquer His enemies, only God Himself can open this **"book"** and reveal its contents. This is the same **"book"** that was not revealed to the prophet Daniel in his day (*Dan. 12:1-10*). Every believer in every age has had the Gospel of God's grace in Christ Jesus revealed to them, but there are some things God reserved for the last age following the first coming of Jesus Christ and on earth His accomplishing the redemption of His people through His obedience unto death. These are the final chapters of redemptive history.

**(5:2)** – This is God's book, the revelation of His perfect work throughout the last days, and this **"STRONG ANGEL,"** a mighty messenger of God with a powerful message, asked **"WITH A LOUD VOICE, WHO IS WORTHY TO OPEN THE BOOK, AND TO LOOSE THE SEALS THEREOF?"** It is apparent that just anyone could not open this book and set forth its meaning. Someone had to be found **"worthy to open the book, and loose the seals thereof."** This matter is at the foundation of God's will and purpose contained in the seven-sealed book. It presents a mystery the natural man with all his collective wisdom and self-proclaimed goodness cannot answer. It is equivalent to the questions presented in the *Book of Job* – *"How should man be just with God"* (*Job. 9:2*); *"How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman?"* (*Job 25:4*). This question is vital in the salvation of sinners, and it lies at the heart of the Gospel message. The problem is that all men are sinners who justly deserve death (*Rom. 3:9-23*), and God must be true to Himself – *"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"* (*Gen. 18:25*). If God is to save His elect (sinners), He must remain true to Himself. He must be both *"a just God AND a Savior"* (*Isa. 45:21*). How can this be?

**(5:3)** – **"NO MAN"** in the eternal dwelling of **"HEAVEN,"** nor in this temporary dwelling of **"EARTH,"** nor from the underworld, **"WAS ABLE TO OPEN THE BOOK, NEITHER TO LOOK THEREON."** This is one of the many glaring testimonies of God concerning the utter sinfulness and depravity of all men and women born of Adam (*Rom. 3:9-20,23; 5:12*). **"No man,"** not even the best of sinful men, has any worthiness or ability to **"open the book"** or even **"look thereon."** This is also a grand testimony of how what man by nature is or what he wills, does or fails to do will not alter God's sovereign decrees, plans, and purpose to accomplish His will (*cf. Isa. 46:9-13; Dan. 4:34-35*). Man by nature cannot even see or understand God's sovereign will and purpose, let alone change it. No mere **"man"** is holy or righteous enough to **"open the book."**

**(5:4)** – **"AND I WEPT MUCH"** – John **"wept"** over the sinfulness and hopelessness of mankind, including himself. This is the evidence of true conviction over sin wherein a sinner realizes he has no hope of salvation within himself. There is no hope in fallen man (*Rom. 5:12*). There is no pretense of

goodness or righteousness here. There is only the realization that all us by nature and based on our best deserve and earn eternal damnation (*Psa. 39:5*). But John knows, as do all true believers, that there is hope, and it is found, not in ourselves, but in the Lord Jesus Christ as He is announced by “*one of the elders.*”

**(5:5) – “AND ONE OF THE ELDERS SAITH UNTO ME, WEEP NOT”** – Here is a message of good news, good tidings of great joy. Where is this joy to be found? ***“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.”*** Now the focus shifts to the Lord Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God slain for the sins of His people and the establishment of the kingdom of righteousness. *Isaiah 9:6* tells us the establishment and government of the kingdom of grace will be upon the shoulders of Christ. This chapter is a testimony of that fact in the history of the whole will and purpose of God as revealed in this “*book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals*” is fulfilled in the glory of the Person and finished work of redemption by the Lord Jesus Christ! Jesus Christ is worthy because He is God manifests in the flesh. Jesus Christ is worthy because He by Himself accomplished redemption for His people and brought forth an everlasting righteousness of infinite value upon which the kingdom of God is established.

The basis of this book of God’s decrees is the everlasting covenant of grace between the Persons of the Godhead before the foundation of the world. It is summarized in God’s purpose to glorify Himself in the salvation of His elect through the Lord Jesus Christ and based on His finished work of redemption on the cross. The message here is as stated in *Romans 11:36* – “*For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.*” All of salvation is given in, provided by, revealed through, and brings praise to Christ, the Lamb of God. All God receives from sinners, he receives through Christ. It is all based on the blood and righteousness of Christ.

Notice how Christ is identified as “*the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David.*” This describes the glorious Person and mediatorial office of the Lord Jesus Christ, the only one who is worthy to open the book, loose the seals, and fulfill the whole will and purpose of God. HE “*hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof*” – This describes the glorious and powerful work of Christ to accomplish the redemption and salvation of His people, God’s elect, by His obedience unto death (*Php. 2:5-11*). “*The Lion of the tribe of Juda*” comes from Jacob’s prophecy when he blessed his son, Judah (*Gen. 49:9-10; Heb. 7:14*). A “*lion*” symbolizes the conqueror King. Like a lion, Christ is great in strength and mighty to deliver. He is an effectual Redeemer, an almighty Protector, a powerful Avenger. He is powerful to engage all the enemies of His subjects.

“*The Root of David*” has its foundation in the royal covenant with David (*2 Sam. 7:12-16*) wherein the Lord revealed that Messiah would come through David’s line. He was identified in prophecy throughout as the offspring of David according to the flesh, His perfect, sinless humanity (*Isa. 11:1,10; Jer. 23:5-6; Matt. 22:41-46; Rom. 1:1-4*). To redeem us, this Lion had to become a Lamb to be sacrificed. This is why He was made flesh (*John 1:14; Heb. 2:14-18*). Christ is David’s offspring according to the flesh, and He is David’s Lord, the Messiah Himself.

**(5:6)** – As we continue through this vision given by the Lord to the apostle John, He has shown us the glory of Jesus Christ as the strong “*Lion of the tribe of Juda*” Who came to conquer and subdue. No He shows us the glory of Jesus Christ as the “**LAMB**” of God (*cf. John 1:29*). Jesus Christ is both the Lion and the Lamb. Throughout the Old Testament, Jesus Christ has been pictured and typified as the young, innocent, lamb of sacrifice Who, for the sins of His people imputed to Him, went under the wrath of God as their Surety and Substitute (*cf. Gen. 3:21; Exod. 12*). As the Lamb of God He had no sin in Himself, but He became guilty and cursed for the sins of God’s elect imputed to Him (*2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13*). He was “**SLAIN**” (slaughtered, butchered) in our place (*Isa. 53*). The kingdom of God, His church, is built upon the blood of this “**Lamb**” to satisfy the justice of God for the sins of His people. The whole will and purpose of God in the salvation of His elect and the establishment of His eternal kingdom centers on Christ and Him crucified. All salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, eternal life, and glory are the fruit and result of the death of the Lamb (*John 12:24-33*). The whole purpose of God is fulfilled in Christ the Lamb, and the fruits of His work in the complete salvation of His people (*Luke 9:28-31*).

He stood “**IN THE MIDST OF THE THRONE AND OF THE FOUR BEASTS,**” as He is the center of the kingdom as well as its foundation. “**SEVEN HORNS AND SEVEN EYES**” symbolizes the power and perfection of His work to save all for whom He died and arose again and to give them life from God by the Holy Spirit identified as “**THE SEVEN SPIRITS OF GOD SENT FORTH INTO ALL THE EARTH.**” Christ is the “*horn of salvation*” (*Luke 1:69*) and has complete power and knowledge to accomplish His great work. God has a people all over the earth, His elect out of every nation.

**(5:7)** – As the victorious “**LAMB**” Christ takes the book out the Father’s hand. This act symbolizes not only agreement between the Father and the Son in the everlasting covenant of grace but also the finishing of the work the Father gave Him to do (*John 17:1-5*). The Father appointed the Son to be the Surety and Representative of His chosen people. He gave all of them to Christ, placing the whole responsibility of their entire salvation upon the shoulders of God the Son in light of His redemptive work on the cross. His taking the book into His hands is symbolic of Christ’s ascension into heaven and receiving of the Father all authority, power, and honor (*Php. 2:9-11*). The book was in “**THE RIGHT HAND**” of God. Christ is seated at the right hand (place of honor) of the Father (*Heb. 12:2*).

**(5:8)** – This is true worship in spirit and truth as the church, symbolized by the “**THE FOUR BEASTS**” (living creatures) and “**FOUR AND TWENTY ELDERS**” express their adoration, reverence, faith in, and gratitude for salvation accomplished by the free and sovereign grace of God in Christ, “**THE LAMB**” (*cf. Gal. 6:14; Php. 3:3*). Christ as “*the Lamb*” was no mere creature who assumed human nature, suffered, and died, and is the one Mediator between God and men, but He is truly God in every respect and worthy of worship (*Isa. 9:6; 7:14; Mt. 1:21,23; John 1:1-4,14*).

“**HARPS**” symbolize their hearts and minds engaged in worship. “*Harps*” were often used in worship and expressed in song the heart of worship (*Psa. 33:2*). “**GOLDEN VIALS FULL OF ODOURS**” are the “**PRAYERS OF THE SAINTS**” (*Psa. 141:2*). This symbol is taken from the tabernacle (*Lev. 16:12*). Inside the holy place where the table of showbread, golden candlestick, and the laver rested, there were golden censers full of incense that burned. The odor ascended upwards with a sweet smell indicating that God was pleased with it as opposed to a revolting smell. The prayers, praises,

and sacrifices of God's people are a sweet-smelling savour unto God through Christ. Our persons and our works are all washed in His blood and, thus, accepted before God (*1 Pet. 2:5*).

**(5:9)** – The **“NEW SONG”** is the song of the redeemed that has one theme – the worthiness of Christ as the Lamb **“TO TAKE THE BOOK, AND TO OPEN THE SEALS THEREOF.”** This is a **“new song”** as opposed to the old song we all sang in our old natural sinfulness trying to express our own worthiness in some way. It also the song of the new covenant proclaiming the glory of Christ's Person and the power of His finished work to redeem us from our sins and make us righteous before God – **“FOR THOU WAST SLAIN, AND HAST REDEEMED US TO GOD BY THY BLOOD.”** This song is sung by all of God's elect, all over the world, **“OUT OF EVERY KINDRED, AND TONGUE, AND PEOPLE, AND NATION,”** both Jew and Gentile, when they are brought by the Holy Spirit to faith in Christ and true repentance.

**(5:10)** – This is the assured fruit of Christ's work of redemption as stated back in *Revelation 1:6*. Those whom Christ loves, for whom He died, who are washed in His blood, who have His righteousness imputed to them, received by faith, have been given a kingdom of grace which cannot be taken away. We reign as kings over our enemies (sin, Satan, the flesh, and the world) by the indwelling power of God the Holy Spirit. We are robed in the royal robe of Christ's righteousness and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Christ reigns personally as sovereign King, and we in Him reign representatively. We are priests in the sense that we have free access unto the Father by the merits of our great high priest who ever lives to make intercession for us (*Heb. 10:19-22*). We offer spiritual sacrifices unto God, all acceptable unto God by Christ. We who are in Christ *“are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that [we] should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called [us] out of darkness into His marvellous light”* (*1 Pet. 2:9*).

**(5:11)** – Here are all the elect angels along the whole church of the redeemed gathered around the throne and worshipping the Godhead as revealed in Christ, the Lamb. **“AND THE NUMBER OF THEM WAS TEN THOUSAND TIMES TEN THOUSAND, AND THOUSANDS OF THOUSANDS”** – This is an expression indicating an innumerable company (*cf. Dan. 7:10*).

**(5:12)** – **“A LOUD VOICE”** signifies their zeal and love for Christ in expressing before the universe **“WORTHY IS THE LAMB THAT WAS SLAIN.”** They ascribe to Him alone **“POWER, AND RICHES, AND WISDOM, AND STRENGTH, AND HONOUR, AND GLORY, AND BLESSING.”** Notice that all of His glory is based on the fact that He **“was slain,”** His obedience unto death, even the death of the cross. Christ crucified is the ground and focal point of the whole purpose and will of God. Christ is glorious in Himself as God the Son, the second Person of the Trinity, but this glory is His glory as the Mediator between God and men (*John 17:1-5; Php. 2:5-11*).

**(5:13-14)** – Here is the glory of God in Christ pronounced throughout the universe. Not one creature is exempt from this adoration and praise to God in Christ. The church as represented by **“THE FOUR BEASTS SAID, AMEN.”** This is true worship of God in Christ and the recognition that eternal life is in Him and Him alone (*John 17:3*).

## LESSON 16 – CHRIST GOING FORTH TO CONQUER

Revelation 6:1-6

**(6:1)** – This section of the second vision begins the opening of the seven-sealed book of God’s purpose and plan throughout the last age. Remember, only Christ, the Lamb slain and raised from the dead, is worthy to open these seals and reveal the contents of the book. In this lesson we will cover the opening of the first three seals. **“AND I SAW WHEN THE LAMB OPENED ONE OF THE SEALS”** – Opening these **“seals”** is the revelation of God’s mighty acts throughout this age both in the salvation, protection, and preservation of His elect, and in manifestations on earth of His judgments against the wicked. This will all end with the second coming of Jesus Christ. The first four seals give us the symbols of four horses and their riders, and each of the **“FOUR BEASTS”** (living creatures) introduces these with **“THE NOISE OF THUNDER,”** a powerful word, saying, **“COME AND SEE.”**

**(6:2)** – The first seal reveals the Lord Jesus Christ as the mighty Conqueror riding **“A WHITE HORSE.”** This shows the holiness and purity of His great work. We can speak of His perfect work of redemption for His people wherein by His obedience unto death wove the perfect white robe of righteousness for us, which having been imputed to us gives us a perfect, righteous standing before God. Upon His completing this great work, He was given a **“CROWN”** of glory and victory as the one Mediator between God and men. We can also speak of His continual perfect work of intercession as He is at the right hand of the Father ever living and ever pleading the merits of His righteousness for us. Here He is as One Who has gone **“FORTH CONQUERING, AND TO CONQUER.”** Who is He **“conquering”**? He certainly conquers all His enemies. He conquers some of His enemies so as to bring them down to death and consign them to eternal damnation, but we need to see that He conquers some of His enemies for a different purpose. He conquers God’s elect, who by nature are His enemies, bringing them down to death, but with the purpose of raising them up unto spiritual and eternal life (*cf. Rom. 5:6-11; Eph. 2:1-5; Col. 2:1-22*). Notice, He has a **“BOW”** to shoot arrows. This is the weapon of His Word which is *“the savour of death unto death”* to some and *“the savour of life unto life”* to others (*2 Cor. 2:16*). We see, then, in this first seal that as Christ goes forth to **“conquer”** His enemies, there is still the comfort and assurance of the salvation, protection, and preservation of His people. No matter how terrible things get, Christ will save His people and bring them into the kingdom by conquering them, making them who were once His enemies to be reconciled to Him (*Col. 1:21*). In the process He defeats all who continue to stand against Him. He conquers His people (His sheep) with grace in their salvation. He conquers the world and all His enemies in judgment and wrath.

Gospel preaching in the power of the Holy Spirit is like a **“bow”** with arrows aimed at specific hearts (*Matt. 24:22*). There is a general call of the Gospel to all to whom it is preached, but there is also the invincible calling of the Holy Spirit to God’s elect which none can or will resist. This calling unto life is the result of Christ’s finished work on the cross as He put away our sins and arose from death unto life. The fruit of His death is our life (*John 6:37; 12:32-33*). Christ is pictured again in *Revelation 19:11* as a rider on a white horse, but there He comes to make war and to judge all His enemies. Again, **“white”** symbolizes His righteousness, holiness, and truth unto which all His people are brought to submit and by which all men will be judged (*Rom. 1:16-17; 10:1-4; Acts 17:30-31*). This separates His people from the world (*Rom. 1:1; Acts 2:38-41*). Christ conquered sin, Satan, and the world by His death on the cross wherein He established the only righteousness by which God is just to justify sinners. He continues to conquer His people by bringing them to submit to His redemptive rule through the work of the Holy Spirit. He will ultimately conquer all His enemies in His final victory at His second coming.

**(6:3-4)** – The “**SECOND SEAL**” reveals “**ANOTHER HORSE THAT WAS RED.**” This symbolizes Christ’s judgment upon this world manifested generally in the wars, conflicts, and slaughter that has always been on earth and will continue throughout this age. It also signifies persecution of Christ’s people from the enemies of the Gospel. Christ said that in the last days there would be great persecution, and there would be “*wars and rumors of wars*” (*Matt. 24:6; Mark 13:7*). This will continue until His second coming as His enemies are made His footstool (*Heb. 10:12-13*). The peace that He came to bring on earth (*Luke 2:14*) was not peace between nations but peace between God and His people based on the only ground of peace and reconciliation, the blood and righteousness of Christ (*2 Cor. 5:20-21*). Nations declare war on nations. Individuals declare war on each other. Satan and the world have declared war on Christ and His church (*Matt. 10:34-39*). Christ told His disciples to expect opposition and even persecution and view it as a blessing as they suffer for the glory of God (*Matt. 5:9-12; Acts 5:41; Php. 1:27-30*). The “**GREAT SWORD**” “**THAT WAS GIVEN UNTO HIM**” by God is an instrument of judgment against sin as men by nature refuse to seek the Lord and believe His Gospel. In all this we are assured that we can neither be defeated by our enemies nor separated from God’s love in Christ (*Rom. 8:35-39*).

**(6:5-6)** – The third seal reveals “**A BLACK HORSE**” which symbolizes economic hardship and famine throughout the world during the last days, and also signifies great spiritual famine where there is a scarcity of God’s Word, the Gospel of salvation (*cf. Amos 8:11-12*). In this “*seal*” there is the assurance that God will preserve His people in the midst of this great famine (*cf. Matt. 5:6; 6:24-34*). The rider has “**A PAIR OF BALANCES IN HIS HAND.**” In the Bible scales signify equity and justice (*cf. Job 31:5-6; Dan. 5:27*). Our salvation by the grace of God is most certainly a matter of equity and justice. The scales of God’s justice against our sins have been made equal as Christ paid our debt in full. His righteousness is our equity and justice before God. Here these “*balances*” show that as during times of economic hardship things seem out of balance, not equal, not just, especially with the poor and down-trodden, the Lord God will make all things equal. His justice will prevail. Consider the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (*Luke 19:-31*). Consider how that true children of God may suffer physically in the last days more than most. But God will preserve us. A “**MEASURE OF WHEAT**” and “**THREE MEASURES OF BARLEY**” with which to make bread would cost “**A PENNY,**” literally a denarius, normally a day’s wage in that time. This is living on the bare necessities of life, no luxuries at all. God will give His people what they need. Think of Christ as our Bread of life. God most certainly gives us what we need spiritually in this day of famine of God’s Word. Christ is enough. Man’s religion says Christ is not enough.

“**AND SEE THOU HURT NOT** (do no injustice) **THE OIL AND THE WINE**” – Some believe this refers to the remaining availability of the most expensive luxuries for the rich. This could be part of what the apostle Paul called “*strong delusion, that they should believe a lie*” (*2 Thess. 2:11*), which is God’s judgment against the unbelief and rebellion of men. Being that the phrase “*hurt not*” can mean “do no injustice,” we can view this under the common meaning of these as symbols of the Spirit of God (“*oil*”) and the Gospel (“*wine*”). It is true that even in times of economic hardship, God’s people will never be deprived of the glorious benefits of salvation by the grace of God in Christ (*Matt. 6:33; Rom. 8:32; Eph. 1:3*). Christ will always protect, preserve, and feed His sheep (*Zech. 2:8; Ps. 34:7*).



**(6:7-8)** – The fourth seal reveals **“A PALE HORSE”** whose name was **“DEATH, AND HELL FOLLOWED WITH HIM.”** **“Hell”** here is *“Hades”* or *“the grave.”* Physical **“death”** comes in many forms, **“SWORD, AND WITH HUNGER, AND WITH DEATH, AND WITH THE BEASTS OF THE EARTH,”** but it comes to all in some form (*Heb. 9:27*). It comes to believers and unbelievers, but unbelievers will experience the *“second death”* (*Rev. 20:14*), which is eternal death and separation from God and which has no power of believers (*Rev. 20:6*). Believers have Christ, and in Him they have righteousness that brings life. So the power of **“death”** and **“hell”** is limited – **“AND POWER WAS GIVEN UNTO THEM OVER THE FOURTH PART OF THE EARTH.”** The Lord Jesus Christ has the keys over **“death”** and **“hell”** (*Rev. 1:18*). Hannah said, **“The LORD killeth, and maketh alive: He bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up”** (*1 Sam. 2:6*). Christ conquered both **“death”** and **“hell”** by His death as Surety and Substitute of His people. Here **“Death”** and **“hell”** have no power over anyone but that which is given them by Christ (*Ezek. 14:19-23*). All men will die, but not all will die in this way. All will eventually die, but God allows many to live on as He accomplishes His will in the salvation of His people and in the judgment of the wicked. The lesson for us is this – This physical body is *“dead because of sin”* (*Rom. 8:10*). Our only hope of eternal life and glory is *“life because of righteousness”* (*Rom. 8:10*). God the Holy Spirit gives spiritual and eternal life because of the righteousness of God in Christ freely imputed to us and received by faith. Christ has conquered death for all His people (*1 Cor. 15:51-57*).

**(6:9)** – The opening of the **“FIFTH SEAL”** reveals **“THE SOULS”** of believers who **“WERE SLAIN FOR THE WORD OF GOD, AND FOR THE TESTIMONY WHICH THEY HELD.”** They were persecuted and martyred *“for righteousness’ sake”* (*Matt. 5:10*) as they stood firm for the glory of God in their testimony of the Gospel of His grace in Christ. They are described as being **“UNDER THE ALTAR,”** a symbol that finds its meaning in the altar of burnt offering in the tabernacle, which was a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ Who is our Altar and our Sacrifice. This is another way of saying that they are covered by the blood of Christ, justified in Him, and even though they lost their physical lives, they are secure for eternal life in Christ. They sacrificed their own lives for Christ and His truth because He sacrificed Himself to satisfy God’s law and justice as their Substitute and Surety. Their death is a testimony to the world’s hatred of Christ, His church, and His truth as it exposes their false hopes and refuges (*John 3:19-20; 15:18–16:3*). The **“testimony”** of the Gospel sets forth Jesus Christ as the only way of salvation for sinners, and it excludes any and all other ways men invent in human, self-righteous, free-will religion.

**(6:10)** – **“AND THEY CRIED WITH A LOUD VOICE, SAYING, HOW LONG, O LORD, HOLY AND TRUE, DOST THOU NOT JUDGE AND AVENGE OUR BLOOD”** – They cry out for vengeance from God, not for their own personal vengeance but for the glory of God in Christ (*Rom. 12:19; Psa. 94:1-3; Matt. 23:34-37*). All who persecute Christ’s people persecute Him (*Matt. 25:31-46; Acts 9:5*). They cry out for justice according to the glory of God in Christ and because they, by the grace of God, have put their trust and placed their hope in Christ, based on His blood and righteousness alone to secure them for glory. **“ON THEM THAT DWELL ON THE EARTH”** describes the unbelieving world, those who are so connected to the earth (the world) that they care nothing for the glory of God in Christ, the truth of the Gospel, and the welfare of the church.

**(6:11) – “AND WHITE ROBES WERE GIVEN UNTO EVERY ONE OF THEM”** – This is symbolic of the imputed righteousness of God in Christ which is given to all His people by grace. This is the ground of salvation and hope of all believers. It is also the standard by which God will judge all unbelievers in the end (*Acts 17:31*). None can enter heaven but those who are given this robe of righteousness. This is not a literal robe which they wear upon their bodies. It is not, as some say, “a pasted-on righteousness.” It is the entire merit of Christ’s work in their stead by His obedience unto death. It is HIS complete satisfaction (full payment of their sin-debt) of the law and justice of God by the blood of His cross. **“AND IT WAS SAID UNTO THEM, THAT THEY SHOULD REST”** – These believers have entered into Christ’s rest by faith in Him (*Matt. 11:28-30; Heb. 4:9-11*). Now they have entered into rest from the persecutions they suffered from the world. **“YET FOR A LITTLE SEASON”** means until final Judgment when all saints of God would be free from all persecution on the earth – **“UNTIL THEIR FELLOWSERVANTS ALSO AND THEIR BRETHREN, THAT SHOULD BE KILLED AS THEY WERE, SHOULD BE FULFILLED.”** When God’s people believe in Christ, they enter into an eternal rest, but all things have not yet come to their final end for the body of Christ. The martyrs in heaven are resting now in their spirits until the time when all **“their brethren”** are called into the kingdom. Then all things will be consummated.

**(6:12)** – The opening of the **“SIXTH SEAL”** reveals the final destruction of the world by the power and glory of God in Christ (*cf. 2 Pet. 3:10-12*). What is described here has to do with physical manifestations of God’s wrath upon the unbelieving world, but it also has spiritual significance to serve as a warning for men to *“flee from the wrath to come”* (*Matt. 3:7*) by seeking and believing in the Lord Jesus Christ.

**“THERE WAS A GREAT EARTHQUAKE”** – FOUNDATIONS DESTROYED – God will shake this earth apart. All that unbelievers see as immovable and indestructible will be destroyed. All who dwell on the earth (i.e. who in some way see this fallen world as their hope and salvation) will be shaken to the core. This is what the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit does to God’s elect before this time. When God sends the Holy Spirit in power of conviction to His elect, He shakes our world spiritually and brings us to the only thing that is eternally indestructible and stable which is Christ the Lord and our righteous standing in Him. The *“earthquake”* marks destruction for a world under God’s just wrath.

**“AND THE SUN BECAME BLACK AS SACKCLOTH OF HAIR”** – DARKNESS PREVAILS – The sun will cease to give its light. All light that this world has (nature, conscience, God’s Word) will become darkness – *“Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness”* (*Luke 11:35*). *“Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth”* (*John 12:35*). Consider that physical darkness cannot compare to the horror of spiritual darkness. We preach Jesus Christ, the Sun of righteousness, but in this day there will be no preaching of Christ. There will be no salvation. All who found without Christ shall be damned. All who are found in Christ shall be saved.

**“AND THE MOON BECAME AS BLOOD”** – The moon shines with reflected light of the sun. When the source of light is destroyed, then all light will be destroyed. We hear a lot about the blood moons which are lunar eclipses. And certainly in the process of God’s destruction of this sinful world, there will be cosmic physical manifestations of this terrible event. We do not know specifically every detail, but we know that all that the unbelieving world needs to sustain life, all that they judge to be of value, all that they see as indestructible will be consumed in death as symbolized by *“blood.”* **“Blood”** is nothing to fear for the true children of God, because we rest in the *“blood”* (death) of the Lord Jesus Christ for all our sins and all our righteousness. **“Blood”** is death for the unbeliever, but it is life for the believer.

**(6:13)** – **“AND THE STAR OF HEAVEN FELL UNTO THE EARTH”** – Some relate this to ungodly kings and political leaders who shone forth in their sinful earthly glory in the eyes of men. Others claim this signifies false preachers who were *“stars”* in the eyes of religious unbelievers. Either way, they will all fall **“EVEN AS A FIG TREE CASTETH HER UNTIMELY FIGS, WHEN SHE IS SHAKEN OF A MIGHTY WIND,”** like unripe fruit falling off the tree before it is able to survive. They are green, immature, and incomplete. This is a testimony to the only way of completeness before God found in and by the Lord Jesus Christ (*cf. Col. 2:9-10*). All men, even the most powerful, rich, and even the most religious and moral, without Christ are incomplete, without righteousness before God. They imagine, and others agree, they are above the judgment and wrath of God, but they are not (*Matt. 7:21-23*). When they fall to *“earth”* under God’s wrath, it will be revealed then to the whole world that only those who by the sovereign mercy and grace of God are found in Jesus Christ, washed in His blood, clothed in His righteousness, regenerated by His Spirit, are complete (justified, sanctified, and certain to be glorified).

**(6:14) – “AND THE HEAVEN DEPARTED AS A SCROLL WHEN IT IS ROLLED TOGETHER”** – THE WAY TO GOD SHUT FOREVER – The *“heaven”* is closed shut like a book. Christ is the way to *“heaven,”* the only way to God because He in His death passed through into *“heaven”* for His people (*Heb. 4:14-16*). During this time of God’s final wrath, there is no possibility of salvation. **“AND EVERY MOUNTAIN AND ISLAND WERE MOVED OUT OF THEIR PLACES”** – NO PHYSICAL ORDER – In man’s view it will seem like chaos, nothing in its proper place. It is all working according to God’s order, but this is a testimony that apart from the glory of God in Jesus Christ, this whole created universe, including sinful man, is not in its proper order. The proper order will be set up in the new heavens and the new earth, and here is the way it is stated – *“For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to Whom be glory for ever. Amen”* (*Rom. 11:36*).

**(6:15-16) – NO HIDING PLACE** – All classes of mankind are represented here. No one is exempt. Pedigree, socio-economic status, race, religion will matter nothing in that day of judgment. Salvation has never been nor ever will be conditioned on anything in, of, and from man. All who are found without Christ, without His precious blood to wash away their sins, without His righteousness imputed to justify them before God, without spiritual life from the Lord, will perish eternally. All that will matter in that day is how a sinner stands in relation to Christ. Notice these **“HID THEMSELVES IN THE DENS AND IN THE ROCKS OF THE MOUNTAINS.”** Attempting to hide themselves from Christ, but this will do them no good. The only rock that will save a sinner in that day is the Rock Christ Jesus. Just as men today try to hide themselves in the dens and rocks of false religion, they will perish.

Realizing that the **“MOUNTAINS AND ROCKS”** provide no hiding place of safety from the wrath of God, they cry, **“FALL ON US, AND HIDE US FROM THE FACE OF HIM THAT SITTETH ON THE THRONE, AND FROM THE WRATH OF THE LAMB.”** They cry for death thinking it would be better than facing a holy God without a mediator and substitute. The door of grace is now closed forever, and there is no hope of salvation. This is why we who preach the Gospel of God’s grace in Christ emphasize to our hearers – *“Seek ye the LORD while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.”* (*Isa. 55:6-7*); *“behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation”* (*2 Cor. 6:2*). Notice, their fear is described as **“THE WRATH OF THE LAMB.”** This shows that everything at Judgment is revealed as it relates to Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Therefore, the question is asked in the next verse –

**(6:17) – “FOR THE GREAT DAY OF HIS WRATH IS COME; AND WHO SHALL BE ABLE TO STAND?”** The answer is clear – Only those who stand in and by the Lord Jesus Christ. All who have been washed from all their sins by His blood and have His righteousness imputed to them (*6:11*). All who are IN CHRIST have already been judged for all their sins when Christ died on the cross. They now stand before God to be declared righteous in His sight and before the whole universe. All who are without Christ will be judged according to their works and declared guilty before God and before the whole universe – *“Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish”* (*Psa. 1:5-6*). The message, therefore, is clear – BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST AND YOU SHALL BE SAVED!

**(7:1) – “AND AFTER THESE THINGS”** – After what John had seen as recorded in chapters 4—6, he is given another vision that sets forth the complete security, protection, and salvation of God’s chosen people in the Lord Jesus Christ. In this chapter the Lord gives more reasons for the church to take heart, be confident, and rejoice despite all of His judgments poured out upon the earth because of sin. God is going to save His elect, and He preserves this earth until Judgment for this very reason. **“I SAW FOUR ANGELS STANDING ON THE FOUR CORNERS OF THE EARTH”** – These *“four angels”* are God’s messengers and His agents of judgment upon the whole earth (north, south, east, west). God’s power and name are declared throughout the whole earth (*Rom. 9:17*). They are **“HOLDING THE FOUR WINDS OF THE EARTH”** – They are restraining (holding back) the *“four winds”* which represent God’s wrath upon *“the earth.”* This sinful world is headed for complete destruction, but it is not destroyed yet. As we consider the following objects of God’s wrath, consider in each one how true believers can take real comfort and assurance as we view these things from the perspective of God’s throne.

**“THAT THE WIND SHOULD NOT BLOW ON THE EARTH”** – *“The earth is the LORD’S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein” (Psa. 24:1).* The Lord has declared, *“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth” (Matt. 5:5; cf. Psa. 115:16; 37:11),* but it will be a new earth without sin, one wherein dwells righteousness.

**“NOR ON THE SEA”** – The *“sea”* symbolizes all people without distinction (*cf. Matt. 13:47-51*). This judgment will come upon all people because all have sinned and come short of God’s glory. Even though the people of God who are left at this time will go through the same physical calamities, it will be of a different nature for them. It will be their passage into eternal peace and rest in Christ.

**“NOR ON ANY TREE”** – This whole natural world will be destroyed when God lets loose the *“four winds”* of judgment. All natural trees will be destroyed, but there are some trees that will be saved. Of course I am referring to the people of God who are often described under the symbol of trees (*Psa. 1:1-3; 52:8; Isa. 61:3*). This is the wrath of God held back for a certain time known only to God. It is the longsuffering of God ordained for the salvation of His people in Christ and for the final destruction of the wicked (*Rom. 9:22-23; 2 Pet. 3:9-13*).

**(7:2) – John sees “ANOTHER ANGEL ASCENDING FROM THE EAST, HAVING THE SEAL OF THE LIVING GOD.”** This *“angel”* is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, the *“Angel (Messenger) of the covenant” (Mal. 3:1).* He possesses *“the seal”* of the covenant as He has all power and authority over heaven and earth to command the **“FOUR ANGELS”** to hold back or not release judgment on the earth. This *“seal”* also signifies God’s ownership of His people in Christ. Just as God set His seal upon the houses of Israel when He passed through Egypt (*Ex. 12:23*), so Christ has set His seal upon all the elect (*John 6:37-45; 10:14-16*). The *“seal”* means identification of the people of God, and ratification which is God’s approval of them as they stand in Christ. We see this in the matter of our Lord Himself being sealed – *“Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for Him hath God the Father sealed” (John 6:27).* This sealing was stated at the Lord’s baptism – *“And lo a voice from*

heaven, saying, *This is my beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased*” (Matt. 3:17; cf. Matt. 17:5; Luke 9:35). The Lord identifies His elect and reveals His approval of them when He brings them to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and submission to His righteousness in which they stand approved (Rom. 6:17-18; Eph. 1:13; 2 Tim. 2:19).

**“TO WHOM IT WAS GIVEN TO HURT THE EARTH AND THE SEA”** – We must understand that this is GOD’S wrath as it is His right alone to exercise final judgment upon sinners. The angelic messengers had no power or authority to do this but that which is **“given”** them by God. It is also to be carried out in God’s appointed time. It is a manifestation of a sentence already given for sinners who are without Christ – *“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him”* (John 3:36). True believers must always know and consider in ourselves and by nature we deserve no better (Luke 13:1-5). The reason we will not suffer this punishment is the grace of God in Christ Jesus. God is merciful to all who come to Him pleading the merits of Christ’s blood and righteousness alone.

**(7:3)** – The Lord commands the four angels – **“HURT NOT THE EARTH, NEITHER THE SEA, NOR THE TREES, TILL WE HAVE SEALED THE SERVANTS OF OUR GOD IN THEIR FOREHEADS.”** God’s final judgment upon this world is held back until His appointed time. That time, as appointed by God, is when all of His elect are **“sealed ... in their foreheads.”** The forehead is a symbol for the mind (cf. Exod. 28:36-38; Ezra 9:1-4). It is found eight times in *Revelation*. When applied to God’s elect as in *Revelation 14:1-5* and *22:1-4*, it signifies (1) the Father’s possession and knowledge of, as well as His love for, His people, and (2) their mind and attitude towards the Lord. We see a great contrast in those who worship the beast of Satan as they have his mark upon their foreheads and their hands (Rev. 13:15-16). Here it describes God’s people who are brought by the Holy Spirit in the new birth to know Christ savingly, come to Him in faith, and serve Him as willing, loving bondservants – *“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent”* (John 17:3). This is true heart knowledge given to them by God (John 6:44-45).

This world will not be destroyed until all the elect of God, the redeemed of the Lord, are called by the Holy Spirit in the new birth to faith in Christ and repentance of dead works and idolatry. The only thing holding back the judgment of God from this world is the mediatorial work of Christ on behalf of His people to give them eternal life. God’s patience, longsuffering, and forbearance with this world is *“to usward,”* and is for the salvation of His elect (2 Peter 3:9, 15). All true believers have **“the seal of the living God”** upon them. The wrath of God against sin will not fall on them because God has already punished the sins of His people in Christ, their Substitute, to the full satisfaction of His justice. Since Christ has redeemed them from the curse of the law, believers cannot be condemned (Rom. 8:1,33-34; Gal. 3:13), and they cannot remain dead in trespasses and sins. They must be born again and brought to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This seal of God’s grace in Christ protects, preserves, and keeps them. It is the mark of God’s ownership upon them. It cannot be broken.

**(7:4) – “AND I HEARD THE NUMBER OF THEM WHICH WERE SEALED”** – John was given **“the number”** of God’s chosen people, all who have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, and all who have been regenerated and called by the Holy Spirit in the Gospel. Remember this sealing refers to God identifying His chosen people and establishes His approval of them as they stand by His grace in the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no approval of men with God apart from Christ – *“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men” (Luke 2:14)*; literally, *“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased!,”* or *“Glory be to God in the highest Heavens, And on earth peace among men who please Him!”* How can God be pleased with any sinner, or how can any sinner please God? It is only as we stand IN CHRIST, washed in His blood and clothed in His righteousness imputed to us. It is only as we believe in and cling to Christ as our only hope of righteousness and salvation, for *“without faith it is impossible to please Him” (Heb. 11:6)*.

**“AND THERE WERE SEALED AN HUNDRED AND FORTY AND FOUR THOUSAND OF ALL THE TRIBES OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL”** – Some believe this means literally 144,000 individuals whom God will raise up out of the physical Jewish nation to be witnesses of Christ in the last days. But this is not 144,000 individuals. It is a number that symbolizes the entire body of the redeemed of the Lord. It is multiples of twelve (12 x 12) multiplied by one thousand meaning a large number known only to God. It is, however, a complete number. There will no vacancies in the kingdom of heaven. These are the ones who have been sealed by God. This is SPIRITUAL Israel, all the elect of God, both Jew and Gentile. As some deny this calling it “replacement” theology, we believe as it is FULFILLMENT theology (*Rom. 2:28-29; 9:6-8; Gal. 3:26-29; 6:14-16; Php. 3:3*).

**(7:5-8)** – Here is a list of the 12 tribes of Israel. This is not the first list found in the Bible, but it is different than the others. We have no specific explanation given for this difference, but there are a few significant things to notice. First, **“THE TRIBE OF JUDA”** appears first, and Juda was the tribe of the Lord’s human ancestry (*Gen. 49:8-10*). This sets forth the preeminence of Christ in the salvation of His people and in the purpose and plan of God. **“THE TRIBE OF REUBEN”** appears second on the list. This may seem strange as Reuben was the first born son and normally would appear first. Reuben symbolizes Christ as the *“firstborn among many brethren” (Rom. 8:29)*, the *“firstborn of every creature,”* and the *“firstborn from the dead” (Col. 1:15,18)*. Christ’s resurrection from the dead is the *“firstfruits” (1 Cor. 15:20,23)* of His people, meaning that His redemptive work, signified by His resurrection, is the guarantee of the salvation and resurrection of all His people (*John 6:37-40*). **“LEVI,”** the priestly tribe, was left out of the list in *Numbers 1* because the **“TRIBE OF LEVI”** had no territorial inheritance. It was in the center of and supported by the other tribes. It is added here, which could be a statement concerning the fact that the earthly priesthood is now finished as fulfilled by the eternal priesthood of Christ. The tribe of Dan and Ephraim are omitted, some say because of their blatant and continual idolatry (*Jud. 18:30-31; Hos. 4:17*). We know that all of the tribes of the physical nation Israel were made up of a sinful, rebellious people, but it could be that because of the magnitude of their sin these tribes are omitted. The **“TRIBE OF**

**JOSEPH**” replaces Ephraim. In any event, the number is still 12 x 12 x 1000 and is symbolic of the whole church of the Lord Jesus Christ throughout history and into the last age.

**(7:9)** – Here John describes the church as **“A GREAT MULTITUDE, WHICH NO MAN COULD NUMBER, OF ALL NATIONS, AND KINDREDS, AND PEOPLE, AND TONGUES”** showing that this is SPIRITUAL Israel, the whole election of grace. They **“STOOD BEFORE THE THRONE AND BEFORE THE LAMB, CLOTHED WITH WHITE ROBES.”** It is clear that their right to *“before the throne”* of God was and is the merits of Christ, *“the Lamb.”* Their *“white robes”* is symbolic of the righteousness of Christ as it was imputed to them. The **“PALMS IN THEIR HANDS”** signify their faith in Christ and their praises and worship of Him before the throne.

**(7:10)** – **AND CRIED WITH A LOUD VOICE, SAYING, SALVATION TO OUR GOD WHICH SITTETH UPON THE THRONE**” – The whole church of the Lord Jesus Christ ascribes their whole salvation to God alone in and by **“THE LAMB,”** the Lord Jesus Christ, the one Mediator between God and men. One of the great truths God the Holy Spirit teaches us in our conversion is that salvation is of the Lord, by His free and sovereign grace through Christ, and based on His shed blood and imputed righteousness alone. This is the basis and heart of our worship to God.



**(7:11) – “AND ALL THE ANGELS STOOD ROUND ABOUT THE THRONE”** – Even the elect angels worship God for the redemption of His church – **“AND ABOUT THE ELDERS AND THE FOUR BEASTS.” “AND FELL BEFORE THE THRONE ON THEIR FACES, AND WORSHIPPED GOD”** – Not being objects of redemption, they worship God as they are spectators viewing the glory of God as revealed in the glorious Person and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ (*1 Pet. 1:12*).

**(7:12)** – Their worship consists of the following elements: **“AMEN,”** which means complete agreement with the sovereign mercy and grace of God. **“BLESSING”** which is all eternal blessedness in Christ (*Eph. 1:3*). **“GLORY,”** which, as stated, is the glory of God in Christ (*Col. 1:19; 2:9*). **“WISDOM,”** which is the infinite wisdom of God in Christ (*1 Cor. 1:23-24*). **“THANKSGIVING,”** which, along with Godly love, is the motivation for all worship and service to God in Christ. **“HONOR,”** which is the goal of all worship and service – to bring honor to God and not to ourselves; for our honor is the honor of Christ (*Gal. 6:14*). **“POWER, AND MIGHT”** which is the power and force of God to save, preserve, bless, and bring us to glory, and not our own power of which we have none. **“BE UNTO OUR GOD FOR EVER AND EVER. AMEN”** – All of this glory belongs only to God in Christ and is displayed in its fullness in the salvation of His people, sinners, by His grace through the Lord Jesus Christ.

**(7:13)** – The Lord taught, *“But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth”* (*John 4:23-24*). From here the “true worshippers” are identified as **“ONE OF THE ELDERS”** responded with a question posed to John – **“WHAT ARE THESE WHICH ARE ARRAYED IN WHITE ROBES? AND WHENCE CAME THEY?”**

**(7:14)** – John responded, **“SIR, THOU KNOWEST”** – John acknowledges that the angel, the messenger of Christ, knew full well the answer to the questions. The angel was not seeking information but declaring a vital Gospel message for the benefit of God’s people. We as the church of the Lord Jesus Christ in our worship and service to God must continually acknowledge the truth of God’s sovereign grace in our salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ. **“AND HE SAID TO ME, THESE ARE THEY WHICH CAME OUT OF GREAT TRIBULATION”** – These true worshippers came out of great persecution from the world because of the offense of the cross (*John 3:19-20; 15:19–16:3*). All true believers do not suffer in the same way and to the same degree, but all suffer persecution in some degree over the Gospel (*Rom. 8:17; Php. 1:27-30; Heb. 12:1-14*). **“AND HAVE WASHED THEIR ROBES, AND MADE THEM WHITE IN THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB”** – True believers suffer for the cause of Christ and His truth, but our suffering does not save us. The suffering of Christ for us is our salvation. The death of Christ, as He put away our sins and established the only righteousness whereby God justifies us, is the ground and foundation of our whole salvation. True believers are the fruit of the glorious Person and finished work of Christ on the cross (*John 12:32-33; Gal. 4:4-6*). This also emphasizes that **“their robes,”** symbolic of their justification before God, is the imputed righteousness of Christ as they are **“washed”** in His blood. All of God’s elect are justified sinners, clothed in the righteousness of Christ freely imputed to them. To worship and serve God one must be righteous. Among men *“there is none*

*righteous, no, not one*” (Rom. 3:10). The issue in true worship, then, is, “*How can a man be just with God?*” Any sinner who calls upon or seeks to worship and serve God on any other ground shall be rejected.

**(7:15) – “THEREFORE ARE THEY BEFORE THE THRONE OF GOD, AND SERVE HIM DAY AND NIGHT IN HIS TEMPLE”** – They are identified as servants of God. A servant of God is a redeemed sinner who serves God as motivated by grace, gratitude, and love. They are willing, loving bondservants of Christ (Rom. 7:4-6). They “*serve HIM day and night*” as this is the goal of their lives – to glorify God in Christ. They serve Him “*in His temple,*” which represents His redemptive glory in Christ. “**AND HE THAT SITTETH ON THE THRONE SHALL DWELL AMONG THEM**” – They serve God in the ever-abiding glory of His presence.

**(7:16) – “THEY SHALL HUNGER NO MORE”** because they feed upon the glory and grace of Christ, the Bread of life (Matt. 5:6; John 6:35). “**NEITHER THIRST ANY MORE**” because they drink from the fountain of life which is Christ, the water of life (John 4:10-14). “**NEITHER SHALL THE SUN LIGHT ON THEM, NOR ANY HEAT**” – They are protected from all harm because they abide in Christ. This shows that true worship is based upon a salvation that is fully complete and freely provided.

**(7:17) –** This shows that true salvation is fully complete and freely provided in and by the Lord Jesus Christ (Col. 2:9-10), “**FOR THE LAMB WHICH IS IN THE MIDST OF THE THRONE.**” HE “**SHALL FEED**” His people with the Bread of life, and HE “**SHALL LEAD THEM UNTO LIVING FOUNTAINS OF WATERS**” which is the water of eternal life in and by Him. “**AND GOD SHALL WIPE AWAY ALL TEARS FROM THEIR EYES**” – The hope of eternal life, peace, and happiness for true worshippers is in God alone as He reveals Himself in the glorious Person and finished work of Christ. Without faith in Christ, resting in His blood and righteousness for all salvation, there is no true worship or service to God (John 14:6).

**(8:1)** – Here is Christ the Lamb opening the “**SEVENTH SEAL**” revealing another part of the book of God’s sovereign decrees in His purpose to glorify Himself in the salvation of His people by the Lord Jesus Christ and in His judgments upon the world because of sin. These events began in John’s time and continue throughout the Gospel age up unto the second coming of Christ. The “*seventh seal*” reveals seven trumpets of judgment described here and through *chapter 11*. These are manifestations of God’s vengeance upon His enemies who persecuted the church. The final destruction of all the enemies of Christ and His church is reserved for the final Judgment, but even now, throughout the last days, God is bringing judgment upon the world in many ways for sin.

“**SILENCE IN HEAVEN**” is not a ceasing of praise and declaring God’s glory, but a brief suspension of revelation given to John “**FOR THE SPACE OF HALF AN HOUR.**” This is a time of reflection and preparation to receive the revelation of the final seal before the judgment of God is poured out upon the earth. There have always been manifestations of God’s judgment poured out upon the earth (*cf. John 3:19-20; Luke 13:1-5; Isa. 45:5-7*). But opening this seventh seal accomplishes two things: (1) It reminds us of the security of the sealed saints in the Lord Jesus Christ by the grace of God; and (2) It ushers in the judgment sent forth by God through the agency of what is revealed in the seventh chapter of the angels that stand in the four corners of the earth holding back the four winds. “*Silence*” also emphasizes the fact that no sinner who is without Christ will be able to answer to defend himself against God’s judgment and wrath (*Rom. 3:19*). No man will be able even to question God’s justice to save His elect in Christ or to bring His wrath down upon the wicked, unbelieving world.

**(8:2)** – The seventh seal reveals “**SEVEN ANGELS WHICH STOOD BEFORE GOD.**” These are angelic messengers of God who are called, equipped, and set for a particular task. “**AND TO THEM WERE GIVEN SEVEN TRUMPETS**” – Trumpets were used to announce great events or sound warnings of which all people within the sound of the trumpet should be aware. These trumpets are God’s warnings of wrath to come. As stated, these are the things which God brings upon men and women, cities and nations, because of their opposition to Christ and their persecution of His church. And every act of divine judgment in time is a warning of eternal judgment to come, calling for God’s enemies to bow to Christ in repentance and faith. The message to the lost is flee from the wrath to come. Flee to Christ for salvation and safety. For believers these can be viewed as trumpets of jubilee (*cf. Lev. 25:8-10*) sounding forth the beginning and continuation of the end of day when all who have been sealed in their foreheads will be glorified and live forever with Christ.

**(8:3)** – Here is “**ANOTHER ANGEL**” of intercession who can be none other than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself (*Rev. 7:2-3; 1 John 2:1-2*). He is the supreme Messenger and Angel of the Covenant Who stands as the Representative and Substitute of His people, the church. This is an act of intercession by Christ before God on behalf of His people (*1 Tim. 2:5*). He “**STOOD AT THE ALTAR**” which is the altar of His own sacrifice as He took our place and died under the judgment of God for our sins imputed to Him (*2 Cor. 5:21*). The “**GOLDEN CENSER**” and “**MUCH INCENSE**” symbolize the merits of HIS sacrifice, His blood and righteousness, by which He offers up “**THE PRAYERS OF ALL SAINTS**” (*cf. Heb. 4:14-16*). Here is the essence of all true prayer that is accepted by God (*James 5:16*). It is through the Lord Jesus Christ and sanctified by His blood and righteousness alone (*Heb. 10:19-22*). The “**GOLDEN ALTAR**” is a reference to the altar of incense which was made of wood covered with gold

(Ex. 37:25-26). It symbolizes the prayers of God's people offered up through and by the merits of Christ's obedience unto death. These prayers are offered **"BEFORE THE THRONE"** of grace.

**(8:4) – The "SMOKE OF THE INCENSE, WHICH CAME WITH THE PRAYERS OF THE SAINTS"** is that sweet-smelling savor unto God which speaks of the pleasure and satisfaction He takes in the Lord Jesus Christ and the merits of His blood and righteousness. Our whole salvation, our whole persons, our obedience in prayer, worship, and service, all ascend unto God **"OUT OF THE ANGEL'S HAND,"** i.e. by virtue of the merits of Christ's sacrifice on our behalf (*Eph. 1:6-7*). Always remember that **"saints"** describes sinners saved and sanctified by the grace of God in Christ.

This is good reminder to us that even as saved people our only qualification to approach God in worship, prayer, praise, and service is our standing in Christ. Even though God the Holy Spirit has done a miraculous, gracious, and powerful work within us in our new birth; even though we now have a new heart, a new spirit, and new life within; even though we now believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and have repented of our dead works and idolatry; even though we now are motivated by the Holy Spirit with love, grace, and gratitude, still our only qualification to approach our Holy Father is now and forever the Lord Jesus Christ, our Great High Priest, the Worthy Lamb that was slain (*Rev. 5*). Jesus Christ is now and forever our only MERIT before God. No sinner will "SEE" or "ENTER the kingdom of God" without being "born again" by the Holy Spirit (*John 3:3-5*). But it is not our new birth that merits our salvation. It is in our new birth that the Holy Spirit brings us to see how Christ is our only merit for salvation because of His righteousness imputed alone. God the Holy Spirit indwells us to keep us coming and looking to Christ for all merit and worthiness – *"To Whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, ACCEPTABLE TO GOD BY JESUS CHRIST"* (*1 Pet. 2:4-5*).

**(8:5) –** When Christ took the place of His people on the cross, the fire of God's judgment fell upon Him. Without Christ, no sinner will escape this judgment. The **"FIRE OF THE ALTAR,"** i.e. fire of God's judgment, will fall upon all who are without Christ. It will fall in a mighty and very public way as symbolized here by **"VOICES, AND THUNDERINGS, AND LIGHTNINGS, AND AN EARTHQUAKE."** This is the answer to the prayers of God's people as recorded in *Revelation 6:10*. It is a cry for vengeance but not personal vengeance merely to satisfy our own sense retribution. It is the vengeance of God which is His holy justice against all sin and all unrighteousness.

**(8:6) – "AND THE SEVEN ANGELS WHICH HAD THE SEVEN TRUMPETS PREPARED THEMSELVES TO SOUND."** The order is issued for the **"angels"** to prepare to blow the trumpets of God's judgment. These trumpet judgments as recorded in *Revelation 8 – 11* are a terror to all who reject the only way of salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, eternal life, and glory in and by the Lord Jesus Christ. We will see that there is a striking similarity between these trumpet judgments and the plagues God sent upon Egypt described in the Book of Exodus. Remember how the only refuge from death in Egypt was the blood of lambs (*Exod. 12:13*), all which pictured the blood of Christ, the Lamb of God.

**(8:7)** – Now we begin the vision of the seventh seal revealing “seven trumpets” which “seven angels ... prepared themselves to sound” (8:6). The seventh trumpet in *Revelation 11* reveals the final day of judgment (*cf. 1 Cor. 15:52*). The first six trumpets reveal events leading up to judgment day and cover the time period of the final tribulation. These trumpets warn of God’s judgment against the sins of man and are meant to alert people to the greater and final wrath to come. The message of the Gospel is “*flee from the wrath to come*” (*Matt. 3:7*), and the only one to whom sinners can flee and find salvation is the Lord Jesus Christ by whose righteousness sinners are forgiven and justified before God. The images John sees find their meaning in the Old Testament. The first four trumpets are very similar to the plagues God sent upon Egypt prior to delivering the Hebrew children from bondage. Through these images John describes in very general terms the countless calamities (war, famine, economic hardship, plagues, ecological disasters) that will come upon the world because of human sin. The purpose here is not to prophesy of modern technology (atomic bombs and military war machines) but to show that God is in control. God will bring judgment upon the earth, but He will also save and preserve His people in and by the Lord Jesus Christ. These judgments recorded here and through *Revelation 11* are a terror to all who reject the only way of salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, eternal life, and glory by God’s grace in the Lord Jesus Christ. These trumpets sound a clear message of warning (*1 Cor. 14:8*). It is tragic when sinners refuse to hear these warnings. There is also encouragement in these trumpets for the people of God as they show forth the power of Christ, not only in judgment against sin, but in the putting away of our sins on the cross of Calvary. We who are IN CHRIST are eternally safe from the wrath of God because of our union with HIM.

The FIRST TRUMPET, as well as all of them, describes physical destruction from the hand of the Lord. **“THEY WERE CAST UPON THE EARTH”** by God, for vengeance belongs to Him alone. God alone has the power to command and control the elements. **“HAIL AND FIRE MINGLED WITH BLOOD”** describes physical disasters upon earth that bring death. This reminds us of the plague on Egypt recorded in *Exodus 9:22-26*. Only those who were out in the open, without a covering, were killed. Only those in the land of Goshen (God’s sealed ones) were spared. The spiritual lesson is that there is no safety from the wrath of God for those who are not IN CHRIST, covered in His blood and clothed in His righteousness imputed. All who are IN CHRIST are safe and secure in Him.

**“AND THE THIRD PART OF TREES WAS BURNT UP, AND ALL GREEN GRASS WAS BURNT UP”** – This physical destruction is symptomatic of an even greater spiritual problem. **“Trees”** and **“grass”** indicate physical life, but they are symbolic of spiritual life. Christ is our “*tree of life*” (*Rev. 22:2*), and His Word is our pasture of green **“grass.”** The true church is often symbolized in Scripture as a “*tree*” or “*trees*” (*Psalms 1:3; 92:12-14; Jer. 17:7-8; Isa. 41:19-20; 61:1; Rom. 11:17*). In these last days death will prevail and very few will find spiritual, eternal life in Christ.

**“The third part”** indicates that this will not yet be total destruction on earth during this age, but it will be greater than before as described in *Revelation 6:8* – “*the fourth part of the earth.*” Some have suggested that the significance of the **“third part”** being repeated is that destruction on earth will be greater and people will begin to take notice of these events and wonder what is happening. “*The fourth part*” in *Revelation 6:8* describes what could be interpreted as a normal death rate which people would not notice as uncommon. As long as this fraction does not increase, no one gives it any thought. But when the trumpets blow and the number increases to a **“third part,”** it marks the beginning of the end and upsets all the calculations of men. It gets people’s attention and men begin wondering what is happening.

They begin to seek answers as they grope in the dark looking to themselves and their own devices. Unbelievers will harden their hearts because they will attribute such things, NOT to the hand of God and His wrath against sin, but to “bad luck” and human error. They will seek ways to fix things as if man could save the world or as if man is in control. This is why true believers must view these things through the lens of God’s Word. We cannot interpret these things in an historical way or just as slight increases of natural disasters due to our lack of conservation. Christ is in control, and the destruction of this world is the completion of His kingdom. Total destruction will not come until the end of the age, but until it does, we are to preach the Gospel, and God will save His elect (*2 Pet. 3:10-18*).

**(8:8-9)** – The SECOND TRUMPET describes some disaster like **“A GREAT MOUNTAIN BURNING WITH FIRE CAST INTO THE SEA”** (*cf. Psa. 46:1-3*). Many times in Scripture the Lord uses a mountain to symbolize man’s refuges and kingdoms. Mountains are sometimes symbols of false religion and man’s natural religious pride (*Jer. 51:24-26*). God will destroy all refuges and all kingdoms but the one refuge and His own kingdom in Christ. This also shows us that as there will destruction upon land, there will also be destruction in the sea. **“THE THIRD PART OF THE SEA”** becoming blood indicates death again. Recall that the first plague on Egypt was the Nile being turned to blood. As the Nile was a source of life and economic prosperity for Egypt, to unbelievers false religion is a source of life and economic prosperity. It will be exposed for what it is – death and destruction. There is no safety or blessing anywhere for those who do not trust Christ for all salvation. **“THE THIRD PART OF THE CREATURES WHICH WERE IN THE SEA, AND HAD LIFE DIED”** indicates again how death will prevail over this fallen, cursed world. **“THE THIRD PART OF THE SHIPS WERE DESTROYED”** proves that men or man-made objects will not be able to save this world. There is no eternal refuge or profit from the sea for men. All empires of the sea will be destroyed. Nothing but the cross of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ can withstand the power of God against sinners. Christ is the only safe refuge and hiding-place for condemned sinners, and He is the only source and power of life for dead sinners.

**(8:10-11)** – The THIRD TRUMPET describes destruction in fresh inland waters such as pollution, but there is a terrible spiritual connection related to these physical events – **“AND THE THIRD ANGEL SOUNDED, AND THERE FELL A GREAT STAR FROM HEAVEN, BURNING AS IT WERE A LAMP, AND IT FELL UPON THE THIRD PART OF THE RIVERS, AND UPON THE FOUNTAINS OF WATERS.”** First of all, understand that the Lord Jesus Christ is the water of life for all His people (*cf. Matt. 5:6; John 4:7-14; 7:37-38; Rev. 22:1-2*). He alone is the water of eternal life. He sends the water of the Holy Spirit bringing the pure, uncorrupted, uncontaminated water of His Word, the Gospel of His grace. Here we see a **“great star”** falling upon the rivers and their source. The key to understanding the exact identification of this **“great star”** is in its name – **“AND THE NAME OF THE STAR IS CALLED WORMWOOD.” “AND THE THIRD PART OF THE WATERS BECAME WORMWOOD; AND MANY MEN DIED OF THE WATERS, BECAUSE THEY WERE MADE BITTER.”**

**“Wormwood”** is a name used symbolically in the Old Testament in the following ways to describe: (1) the idolatry of Israel (*Deut. 29:18*); (2) the corruption of adultery (especially spiritual adultery (*Prov. 5:1-6*), (3) calamity and sorrow (*Jer. 9:15; 23:15; Lam. 3:15,19*); and (4) false judgment (*Amos 5:7*). The word refers to bitterness. The spiritual significance of this has to do with the corruption and contamination that will begin to pervade the earth in the last days in the form of false gospels. They are inspired by Satan and his false preachers – stars that fall from heaven. This bitterness always comes when men in some way and to some degree forsake Christ, His blood and righteousness, as the only way of salvation, the only way of sinners being made right with God. Satan will always try to corrupt the pure message of God’s grace in Christ (*2 Cor. 11:3-4,13-15*). Satan will always try to inspire men to seek and find righteousness somewhere other than Christ. All that will come from this is death!

A contrast to this is found in the book of **Exodus 15** when the children of Israel having crossed the Red Sea began to journey in the wilderness. They came to **“Marah”** where the waters were bitter (*Exod. 15:23*). God commanded Moses to take a tree and cast it into the waters to make them sweet (*Exod. 15:25*). That tree pictures the cross of Christ which is the only thing that will make the bitter waters of God’s wrath sweet to the sinner who is shielded from that wrath under the blood and righteousness of Christ. The lesson – **LOOK TO CHRIST AND HIM CRUCIFIED ALONE FOR ALL SALVATION, FORGIVENESS, RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND ETERNAL LIFE!**

**(8:12)** – The FOURTH TRUMPET describes disasters coming upon the heavenly bodies – **“AND THE FOURTH ANGEL SOUNDED, AND THE THIRD PART OF THE SUN WAS SMITTEN, AND THE THIRD PART OF THE MOON, AND THE THIRD PART OF THE STARS.”** This describes God’s judgment upon the earth – **“SO AS THE THIRD PART OF THEM WAS DARKENED, AND THE DAY SHONE NOT FOR A THIRD PART OF IT, AND THE NIGHT LIKEWISE.”** Even the sun, the moon, and the stars will be instruments of God’s judgment and wrath against the world of sin and unbelief. Christ spoke of this in *Matthew 24:29* when He described the events occurring during the last age leading up to His second coming. There will be manifestations of God’s judgment against sin throughout from every facet of God’s creation. It will not be a total destruction until His return to gather His church unto Himself and to bring full and final judgment upon this earth. This alludes to the events surrounding the death of our Lord on the cross (*Luke 23:44-46*). This shows how much a holy God hates sin and must punish all sin. When sin was imputed to the Holy One, Jesus Christ, God the Father forsook

Him and punished Him unto death (*Matt. 27:46*). He did all this to save His people from their sin. Christ will bring all His people into the light of truth, but the rest will remain in darkness (*cf. Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:12-21*). Darkness is God's judgment upon all who insist on remaining in unbelief (*Prov. 1:23-33; 2 Thess. 2:10-12*).

**(8:13)** – This verse announces the final three trumpet judgments which describe events occurring in the final tribulation period – **“AND I BEHELD, AND HEARD AN ANGEL FLYING THROUGH THE MIDST OF HEAVEN, SAYING WITH A LOUD VOICE, WOE, WOE, WOE, TO THE INHABITERS OF THE EARTH BY REASON OF THE OTHER VOICES OF THE TRUMPET OF THE THREE ANGELS, WHICH ARE YET TO SOUND!”** Some scholars believe this is literally an eagle, a bird of prey, rather than an angelic being. Either way, this is a messenger of God, and the message is one of sorrow, wrath, and doom *“to the inhabitants of the earth,”* i.e. those who are so connected to the earth, this world of sin and unbelief, that they have no interest in the things of God, His glory in Christ, His way of salvation. This describes all proud, self-righteous, ignorant unbelievers who refuse to seek the LORD and His salvation. We are going to see that this will be a time of great deception when Satan will be loosed to deceive by spreading his false gospels throughout the world. The false gospels of self-help and conditional salvation will pervade through what is commonly known as the “Christian” church and Christendom.

When we read about God's judgments upon the wicked, let us who have been saved by the grace of God remember three things: (1) We are safe and secure but only because of God's grace in the Lord Jesus Christ. We are what we are by the grace of God, and we stand in Christ, washed in His blood and clothed in His righteousness imputed to us. Therefore, we have nothing to fear from God's wrath against our sins, because Christ has already suffered the equivalent of eternal damnation as our Surety and Substitute. (2) These manifestations of God's judgments are never meant to make us proud or self-righteous as if we too did not deserve such judgments. We are all sinners, and our only hope of salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, and eternal life is the Lord Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Always remember that if God gave any of us what we deserve or what we have earned, it would be eternal wrath. Again, if any of us are saved, it is totally by God's grace based on the blood and righteousness of Christ (*Luke 13:1-5*). (3) We need to pray that God will keep us diligent and zealous to stand firm in the truth of His Gospel without compromise and to be witnesses throughout the world in preaching this Gospel to the lost. We know Christ is going to bring His sheep into His fold.



**(9:1)** – The FIFTH TRUMPET now sounds the first message of “*woe*” (great trouble, distress, sorrow) as announced in *Revelation 8:13*. This vision states – **“AND THE FIFTH ANGEL SOUNDED, AND I SAW A STAR FALL FROM HEAVEN UNTO THE EARTH”** – This “*star*” is Satan himself (*Luke 10:18*), known as “*Lucifer*” which means “light-bearer” or “day-star.” He fell from heaven when he was lifted up with pride and rebelled against God (*Isa. 14:12*), and many angels fell with him (*Rev. 12:4-7*). **“AND TO HIM WAS GIVEN THE KEY OF THE BOTTOMLESS PIT”** – Notice that this “*key*” was “*given*” to him. It means to have the ability to open a door and indicates that Satan does not have this ability in of himself. It had to be “*given*” to him. Christ told His disciples, “*All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth*” (*Matt. 28:18*), so this speaks of the sovereignty of God over all things. God is not the Author of sin, but He governs and controls all things for His glory and the good of His people. We learned in *Revelation 1:18* that Jesus Christ alone has “*the keys of hell and of death.*” Satan has no power but that which he is given by God to be an instrument of God’s judgment against the wicked. Ever since the fall of man Satan has been allowed by God to dominate this fallen world – “*the prince of this world*” (*John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; Eph. 2:2*). Satan fell from heaven to the earth. He was allowed to roam the earth to deceive the nations throughout the Old Testament age (*Job 1:6-7; Luke 10:17-18; 1 Pet. 5:8*). In *2 Peter 2:4* we read, “*For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment.*” The word translated “*hell*” here is *ταρταρόω* (pronounced *tartaroō*) and transliterated as “*tartarus*.” This is the only time this word is used in the New Testament, and it refers to the “*realm of darkness.*” Satan’s realm is the realm of darkness, and when God saves His chosen people, it is described as being delivered “*from the power of darkness,*” and “*translated into the kingdom of His dear Son*” (*Col. 1:13*).

This gives us an understanding of “*the bottomless pit.*” It is the realm of darkness on this fallen and cursed earth into which Satan was cast and bound by the Lord Jesus Christ when Christ died. The defeat of Satan is described as being the work of Jesus Christ on the cross (*John 12:31-33*). Satan was “*cast out*” by the death of Christ. He was bound up for a while so that he could no longer deceive the nations in the sense of hindering or even prohibiting the Gospel going out to the nations. We must understand that this was and is God’s purpose from the very beginning. Satan was and is an unwitting and unknowing participant in the sovereign plan of God both to save His people and judge the world. Here, in the giving of this “*key*” to Satan, he is once again loosed into the realm of darkness, “*the bottomless pit,*” the fallen world to go about to corrupt the church and deceive the world (*Rev. 20:1-3*).

**(9:2)** – **“AND HE OPENED THE BOTTOMLESS PIT”** – This is the loosing of Satan as an unwitting and unknowing instrument of God’s judgment. **“AND THERE AROSE A SMOKE OUT OF THE PIT, AS THE SMOKE OF A GREAT FURNACE; AND THE SUN AND THE AIR WERE DARKENED BY REASON OF THE SMOKE OF THE PIT”** – This “*smoke*” symbolizes the darkness and deception of Satan’s false gospels of salvation by the works and/or the wills of men. The “*sun*” symbolizes the Lord Jesus Christ, “*the Sun of righteousness*” (*Mal. 4:2*), the Light of truth and the warmth of God’s grace and mercy for sinners. The “*air*” symbolizes the power of the Holy Spirit in the Gospel which is the “*power of God unto salvation*” (*Rom. 1:16*), and the life He gives to all whom God has chosen and whom Christ redeemed by His blood. The apostle Paul described this in *2 Corinthians 4:3-6*. Satan’s main goal is to keep sinners from seeing the reality of righteousness in and by the Lord Jesus Christ. He uses the smoke and darkness of lies and deception to accomplish this goal. False religion, the religion of

works and free-willism, is his main tool of deception (*John 3:19-20; 2 Cor. 11:3-4*). It is a deception as old as Cain who fell prey to the smoke of Satan. All who seek righteousness by their works and not by faith in Christ are deceived by the smoke of the **“bottomless pit.”** Even this is part of God’s judgment upon the world because of sin and unbelief.

We need to stress that this in NO way teaches that Satan defeats Christ. Christ has never been nor will ever be defeated. This is God’s judgment upon a sinful, unbelieving, rebellious world. The **“smoke”** here is the fire of God’s judgment. The **“bottomless pit”** describes all the false gospels and false churches in this world. They are truly **“bottomless”** because they have no foundation in truth which is the opposite of the true believer’s foundation in the Rock Christ Jesus.

**(9:3) – “AND THERE CAME OUT OF THE SMOKE LOCUSTS UPON THE EARTH”** – Notice these **“locusts”** **“came out of the smoke.”** The **“smoke”** is their hiding place and deception (*2 Cor. 11:13-15; Jude 3-4*). These are false preachers (inspired by Satan) are deceived themselves, and they practice to deceive by their false message disguised as truth (*John 8:44*). **“AND UNTO THEM WAS GIVEN POWER, AS THE SCORPIONS OF THE EARTH HAVE POWER”** – God gave them this **“power”** to deceive with the poison of their false doctrine (*Gal. 1:6-9*). Their goal is to inspire men to seek to establish by their works their own righteousness before God rather than submitting to Christ and His righteousness imputed as the only ground and way of salvation (*Rom. 9:31–10:4*). Their goal is to exalt the wills of men and deceive them to think that they, not Christ alone, make the difference in their own salvation (*John 1:11-13; Rom. 9:15-16*). Again, this is God’s judgment against the ungodly (*2 Thess. 2:9-12*). They are symbolized by **“locusts”** because of their destructive power, and they leave nothing but total destruction and desolation in their wake. The only salvation and defense against Satan and his preachers is the power of God unto salvation in the Gospel of His grace, submitting to Him and His righteousness imputed alone, and by God’s grace in receiving a love for the truth of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit (*2 Cor. 4:6; 2 Thess. 2:13-17*).

**(9:4) –** This verse describes symbolically the distinction between the children of the devil who have no spiritual life and the children of God who have been given spiritual life in Christ. **“THE GRASS OF THE EARTH, NEITHER ANY GREEN THING, NEITHER ANY TREE”** symbolizes the living as opposed to the dead. Christ assures us that Satan is not allowed to **“HURT”** those whom God has chosen, whom Christ has redeemed, and whom the Holy Spirit has given spiritual life. Satan still attacks the people of God, but he cannot destroy those who are IN CHRIST. They stand before God justified, washed in His precious blood and clothed in His righteousness imputed. The only ones Satan can destroy are **“THOSE MEN WHICH HAVE NOT THE SEAL OF GOD IN THEIR FOREHEADS,”** which symbolizes the mark and power of God’s grace in their minds and hearts. They were sealed by Christ’s death on the cross as He paid their sin-debt and established righteousness which is imputed to them. They have been born again by the Holy Spirit and brought to faith in Christ and repentance of dead works. The truth of the Gospel of God’s glory and grace in salvation by Christ is stamped eternally in their hearts – their minds, affections, and wills (*Rev. 7:2; Rom. 6:17-18*). Satan cannot undo what God has done within the hearts and minds of His elect. God’s people glory, not in the flesh, but in the cross of Christ, and they rejoice in Him alone (*Gal. 6:14; Php. 3:3*). This is the greatest defense against the deceptions and the destruction of Satan.

**(9:5) – “AND TO THEM IT WAS GIVEN”** – The things revealed here come about by God’s sovereign decree and purpose. Our God works all things after the counsel of His own will. He is not the Author of sin, but He is the governor of all things (*Gen. 50:15-21; Acts 2:22-23*). Here in the last days leading up to the final end of all things, the **“locusts”** (Satan’s false preachers) were allowed by God **“NOT”** to **“KILL THEM”** (the true people of God, followers of Christ), **“BUT THAT THEY SHOULD BE TORMENTED FIVE MONTHS.”** **“Torment”** means to test as by a touchstone which was used to test the purity of silver and gold by rubbing either metal against it. So Satan and his ministers will **“torment”** Christ’s true people thinking this will be their destruction, but in reality it will be a testing of the genuineness of their faith in Christ. In this way we can look at these trials as the chastisement from our heavenly Father (*Heb. 12:5-13*). **“Five months”** emphasizes the temporary nature of this **“torment,”** and some scholars claim this is the average life-span for locusts. Others say it is the average time it takes locusts to destroy vegetation on earth. The message is this – Satan and his ministers will all be destroyed by death. It is interesting to note that the number **“five”** in the Bible symbolizes God’s grace. So the temporary time span for the locusts which ends in their death is a time of grace for the people of God because the trial of our faith is *“more precious than gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ”* (1 Pet. 1:7).

**“AND THEIR TORMENT WAS AS THE TORMENT OF A SCORPION, WHEN HE STRIKETH A MAN”** – A **“scorpion”** kills by injecting poison through its tail. Satan and his ministers seek to kill by injecting the poison of false gospels and false doctrine into the church and into the minds of men and women who are already in the natural darkness and deception of fallen human nature. Satan’s goal is to keep men and women in the dark concerning the true Gospel of God’s free and sovereign grace in Christ Jesus (2 Cor. 4:3-4). During this time of tribulation the greatest **“torment”** to the people of God will be Satan’s attempts to spread his false gospels. He does this by feeding the natural man’s self-love, pride, and self-righteousness (2 Cor. 11:13-15). The only remedy is the grace of God in salvation for sinners through the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Satan and his agents are allowed to bring about such devastation, but we who are IN CHRIST (washed in His blood and clothed in His righteousness) are safe because we are sealed by His grace.

**(9:6) – “AND IN THOSE DAYS SHALL MEN SEEK DEATH, AND SHALL NOT FIND IT; AND SHALL DESIRE TO DIE, AND DEATH SHALL FLEE FROM THEM”** – These demonic forces are free to assault the people whom Satan has deceived. They will bring hardship and suffering upon all who are not sealed in Christ. They will destroy all hope and make people wish they were dead, although death itself flees from them. This demonic army will leave people as desolate as the locusts left the grain fields of Egypt. So this describes the utter hopelessness of their message which genders unto bondage. We must remember that although false peace can endure unto judgment, some will see the utter hopelessness in the message of false prophets without finding the truth of God’s Gospel. This describes such despair that people will desire to leave this world for what they think is something better. **BUT THERE IS NO HOPE WITHOUT CHRIST AND THE GOSPEL OF SALVATION BY GOD’S GRACE BASED ON CHRIST’S RIGHTEOUSNESS ALONE!**

**(9:7) –** This symbolically describes the appearance of Satan’s ministers. **“LIKE UNTO”** and **“AS IT WERE”** indicate a symbolic simile. It describes the nature of their deception (*cf. 2 Cor. 11:13-15*). They

are **“PREPARED UNTO BATTLE”** like war horses. They claim to be soldiers in the army of the Lord to conquer men’s souls (soul-winning), but they are in reality soldiers of Satan seeking to murder the souls of men. **“ON THEIR HEADS WERE AS IT WERE CROWNS LIKE GOLD”** – Their crowns were like fool’s gold and give the appearance and pretense of great authority and victory. They may have great numbers and wealth, but it is only the appearance of victory. **“AND THEIR FACES WERE AS THE FACES OF MEN”** – They look like men, but in reality they are demons. They do not have fangs or some monstrous appearance as false religion likes to portray. Their faces are like that of men bent on destruction or determined to gain a following for themselves. Their message was not from or of God but of sinful men.

**(9:8) – “THEY HAD HAIR AS THE HAIR OF WOMEN”** – They appear beautiful on the outside and have charismatic personalities. Their way of worship is one of outward adornment. Their appeal is emotional and sentimental rather than a bold stand in the truth. This does not say women are not intelligent and rational, but it exposes one of the weaknesses of women. It is an appeal to the emotional, sentimental side of people. There is nothing wrong with emotions and sentiment in the truth of God’s grace in Christ. **“THEIR TEETH WERE AS THE TEETH OF LIONS”** – They roar like lions, speaking loudly, but like their father Satan they are walking about, seeking whom they may devour (*1 Pet. 5:8*).

**(9:9) – “BREASTPLATES OF IRON”** describe their pretended and imagined invincibility. They offer defense and protection for their followers, but it will not hold up. This is opposed to the armor of a true believer which has the *“the breastplate of righteousness,”* the imputed righteousness of Christ, by which we withstand all the accusations of Satan against us (*Eph. 6:14*). The **“SOUND OF THEIR WINGS”** indicates their energy, zeal, and business in their religious efforts and in seeking to gain proselytes unto their way. They encompass sea and land to gain converts (*Matt. 23:15*).

**(9:10)** – The scorpion symbolism describes the deadly poison of their false gospel and its doctrine of works and man’s will for salvation rather than the grace of God in Christ. Their deadly doctrine and compromise always motivates sinners in seeking to establish a righteousness of their own. Their power and time is very limited. They cannot hurt believers who trust and rest in Christ for all salvation.

**(9:11)** – The **“KING OVER THEM”** is Satan, the fallen **“ANGEL OF THE BOTTOMLESS PIT.”** They are satanic. Their message destroys the souls of men. Satan’s name is revealed in two languages, Hebrew and Greek, as “the destroyer” or “destruction,” showing his power to deceive the whole world (*1 John 5:19*). He blinds men to the glory of God revealed in the Person and finished work of Christ (*2 Cor. 4:3-6*). His attacks are always against the glorious Person and the blood and imputed righteousness of Christ because he knows if he can keep sinners from seeing God’s glory and submitting to Christ as the only way of forgiveness, righteousness, eternal life, and glory, he can keep them under condemnation and eternal death. Christ has set all His people free from condemnation by His redemptive work on the cross (*Rom. 6:3-7*), and He sets all His people free in heart by the work of the Holy Spirit in the new birth (*Rom. 6:17-18*). In this, Christ brings us to see the glory of God in His face – His glorious Person and finished work of redemption for our complete and eternal justification before God.

**(9:12-13)** – Remember we are studying the opening of the seven seals of the book of God which was mentioned first back in *Revelation 5*. The Lamb of God (Christ Jesus) began to open these seals as recorded in *Revelation 6*. We are reading now of the seventh seal which contains seven trumpet judgments that began to be sounded in *Revelation 8*. The first four trumpet judgments were recorded in *Revelation 8:7-12*. In *Revelation 8:13* we saw an angel, a heavenly messenger, “*saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth.*” This marked the last three trumpet judgments contained in the seventh seal. The first “*woe*” (the fifth trumpet judgment) was revealed in *Revelation 9:1-11*. The next “*woe*” (the sixth trumpet judgment) is found here in *Revelation 9:13—11:13*. So the first announcement of judgment and sorrow is now past – **“ONE WOE IS PAST; AND, BEHOLD, THERE COME TWO WOES MORE HEREAFTER.” “AND THE SIXTH ANGEL SOUNDED”** announcing the second “*woe*” by sounding the “*sixth*” trumpet judgment.

John states, **“AND I HEARD A VOICE FROM THE FOUR HORNS OF THE GOLDEN ALTAR WHICH IS BEFORE GOD.”** Like all the other announcements, this is a message from God Himself and is associated with the “*golden altar*” in the tabernacle. Both the brazen altar of sacrifice and this “*golden altar*” had “*four horns*” on each corner representing the four corners of the earth as God has an elect people all over this world. The blood of sacrifice would be applied to these “*horns.*” They symbolized power and effectiveness to accomplish what they symbolized. The brazen altar symbolized the atonement accomplished by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Surety and Substitute of His people. It represented righteousness established and imputed to all of God’s elect for their justification before Him. The “*golden altar*” was the altar of incense, and it symbolized the intercessory work of the Lord Jesus Christ in the prayers of His people as He presented their prayers, worship, and service to God to be accepted on the basis of His blood, His righteousness imputed.

Recall that this “*golden altar*” was the place where the prayers of the saints were offered to God as they cried for deliverance and justice (*Rev. 8:3*). Here is God’s answer as He has ordained it to happen in answer to the prayers of His people in Christ. This speaks of the blood of Christ, His satisfaction to God’s law and justice for the sins of His people, which is the issue in judgment. All who reject Christ receive the sentence of condemnation, and all who are in Christ, all who trusts Him, though they may be killed in this body, shall be saved with an everlasting salvation.

**(9:14)** – **“LOOSE THE FOUR ANGELS WHICH ARE BOUND IN THE GREAT RIVER EUPHRATES.”** In *Revelation 7:1-3*, “*the four angels*” were told to hold back the four winds, symbolic of the restraint of God’s wrath so that the people of God might be sealed with the name of Christ. But when this sixth trumpet sounds, God’s restraint is lifted and His judgment now falls upon a third part of the earth. These “*four angels*” act only upon God’s sovereign command as this is God’s righteous judgment upon the earth. Mention of “*the great river Euphrates*” has caused many modern commentators to point to a future war with Syria, Iraq, Arab nations, and even China. This is not speaking of one specific river in one specific location on earth. It is symbolic. Recall that these angels were described before as “*standing on the four corners of the earth*” (*Rev. 7:1*). Throughout the Old Testament, the Euphrates River is a symbol of that which feeds and nourishes ungodly empires, such as Babylon and Assyria, and which feeds false religion. It is a symbol, therefore, of the wicked world. It was also the boundary beyond which lay exile and danger for the people of God. It was a boundary of God’s land of promise and peace to His people (*Gen. 15:18; Deut. 11:24*). God has hedged in His people

to preserve and protect them from the judgments falling upon the world. This is also a symbol of the surety of God's judgment upon the wicked symbolized by Babylon (false religion) which was bordered by this river (*Jer. 51:59-64; Rev. 18:20-21*). It was the home of the hostile nations listed in *Ezekiel 38-39*, led by the mysterious Gog and Magog. Most importantly, it was beyond the Euphrates that Israel had been taken during the years of her exile and captivity in Babylon. Here it speaks of the boundary between peace and war, salvation and destruction.

**(9:15-16)** – God's judgment is retrained by Him until He releases these angels to unleash His wrath upon earth. These **"ANGELS" "WERE PREPARED"** by God for this purpose. We can and do speak often of God's love, mercy, and grace towards sinners, but we must never speak of these without also emphasizing God's justice and the fact that He must hate and punish sinners. The love of God can only be found in Christ, and His love can only be honored and shown in the work of Christ in redemption by His blood to bring forth righteousness enabling God to be both just and Justifier (*1 John 4:10*). Whether these visitations of God's wrath last **"FOR AN HOUR, AND A DAY, AND A MONTH, AND A YEAR,"** they are God's judgments against sin. The timing, duration, and extent of God's judgments in time are all set in God's purpose and plan. **"FOR TO SLAY THE THIRD PART OF MEN"** – Many commentators point to physical wars and conflicts upon the earth in the last days, and there will be wars and rumors of wars (*Matt. 24:6*). The physical wars will result in widespread destruction and kill multitudes of people. These physical conflicts will not be a full destruction of the whole world. That will come in the Lord's return to judge the world and to gather His church unto Himself. But physical wars and conflicts are symptomatic of a greater spiritual problem that exists because men by nature refuse to turn to God. In these wars God sends His message of judgment saying, *"Prepare to meet Thy God"* (*cf. Amos 4:6-13*). Man's war against other men is ultimately man's war against God. The greater problem has to do with Satan's war against Christ and the church because of his enmity towards the Lord and the Lord's people. Satan will be loosed to attack and infiltrate the church on earth with overwhelming numbers of false preachers and false professors. It is described as a vast army – **"THE NUMBER OF THE ARMY OF THE HORSEMEN WERE TWO HUNDRED THOUSAND THOUSAND: AND I HEARD THE NUMBER OF THEM."**

In the physical realm this great number could represent all the armies which did and do battle in war over time. It is an endless number of soldiers who do battle. There has never been one army of one nation this size. This represents God's means and purpose of accomplishing the sending of this great woe. These wars on earth never totally cease. And when one war is fought and won or lost, there is always another nation and another army to step up to do battle. But, as stated, the spiritual application of this has to do with the overwhelming numbers in Satan's army that will attack and infiltrate the church on earth until it is virtually destroyed as described in *Revelation 11* in the death of the two witnesses. We know that true believers are not immune to the devastation and death brought about by physical wars on earth, but God's true people are most certainly preserved and protected from the ultimate attacks and deceptions of Satan that destroys the souls of men. Here is an evil army which is let loose on earth to hurt all but those who are sealed with the grace and power of God in the Lord Jesus Christ. As long as we have the breastplate of Christ's righteousness and the helmet of salvation, we are safe and secure within the power of God's free and sovereign grace in Christ Jesus.

**(9:17)** – As we continue with the sixth trumpet (the second “woe” announced in *Revelation 8:13*), we realize this is symbolic language describing the fierceness of these servants of the Satan acting upon their hatred of Christ and His church and their desire to kill men and usher them into condemnation. They had **“BREASTPLATES OF FIRE”** – This symbolizes the fire of God’s judgment against sin (*Heb. 12:29*). Though these evil agents do their work from the evil of their own heart, it is God’s great work (His strange work) operating throughout the age to send forth these warning judgments. God is a God of justice, and He must punish all sin wherever sin is charged. **“JACINTH”** is dull and dark blue and identified as **“SMOKE”** to symbolize God’s judgment against sin. **“BRIMSTONE”** is pale yellow like sulfur which chokes the life out of a person. It too speaks of God’s judgment against sin (*Gen. 19:24; Psalm 11:5-6; Luke 17:26-30; Rev. 14:10; 21:8*). **“AND THE HEADS OF THE HORSES WERE AS THE HEADS OF LIONS; AND OUT OF THEIR MOUTHS ISSUED FIRE AND SMOKE AND BRIMSTONE”** – Satan is “a roaring lion,” walking about and “seeking whom he may devour” (*1 Pet. 5:8*). So there is no doubt that these evil warriors are agents of Satan. But just as Satan is a “roaring lion” seeking to devour and destroy the souls of men, the Lord Jesus Christ is the “Lion of the tribe of Juda” (*Rev. 5:5*), and our sure defense against Satan and his agents. The Lord Jesus Christ stood in place of His people and devoured their sins as charged to Him (*Dan. 9:24*). This is a vivid reminder that our only hope of salvation from the wrath of God is to wear “the breastplate of righteousness” (*Eph. 6:14*) found in the armor of God. This is the same as “the breastplate of faith and love” (*1 Thess. 5:8*) which comes from and in Christ and by virtue of His shed blood and imputed righteousness. We as believers have the assurance that Christ Himself, as our Surety and Substitute, took the full measure of God’s eternal and just wrath against our sins.

**(9:18-19)** – **“BY THESE THREE”** – **“THE FIRE, THE SMOKE, AND THE BRIMSTONE,”** which, as stated, are all symbols of God’s righteous judgment against sin, **“WAS THE THIRD PART OF MEN KILLED.”** Again the destruction at this time is not total, but as the time of the end draws closer, the death and destruction gets worse and worse for man. This whole sinful, fallen, cursed world will be destroyed, and all who are found at that time without the Lord Jesus Christ will perish under the righteous judgment of God. Only those who have the seal of the living God will survive and live forever with God in Christ. Notice that the “fire, smoke, and brimstone” **“ISSUED OUT OF THEIR MOUTHS.”** Read the next verse **(9:19)** – **“FOR THEIR POWER IS IN THEIR MOUTH.”** “Power” here means ability, privilege, or force. Their force is in their mouth. The same word translated “mouth” here is translated “edge” in *Luke 21:24* where the Lord spoke of how Jerusalem would fall by “the edge of the sword” (*read Luke 21:8-24*). This shows that much of the warfare that goes on in the last days is man’s natural and evil hatred of Christ and His church. They will speak great blasphemies, false gospels, and all sorts of evil against God’s people, but we who are in Christ are protected by the sharp two-edged sword in His mouth (*Rev. 1:16*). While the world is going through the great woes of God’s judgment, the wicked will continue to hate and persecute God’s people. Our only hope and comfort is to be reminded that we are redeemed by the blood of Christ, justified by His righteousness, kept, and sealed by Him unto final glory.

**“AND IN THEIR TAILS: FOR THEIR TAILS WERE LIKE UNTO SERPENTS, AND HAD HEADS, AND WITH THEM THEY DO HURT”** – Their minds were set on destruction, and they left destruction in their wake. No one can escape from them in either direction. As to their own hearts

and minds, they are inspired and energized by Satan who is at enmity with Christ and His people (*Gen. 3:15*). They are unwittingly the agents of God's judgment even against themselves.

**(9:20) – In spite of all these judgments, those who are “NOT KILLED BY THESE PLAGUES YET REPENTED NOT OF THE WORKS OF THEIR HANDS.”** This is a glaring testimony of the spiritual deadness, depravity, and rebelliousness of man by nature. Judgment alone will never bring sinners to repentance. Even in the face of great judgment, men will self-righteously, rebelliously, and stubbornly cling to *“the works of their hands.”* **“THAT THEY SHOULD NOT WORSHIP DEVILS, AND IDOLS OF GOLD, AND SILVER, AND BRASS, AND STONE, AND OF WOOD: WHICH NEITHER CAN SEE, NOR HEAR, NOR WALK”** – This shows that salvation by the works of men is idolatry. This can describe both the idols that men make in seeking a visible manifestation of deity and his own works presented as his righteousness before God. Man by nature fashions a god like unto himself, and, in essence, worships himself – a god who cannot save. God has declared that His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, is *“the express image of His Person”* (*Heb. 1:3*) and *“the fullness of the godhead bodily”* (*Col. 2:9*). To seek to worship and serve God without Christ is idolatry.

Man imagines that God will save him based on his efforts to obey and serve God by his works. God has declared that salvation is solely by His grace in Christ and based on HIS righteousness, not ours (*Rom. 3:20; Eph. 2:8-9*). All who come before God seeking to establish a righteousness of their own by their works will be rejected. All who insist on this course of life without repentance shall be damned forever under the just wrath of God. Man's works are not enough to make him righteous before God – *“Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth”* (*Rom. 10:4*).

Man by nature will not believe, serve, submit to, and worship the God of all grace and mercy in Christ. To worship Christ means no confidence in ourselves, our flesh, our works. To worship Christ is to submit to Him and His righteousness as the only way God can justify the ungodly. Men will become religious and reform outwardly, but they will never come to repentance UNTIL God the Holy Spirit gives them spiritual life. It is the *“goodness of God”* (*Rom. 2:4*) as revealed in His way of salvation by His grace in Christ that brings sinners to repentance of dead works and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Without being given a new heart and removing the heart of stone, men will continue to worship idols.

**(9:21) – “NEITHER REPENTED THEY OF THEIR MURDERS, NOR OF THEIR SORCERIES, NOR OF THEIR FORNICATION, NOR OF THEIR THEFTS.”** The natural man is dead in trespasses and sin. Left to himself, he will justify his evil behavior and actions instead of repenting of them and turning to Christ for salvation and eternal life. Every kind of evil is included here, from the most immoral acts to the most religious without Christ. Apart from a sovereign work of grace in the heart by the power of the Holy Spirit men will not repent. Yet, we are told elsewhere that God has chosen a people whom He will bring to repentance – *“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”* (*2 Pet. 3:9*). This is God's promise made in the everlasting covenant of God in Christ to save His people. God chose them before the foundation of the world. He justified and redeemed them by His Son through the blood of the cross. In time, He will regenerate them, bring them to faith in Christ and repentance of their idolatry and dead works, in the power of the Holy Spirit. Who are these who will come to repentance? They are all whom God brings to believe and rest in Christ. All others will perish under the just judgment of God against their sin.



**(10:1)** – Here begins an interlude between the sixth and the seventh trumpet judgments. The sixth trumpet has sounded, and the seventh is about to sound. It is all leading to the revelation from God that there is a final judgment when all things will be brought to an end. All the people of God, all true believers, will be safe and secure in Christ. All unbelievers will be judged according to their works and damned forever. All who stand having the righteousness of God in Christ imputed to them, who are washed in His blood, shall be glorified with Him. All who stand clothed in the filthy rags of their own works shall perish (*Acts 17:30-31; 2 Cor. 5:10-11*).

**“AND I SAW ANOTHER MIGHTY ANGEL COME DOWN FROM HEAVEN”** – This is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, the Angel or “*Messenger of the covenant*” (*Mal. 3:1*). Having “*come down from heaven*” and being “**CLOTHED WITH A CLOUD**” proves His deity – He is God in human flesh (*Isa. 9:6-7; Matt. 1:23; John 1:14*). He is the one and only Messiah. Here He stands as the Protector of His redeemed people. **“AND A RAINBOW WAS UPON HIS HEAD”** – This rainbow speaks of mercy to His covenant people. The rainbow being about His head shows us the absolute certainty of His mercy to His covenant people in that He wears it as a crown of victory and glory. **“AND HIS FACE WAS AS IT WERE THE SUN”** – This speaks of His glory as Mediator (*2 Cor. 4:6*). He shines forth as the Redeemer and Surety of His people to secure our eternal glory. **“AND HIS FEET AS PILLARS OF FIRE”** – This is the fire which consumes all our enemies but which guides and protects all who are in Christ. It is the power of His way of righteousness by which He justifies all His people and condemns the wicked. The “*cloud*” and the “*pillars of fire*” here allude back to the guidance and protection God granted the Hebrew children as they were about to cross the Red Sea (*Ex. 13:21-22*). This was a picture of Christ whom we see here in His glory.

**(10:2)** – **“AND HE HAD IN HIS HAND A LITTLE BOOK OPEN”** – This reminds us of the seven-sealed book in the hands of Christ, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, back *Revelation 5:1*. Christ is the only one worthy to open that book. It sets forth the eternal decrees of Almighty God concerning His church and her security throughout the New Covenant age. This “*little book open*” is also in the hand of Christ. He owns and administers it. It is “*open*” or revealed (*Deut. 29:29*). The word for “*book*” here is different from the word “*book*” in *Revelation 5:1*. That book in *Revelation 5:1* is the big book of God’s purpose and decrees throughout the last age. It was sealed and had to be open. Here is a “*little book,*” not because its words are insignificant, but because of its portion. It is very significant. It speaks of John’s commission as described in *Revelation 10:8-11*. It is the Gospel message where the mystery of salvation by His free and sovereign grace in Christ is set forth in preaching and in the power of the Holy Spirit as He applies it to His people (*Rom. 1:16-17; 1 Cor. 1:22-24*). It is the revelation of God’s righteousness, of Christ and Him crucified. It is the declaration of how God is just to justify the ungodly through the merits of the blood and righteousness of Christ. **“AND HE SET HIS RIGHT FOOT UPON THE SEA, AND HIS LEFT FOOT ON THE EARTH”** – The “*sea*” and the “*earth*” show the Lord is the sovereign owner and governor of the whole world (*Ex. 9:29; Psa. 24:1; 1 Cor. 10:26,28*). It also shows how the Gospel is to be preached to all nations (*Matt. 24:14; 28:18-20*). God has a people out of every tribe, kindred, tongue, and nation, whom He has chosen, justified, redeemed, and whom He regenerates and will glorify. They all must be effectually and invincibly called by the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit (*John 6:37; 2 Thess. 2:13-14*).

**(10:3-4) – “AND HE CRIED WITH A LOUD VOICE AS WHEN A LION ROARETH”** – The *“loud voice”* is the voice of power and authority. This is Word of God. It is uttered with the power and authority of a *“lion”* – the Lion of the tribe of Judah, Jesus Christ Himself. When His ministers preach the Gospel, they have the authority of the King of kings (2 Cor. 5:20), and when accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit becomes *“the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth”* (Rom. 1:16). **“AND WHEN HE HAD CRIED, SEVEN THUNDERS UTTERED THEIR VOICES”** – This describe the awesome truth and power of God’s Word both in the salvation of sinners by His grace in Christ and in the judgment of sinners who refuse to believe and repent. This is divine truth. When John heard these *“voices,”* he **“WAS ABOUT TO WRITE,”** but was forbidden to write them down – **“AND I HEARD A VOICE FROM HEAVEN SAYING UNTO ME, SEAL UP THOSE THINGS WHICH THE SEVEN THUNDERS UTTERED, AND WRITE THEM NOT.”** Why was John forbidden to write these things? It is because these are truths that only God can reveal when He is pleased to do so. This is especially so in the terrible wrath that awaits all who reject Christ and refuse to submit to Him and His righteousness as the only way of salvation from sin. It will be revealed later to John, but not at this time.

**(10:5-6) – The “ANGEL,”** who is none other than Christ the Lord, **“LIFTED UP HIS HAND TO HEAVEN, AND SWARE BY HIM THAT LIVETH FOR EVER AND EVER.”** Some use this to deny that the angel is Christ Himself, but this is not so – *“For when God made promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no greater, He sware by Himself”* (Heb. 6:13). Swearing *“by Himself”* confirms His promise by His oath – *“Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us”* (Heb. 6:17-18). This shows that the unbelief of men, and the wrath of God upon men for sin, do not hinder or defeat God’s purpose and promise to save His elect people in Christ. Christ has sworn by Himself, i.e. He has committed Himself to this task in order to insure the eternal well-being of His sheep. God the Father has engaged Himself on our behalf when He chose us and purposed to save us in Christ. God the Son engaged Himself on our behalf when He agreed to be our Surety, to become incarnate in order to fulfill every condition for our salvation. God the Holy Spirit engaged Himself on our behalf when He agreed to apply this to us in regeneration and conversion.

What does Christ swear to do? (1) That He will bring all things to their final end. This is spoken in anticipation of the revelation of the seventh trumpet (Rev. 10:7a; 11:15ff.). Time shall cease, and God’s purpose will be accomplished in the salvation of His elect and in His wrath upon the wicked. (2) In that hour, the mystery of God’s decree with respect to the history of the world will reach its culmination in final judgment when God’s people will receive their final glorious inheritance – full salvation in and by Christ as promised to all who believe. This again emphasizes that there is no salvation for sinners apart from the grace of God in Christ. As we preach the Gospel to a lost world, our message is, **“FLEE TO CHRIST; FLEE FROM THE WRATH TO COME.”**

**(10:7) – “BUT IN THE DAYS OF THE VOICE OF THE SEVENTH ANGEL, WHEN HE SHALL BEGIN TO SOUND, THE MYSTERY OF GOD SHOULD BE FINISHED”** – When the “*seventh angel*” sounds the seventh trumpet judgment, the “*mystery of God*” (His purpose and decrees concerning this fallen world) will be finally and fully completed. All that was revealed in the first part of this interlude is in anticipation of the revelation of the seventh trumpet (*cf. Rev. 11:15ff.*). It will all come to its final end exactly according to God’s Word “**AS HE HATH DECLARED TO HIS SERVANTS THE PROPHETS.**” God’s Word shall not return void either in the salvation of His elect people in Christ or in His Word of judgment and wrath against all who refuse to believe and insist on opposing Christ and His truth. There is no salvation but by God’s grace in Christ, and there is no escape from the judgment of eternal death but by God’s grace in Christ.

**(10:8)** – The “**VOICE**” is the Lord Himself speaking to John “**FROM HEAVEN.**” Here again is a commission given to John to “**GO AND TAKE THE LITTLE BOOK WHICH IS OPEN IN THE HAND OF THE ANGEL WHICH STANDETH UPON THE SEA AND UPON THE EARTH.**” John himself receives the message of the “*little book*” because all who speak for God, all who preach the Gospel of Christ, must first know it and receive it themselves. Christ commissioned His disciples to go into the whole world and preach the good news of salvation by God’s grace in HIM. Those who do not have THIS message which exalts Him as the Lord our Righteousness, Christ and Him crucified, the forgiveness of sin and all of salvation through His blood and righteousness imputed, have no good news for sinners. Those who have THIS message from Christ have the authority of God who is sovereign over all the earth.

**(10:9-10)** – John obeyed the command of Christ and said, “**GIVE ME THE LITTLE BOOK.**” God not only commands His people to take the good news, but He also gives His people a desire for that news in the conviction of our sins and in the showing us the need of His grace in Christ and His blood and righteousness. Just as in *Revelation 5:3-4*, He, by the power of the Holy Spirit shows us that none of us are worthy or able to be saved. We are completely at His mercy. “**AND HE SAID, TAKE IT, AND EAT IT UP**” – Taking and eating this book is symbolic of the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing God’s elect to hear and believe the Gospel. The Lord gives us faith to receive and believe this Gospel, and He makes it a part of us. He writes it upon our hearts (*Jer. 31:33; Heb. 8:10*). It becomes more than doctrinal knowledge or mere profession. Just as eating physical food nourishes our bodies and sustains our physical lives, the Word of Christ nourishes us spiritually and is one of God’s instruments to sustain our spiritual lives. God’s true children cannot live without it – “*It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit, and THEY ARE LIFE.*” (*John 6:63; cf. 6:51-56*). This symbolically describes true faith and repentance which comes by the power of the Holy Spirit through the Word of God as it leads us to Christ WHO IS OUR LIFE.

“**IT SHALL MAKE THY BELLY BITTER**” – This symbolically describes true conviction of our own sin and a clear view of the sinfulness of all men and women by nature without Christ (*Isa. 6:5; Dan. 10:8; Luke 5:8; Php. 3:7-8*). The “*belly*” indicates something of the sinfulness of sin which goes deep into the heart. It is not simply an outward matter, but it reaches to the thoughts, motives, attitudes, and intents of the heart. It also describes the bitterness of the knowledge that all men and women by nature are lost in their sins without Christ, without His blood and righteousness. As Paul wrote, “*I say*

*the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh” (Rom. 9:1-3).* He desired their salvation but realized that as long as they were either ignorant of or not submitted to “*the righteousness of God*” in Christ, they were lost (*Rom. 10:1-4*). This bitterness can also describe the bitterness of persecution that we who believe experience from the world because of our testimony of the Gospel of Christ. Our Lord went through this as the world expressed its hatred of Him. This same evil, ungodly, unbelieving world will hate His disciples also (*John 15:18—16:3*).

**“BUT IT SHALL BE IN THY MOUTH SWEET AS HONEY”** – The taste of the Gospel is good news and sweetness to our mouths, even our very souls. In this message of God’s grace, Christ speaks forgiveness, peace, and acceptance for sinners. His Word is the Word of mercy and grace to sinners in need. He shows us our need of forgiveness and our inability to obtain forgiveness, but He also shows us the gracious provision of forgiveness by His precious blood. He shows us our need of righteousness and our inability to produce righteousness, but He also shows us the gracious provision of righteousness by His obedience unto death for our sins. This Gospel of sovereign grace glorifies God, exalts Christ and excludes boasting in ourselves. It edifies God’s people, therefore, it is sweet to our taste. It speaks to us of an absolute certainty of eternal salvation and glory based on solely upon the glorious Person and finished work of Christ on the cross. It speaks of Christ’s death for our sin but also His resurrection for our justification. By the indwelling presence and power of the Holy Spirit, it motivates us to worship, serve, and persevere by the sweet inducements of love, grace, and gratitude.

John writes, **“AND AS SOON AS I HAD EATEN IT, MY BELLY WAS BITTER.”** When the truth of the Gospel of Christ is spiritually digested by God-given faith and brings us to true repentance, then we have no choice but stand firm for the glory of God in Christ and in opposition to the evil, unbelieving world. This brings upon us the reproach of Christ (*Heb. 13:9-13*). Those who were once our friends and allies in the world become our enemies as we stand with Christ. The message of grace that is so sweet to our taste brings on the bitterness of persecution and suffering for the cause of Christ. Those who would compromise this message to gain the approval and friendship of the world have not spiritually tasted and digested this bittersweet truth (*John 12:42-43*).

**(10:11)** – This Gospel is to be preached to **“MANY PEOPLES, AND NATIONS, AND TONGUES, AND KINGS.”** God has an elect people out of all nations, and His elect are made up of all kinds of people, from poor to rich, servants to **“kings.”** This is why the apostle Paul instructed Timothy and, in essence, all of God’s people, to pray for all kinds of people (*cf. 1 Tim. 2:1-5*). God’s people come from all walks of life. They are all chosen of God, justified and redeemed by Christ, and they will be called by the Holy Spirit in the preaching of the Gospel (*John 6:37-40*). John personally never left the Isle of Patmos, but the message given to him by the Lord has been preached all over the world through this book of *Revelation* and by the preaching of the Gospel to all nations. Also, this emphasizes that all men and women by nature are in need of salvation by God’s grace in Christ (*Rom. 3:9-20*). There is no nation, no ethnic group, no socio-economic status, where men can say they do not need salvation by God’s grace. **ALL NEED CHRIST**, and God will bring His people to realize and know their need of Christ.

**(11:1)** – Christ has revealed to John both the sweetness and the bitterness of the Gospel. Its sweetness is shown as it sets forth the one and only sure way of salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, and eternal life for sinners in and by the Lord Jesus Christ (*John 14:6; Acts 4:10-12*). Its bitterness is shown in the persecution and sorrow it brings because of the unbelief and hatred the world has against Christ, His truth, and His church (*John 3:19-20; 15:18—16:3*). *Chapter 11* gives us a description of the bitter experiences believers must endure throughout the last days because of our identification with Christ and our testimony of the Gospel (*Matt. 12:41-42; Mark 16:15-16; Heb. 11:7*). The sad fact is that men by nature will still refuse to repent (*Rev. 9:21*). The earth's inhabitants still rely on their own works righteousness, rejecting the only righteousness which justifies sinners before God, the righteousness of Jesus Christ (*Rom. 10:1-4*). Yet, judgment is coming, and we will see this when the seventh trumpet sounds (*Rev. 11:15*). There will be no more time to repent. The great day of judgment will have finally come, and all who reject Christ will face the wrath of God (*Acts 17:31*). However, we who are in Christ are sealed and protected from the wrath of God as Christ has suffered God's wrath for our sins and has given us a righteousness that enables God to be both just and Justifier. Many believers are persecuted, even killed for the faith, but their souls are eternally safe under the blood of Christ.

*Chapter 11* begins with the measuring of **“THE TEMPLE OF GOD,”** which is the church of the living God. Throughout the New Testament the people of God are depicted as **“the temple of God,”** built by and upon the glorious Person and finished work of Christ, and indwelt by God the Holy Spirit (*Matt. 16:18; Acts 4:11; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:15; Eph. 2:10,20-22; Col. 2:7; 1 Tim. 3:15; Heb. 3:3-6; 1 Pet. 2:4-10; 4:14-17*). John described this before in *Revelation 3:12*. He sees the church again, but here in terms of the temple. Measuring the temple reminds us of Ezekiel's prophecy where he described the heavenly temple, and how he watched while the angel measured its dimensions (*Ezek. 40; cf. Zech. 2:1-2*). This **“temple of God”** is the dwelling place of the Lord. Where does God dwell? Where Christ in His redemptive glory is revealed, honored, and present (*Ex. 25:22; Col. 1:19; 2:9-10; Heb. 1:3*).

The Lord gave John **“A REED LIKE UNTO A ROD,”** which is a measuring stick. He commands John to **“MEASURE THE TEMPLE OF GOD,”** meaning the **“sanctuary.”** This is the dwelling-place of God where He receives, accepts, communes and dwells with His people in and through the Lord Jesus Christ and on the basis of His shed blood, His righteousness imputed. This measuring rod is God's standard to **“measure”** or count the members of the triumphant church in heaven, surrounding **“THE ALTAR,”** the place of sacrifice. Generally speaking this measuring rod is the Scriptures, the Word of God, which is the only right standard of measurement for the church. When we speak of Christ, we speak of Him **“according to the Scriptures”** (*1 Cor. 15:3-4*). Specifically it is the Gospel of God's grace in Christ, wherein **“the righteousness of God”** is revealed (*Rom. 1:16-17; 10:4; 2 Cor. 5:21*) and by which we discern the true church (*Gal. 1:6-9; 6:14-16; 1 Thess. 1:4-5*).

John is told to measure the **“altar”** which speaks of the blood of Christ for the redemption of His church (*Acts 20:28*). This is the place of sacrifice and the measurement of what it takes to be forgiven, justified, and accepted before God. This is the way of Christ and His blood by which sinners are forgiven and justified (*John 14:6*). Man seeks to devise his own measurement, his own way, but it is a way of death (*Prov. 14:12; 16:25*). By man's sinful measurement, he can be saved and accepted by his works, but this way does not honor God, exalt Christ, and bring salvation. God's way is the way of grace that reigns **“through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord”** (*Rom. 5:21*). All who make up the true church of the living God know, believe in, and worship the Lord God as He reveals Himself

according to His standard – the Gospel of salvation by His free and sovereign grace in and by the Lord Jesus Christ. They worship God according to His redemptive glory as both a just God & a Savior, and that upon the ground of the merits of the blood and imputed righteousness of Christ!

John is also told to measure **“THEM THAT WORSHIP THEREIN.”** Who are the people that make up the true church of the living God? They are those who, by the power of the Holy Spirit, know, believe and rest in Christ for all salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, eternal life, and glory (*John 10:26-30; Gal. 3:26-29; 6:14-16; Php. 3:3; 1 Thess. 1:4-5; 2 Thess. 2:13-14*). They are the royal priesthood who can go into the inner sanctuary where only the priests could go in and by the Lord Jesus Christ (*Heb. 10:19-24*).

**(11:2)** – John is commanded to **“LEAVE OUT”** (“cast out”) the outer court of the temple, which is **“GIVEN UNTO THE GENTILES.”** The last temple had an outer court, outside the sanctuary, called the court of the Gentiles. There was a middle wall of partition that separated this outer court from the inner court. Christ drove out the money-changers from the place (*Matt. 21:12-13*). **“Gentiles”** here is used to identify the heathen or unbelievers, not all Gentiles without exception, because God has an elect people who are both Jews and Gentiles. Whenever God the Holy Spirit brings a sinner to faith in Christ, that sinner becomes as SPIRITUAL Jew or Israelite (*Rom. 2:28-29; 9:6-8; Gal. 6:14-16*), and God brings them into equal status before God in Christ within the inner sanctuary (*Eph. 2:11-22*). The language here is intended to distinguish true children of God within the inner sanctuary and false professors outside the sanctuary. To **“LEAVE OUT, AND MEASURE IT NOT”** means that John could not include unbelieving false professors as part of the inner sanctuary where God’s people dwell with Him in Christ. They have no part of what God declares to be the true measurement of acceptance and fellowship with Him – the merits of the blood and righteousness of Christ.

**“AND THE HOLY CITY SHALL THEY TREAD UNDER FOOT FORTY AND TWO MONTHS”** – This is symbolic of the church suffering upon the earth because of persecution from these unbelieving false professors of religion. **“Forty and two months”** equals three and a half years. This finds its meaning in the prophecy of the seventy weeks in *Daniel 9:24-27*. This same time period is mentioned throughout the *Book of Revelation*, sometimes referred to as 1260 days. Some commentators claim this is the exact time period described in the phrase, *“a time, and times, and half a time”* (*cf. Dan. 7:25; 8:14; 12:11-12; Rev. 12:6,14; 13:5*). This refers to the last half of the time period of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week (7 years), which is three and a half years. In the first half of those seven years, the Messiah came and finished His great work of redemption (*Dan. 9:24-26*). In the last half of the seven years, the church was greatly persecuted by unbelieving Jews and Gentiles and, after the death of Stephen, was dispersed throughout the world (*Acts 8:1-4*). What John is told here is that what took place in those three and a half years, **“forty and two months,”** in the great persecution of the church would continue throughout the New Testament age until the return of the Messiah in His second coming. This is the great tribulation in the last days which is the entire period of time between the first advent and the second coming of Christ. As in all times, during this time, the only hope for any sinner is to be found in the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is our safety and security throughout eternity.

**(11:3)** – The Lord now reveals the **“TWO WITNESSES”** who preach the Gospel of God’s grace in Christ to the nations at great cost to themselves. They *“measure the temple of God”* (11:1) by preaching the Gospel as **“witnesses”** testifying of the glory of Christ’s Person and the power of His finished work (Rom. 1:16-17; 1 Cor. 2:1-2). These two witnesses suffer greatly *“for righteousness’ sake”* (Matt. 5:10), over their identification with Christ and their testimony of Christ against the ungodly, unbelieving world. The Lord says, **“AND I WILL GIVE POWER UNTO MY TWO WITNESSES”** – This **“power”** is the word of God in Christ both for the salvation and the damnation of sinners. Their testimony is salvation ONLY in Christ and based ONLY on His blood and righteousness imputed. There is no other way of salvation for sinners but in Christ (John 14:6), and all who seek salvation any other way shall be damned (2 Cor. 2:14-17).

**“Two”** is the number required under the law for a sufficient and complete witness (Deut. 17:6; 19:15; Matt. 18:15-16; John 8:17-18; 2 Cor. 13:1). Christ sent out disciples two by two as His witnesses (Mark 6:7; Luke 10:1). The Lord sends forth His **“witnesses”** through which He calls, gathers, feeds, and protects His sheep (Isa. 43:8-10). Some say these **“two witnesses”** are literally Moses and Elijah returned from the dead because the language of verses 5-6 could apply to them. Some say Enoch and Elijah because they did not die physically but were translated to heaven, and so they literally return to earth during a seven-year tribulation period, only to be killed by antichrist. We have nothing within the text to place such interpretations on these **“two witnesses,”** except to say, as we will see in the next verse, that they represent the true church of the Lord Jesus Christ bearing testimony of His glory and grace throughout this time described as **“A THOUSAND TWO HUNDRED AND THREEScore DAYS.”** This is the same as the *“forty and two months”* back in verse 2 (cf. Dan. 9:24-27).

As stated, this is three and a half years of the suffering of the church, and it symbolizes the whole New Testament age in which the true church suffers persecution from the world and the false church until the second coming of Christ to gather His people and defeat His enemies. It is during this entire period of the New Testament age, indicated by *“forty and two months,”* that the **“two witnesses”** give their testimony through the true church (the true spiritual children of God). This corresponds with the great commission – **“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost”** (Matt. 28:19), and the Lord’s determinate purpose that **“this Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come”** (Matt. 24:14). God will save His chosen people. They will be born again by the Holy Spirit and converted under the preaching of the true Gospel (John 6:37-45; 2 Thess. 2:13-17).

**“CLOTHED IN SACKCLOTH”** describes the nature of their preaching. The true Gospel is a glorious and beautiful message of salvation by God’s sovereign grace through the Lord Jesus Christ. But it is viewed and heard as such only to those whom God has given spiritual life (Rom. 10:13-17). It is, however, a message the world hates. First, it exposes all hopes of salvation based on the power, will, and/or righteousness of men as false, damning, and evil (John 3:19-20). Secondly, it calls on sinners to turn to Christ for all salvation and righteousness and repent of their dead works and idolatry. These **“two witnesses”** preach repentance of dead works and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 9:13; 11:21; Heb. 6:1; 9:14). These witnesses of Christ do not speak peace to the world but continually call sinners to repentance and Godly sorrow over sin. Their message to all who are either ignorant of or not submitted to Christ’s righteousness alone as the only way and ground of salvation is *“repent ye, and believe the*

*Gospel*” (Mark 1:15). These witnesses make it clear that all who are found at the judgment without Christ shall be damned. For this reason the world hates and persecutes the true witnesses of Jesus Christ.

**(11:4)** – The “*two witnesses*” are identified as **“THE TWO OLIVE TREES, AND THE TWO CANDLESTICKS STANDING BEFORE THE GOD OF THE EARTH.”** This is a prophecy from *Zechariah 4*. The “*candlesticks*” represent true Gospel churches which shine in the world with the light of Christ (*cf. Rev. 1:12-13,20*). There are “*two*” because they are a sufficient witness of the glory of Christ’s Person and the power of His finished work to put away the sin of His people, to bring in everlasting righteousness which enables God to be both just and Justifier. We might notice that out of the seven churches in *Revelation 2 – 3* only two were faithful to Christ and His truth. The other five were about to go under. Christ told the church at Ephesus, for example, “*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*” (*Rev. 2:5*). How many local churches are founded upon and start out with the true Gospel but then fall to false doctrine and compromise? This will get worse as the New Testament age draws closer to the end because Satan will have been loosed into the world to deceive the nations.

In *Zechariah 4* we see a candlestick under a bowl with “*two olive trees*” and “*seven pipes to the seven lamps*.” Oil from the “*two olive trees*” go into the “*bowl*” through the “*pipes*” to fuel the light of the candlestick. The “*olive trees*” represent the oil of God’s grace in the power of the Holy Spirit and the word of God which brings His elect to faith in Christ and repentance of dead works and idolatry. They are “*two*” because they are sufficiently powerful to accomplish the regeneration and conversion of God’s people. Without the oil of the Holy Spirit, no sinner would ever come to believe the Gospel of God’s grace in Christ Jesus. God makes His people willing in the day of His power when sends His Spirit from Christ to convince them of sin, righteousness, and judgment (*John 16:8-11*). Both faith and repentance are gifts from God.

As in the days of *Zechariah*, Zerubbabel (the royal figure who was to rebuild the temple), and Joshua (the high priest who would lead the people of God in their worship of the Lord), were two witnesses to the coming of the Messiah to do His great work. They typified these two witnesses, the church and its ministers who hold forth the word of the Lord in the power of the Holy Spirit (*Rom. 1:16-17; 1 Cor. 1:23-24*). Zerubbabel was also a type of Christ, the sovereign King who builds His church (*Matt. 16:18*). Joshua was a type of Christ our great high priest who entered into the holiest by His own blood. As the Lord through *Zechariah* told Zerubbabel that the temple would be built, not man’s power and goodness, but by God’s power and goodness (*Zech. 4:6-7*), the spiritual temple of God (His church) is built by His power and grace in Christ, not ours.

They are “*standing before the God of the earth*” because God is the sovereign Creator and Governor of this earth. His church and His ministers all stand by His power, and they preach by His authority and power (*Matt. 28:18-20*). They preach HIS Word in the power of HIS Spirit. They are made “*kings and priests*” to show forth the way into the holy presence of God by Christ with the authority of the King of kings (*Rev. 1:4-6*). Although God uses human instruments, the completion and final victory of His kingdom is not by the power or wills of men. It is of God through the Lord Jesus Christ and by His Holy Spirit.



## LESSON 33 – THE DEATH OF THE TWO WITNESSES

*Revelation 11:5-8*

**(11:5)** – Remember that the two witnesses represent the church in the last days leading up to the second coming of Christ. They are described in *11:4* as “*the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth*” which is a symbol taken from the prophecy of *Zechariah 4* where they represent the light of Christ shining forth through His church on earth as the church fulfills its mission of preaching and witnessing the Gospel of God’s free and sovereign in Christ throughout the earth. Remember that the number “*two*” is not to be taken literally but as it represents the sufficient and complete testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ in the world. This was the number required under the law to bear sufficient witness in court.

**“AND IF ANY MAN WILL HURT THEM”** – To “*hurt them*” means to wrong them, speak against them, or act unjustly toward them. The world is hostile to the church and the truth of God’s Gospel (*John 3:19-20; 15:18—16:3*). All those who hate the truth and persecute the church in the last days, if they persist and die in unbelief, will suffer the judgment of God’s wrath against their sin. This is symbolized in the phrase, **“FIRE PROCEEDETH OUT OF THEIR MOUTH, AND DEVOUR THEIR ENEMIES,”** which is the word of God’s judgment against all who reject Christ as the only way of salvation (*Heb. 12:25-29*). This act of God’s judgment may not be immediate, but it is sure to all who are found without Christ, without being washed in His blood and clothed in His righteousness. **“AND IF ANY MAN WILL HURT THEM, HE MUST IN THIS MANNER BE KILLED”** – This is repeated both to show the certainty of this destruction, and to show the manner of it, which will be not by the use of carnal weapons. These enemies of the witnesses will not be killed by the sword or any other physical weapon, but by the Word of God (*Heb. 4:12-13; 2 Cor. 10:1-6*).

**(11:6) – “THESE HAVE POWER TO SHUT HEAVEN, THAT IT RAIN NOT IN THE DAYS OF THEIR PROPHECY”** – The allusion is to the withholding of rain in the times of Elijah because of the idolatries of Ahab and Jezebel (*1 Kings 17:1; 18:1,41,45*). In the same way, the rain of the Gospel is withheld from those who continue to reject Christ. The “*power to shut heaven*” is the authority of the God’s Word in the Gospel which tells sinners that without Christ, there is no heaven, only hell. Heaven is closed to any and every sinner who rejects Christ as the only way of salvation. “*Rain*” symbolizes the Word of God from heaven in the power of the Holy Spirit (*Deut. 32:2; Isa. 55:10-11*). This is God’s judgment upon the wicked for their refusal to submit to Christ and His truth, His righteousness, as the only way of salvation.

**“AND HAVE POWER OVER WATERS TO TURN THEM TO BLOOD, AND TO SMITE THE EARTH WITH ALL PLAGUES, AS OFTEN AS THEY WILL”** – This alludes to one of the plagues of Egypt and to Moses and Aaron turning the waters of Egypt into blood (*Exod. 7:20*), and to all the other plagues of Egypt wherein God brought judgment upon them for unbelief and pride. “*Waters*” is a symbol of the nations, peoples, of the earth who will suffer the “*plagues*” of destruction in response to the prayers of God’s saints, “*as often as they will,*” according to the sovereign, almighty will of God. God’s wrath abides on all who reject the testimony of His witnesses, and those who continue to reject Christ and His righteousness will be judged and damned according to that same Gospel (*Acts 17:31; Rom. 2:16*).

**(11:7) – “AND WHEN THEY SHALL HAVE FINISHED THEIR TESTIMONY”** – Their “*testimony*” is the Gospel message of Christ, crucified, the glorious Person and finished work of Christ

to put away all the sins of all His people. It is the preaching of salvation for sinners totally by the sovereign grace of God in Christ. It is the message which Christ sends forth by His witnesses, the church, and by which God the Holy Spirit regenerates and calls the elect of God to faith in Christ and true repentance. There is a set time period, known only to God, for them to fulfill and complete this mission. As long as their mission to preach the Gospel has not been completed, they are protected by God through the judgments which come upon the earth. Nothing will hinder them, not because of their own power, goodness, or even faithfulness, but because of the power and grace of God (*Zech. 4:6-7*). The true church will be faithful to fulfill this mission but only by the grace and power of God.

When will their testimony be finished? The word **“finished”** here does not refer to time itself but to the completion of a task. This is described by our Lord in *Matthew 24:14* – *“And this Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.”* When this task is completed, **“THE BEAST THAT ASCENDETH OUT OF THE BOTTOMLESS PIT SHALL MAKE WAR AGAINST THEM, AND SHALL OVERCOME THEM, AND KILL THEM.”** This is the same as is described in *Revelation 13:4-7*. This **“beast”** is the same one revealed in *Revelation 17:8*. This **“beast”** is the servant of Satan and is allowed for a time to persecute, **“overcome,”** and even **“kill”** the witnesses of Christ. Some believe this speaks of the total eradication of the church on the earth, that there will be no believers at all in the very end just prior to the second coming of Christ. The Bible teaches us, however, that there will be believers on earth when Christ returns (*1 Cor. 15:51-52; 1 Thess. 4:15-18*).

This describes the continual, growing popularity and influence of false religion and the continual decline of the preaching of the truth in the world as we come nearer to the second coming of Christ. This is taking place even today as the churches where the Gospel of God’s free and sovereign grace in Christ, the doctrine of Christ and His grace, becomes more and more scarce, even rare, and the false churches that come in the name of Christ but deny His truth become larger, more popular, and more influential. The influence of the Gospel will be less and less and even seem dead in the eyes of the world. Paul described this in *2 Thessalonians 2* and in *2 Timothy 4*. Also we must compare Scripture with Scripture. As here the beast is allowed to **“overcome them, and kill them,”** we are assured by our Lord that *“the gates of hell shall not prevail”* over the church He has built and is built upon Him. He told His disciples, *“In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world”* (*John 16:33*). We are assured then that the true church is victorious in Christ.

**(11:8)** – Here is another proof that these images in *Revelation* are spiritual and symbolic, not physical. Having been killed by the beast, the bodies of the witnesses lie unburied in **“THE GREAT CITY,”** later on depicted as Babylon the Great, but here depicted as **“SODOM,”** a prime Biblical image of godlessness, and as **“EGYPT,”** that nation which cruelly held the people of God in slavery. Those who refuse to believe in Christ and repent of dead works and idolatry, those who refuse to submit to His blood and imputed righteousness as the only ground of salvation, are compared to **“Sodom and Egypt.”** **“WHERE ALSO OUR LORD WAS CRUCIFIED”** – This reference to the place where Christ was crucified has led some to believe that John sees the witnesses as actually dying in Jerusalem during the supposed 7-year tribulation. But since the context is the church’s witness to the world, the point is that since Christ died in Jerusalem, rejected by His people, the earthly Jerusalem becomes a symbol of the rejection of Christ by the world, the entire city of man, symbolized by **“Sodom and Egypt”** and later by Babylon the great. Consider how the prophet Isaiah compared Jerusalem in his day to Sodom (*Isa. 1:9-10*).

**(11:9-10)** – The two witnesses are now dead, and their dead bodies lie unburied in the street. To leave a corpse unburied was to show utter contempt for that person. They will even celebrate what they see as the total death of the witness of Christ. **“THESE TWO PROPHETS TORMENTED THEM THAT DWELT ON THE EARTH”** – **“Tormented”** is the same Greek word as in *Revelation 9:5* which is to test with a touchstone used to test the purity of silver and gold by rubbing either metal against it. The Gospel truth is the standard by which all claims of salvation must be tested. When sinners claim salvation by their works, the Gospel test exposes this as evil deeds (*John 3:19-20*). The world hates and is **“tormented”** by the message because it exposes their false refuges. They are like the wicked Ahab of old when he spoke of God’s prophet and said, *“but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil”* (*1 Kings 22:8*). Christ’s true witnesses will not speak peace to sinners who seek salvation by their works. This is a torment to the natural men. **“THREE DAYS AND AN HALF”** simply shows that the victory of the beast over the church is very short-lived. While the true church faithfully bears witness of Jesus Christ throughout the entire church age (3 ½ years, 42 months, and 1260 days), the beast’s triumph is much shorter, only 3 ½ days. Again, the true church is safe and secure in Christ.

**(11:11)** – As stated in the last lesson, **“THREE DAYS AND AN HALF”** symbolizes the very short period of time in which it will seem to the world that the beast has overcome and killed the two witnesses, the true church of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the last days. The world looks upon the true church as being dead, and the world rejoices over that fact. The testimony of the true church is that that world is cursed and in line for eternal damnation, because without Christ, without His blood and righteousness, the work He accomplished on the cross, there is no hope of eternal life and glory (*Gal. 6:14*). The world rejoices because, as they see it, they will be bothered and troubled no more by the testimony of the two witnesses. But something happens here that the world does not expect – **“THE SPIRIT OF LIFE FROM GOD ENTERED INTO THEM”** (the two witnesses). The breath of life by the Spirit of God **“ENTERED INTO THEM, AND THEY STOOD UPON THEIR FEET”** – This takes us back to Ezekiel’s prophecy in *Ezekiel 37:10* – *“So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army.”* Just when the beast appears to triumph, God raises up a mighty army to continue the church’s witness in the world. Just when the witnesses appear humiliated and defeated, God vindicates His truth and His witnesses and strikes **“GREAT FEAR”** on all who hate Christ and reject His Gospel of eternal salvation and glory by His grace through the Lord Jesus Christ. The whole church, and all the redeemed individuals who make up the church, live spiritually and eternally, and continue spiritually and eternally, by the power and grace of God in Christ Who is our life.

**(11:12)** – Upon command from God Almighty – **“A GREAT VOICE”** – they are revived and **“ASCENDED UP TO HEAVEN IN A CLOUD,”** and this sight strikes terror in the hearts of all the enemies of Christ and the church. Some claim this is the great resurrection on the last day at the Lord’s return, but this great event seems to take place before the actual second coming of Christ when all the saints of God are taken with Him to glory forever and ever. In other verses, we are told that this is in line with the fall of Babylon where the people of God are still called to come out (*Rev. 18:1-4*). When Christ returns, and the saints are all taken up to heaven with Him in glory, there will be no more calling of the Gospel. Also, the meaning of this phrase **“they ascended up to heaven”** means they are especially blessed of God, or blessed with some privilege, not literally taken to heaven. The same phrase is used to

describe the city of Capernaum in *Matthew 11:23* which speaks of the fact that they were blessed to hear the Gospel. Capernaum was not taken to heaven, but they were especially blessed to hear the Gospel by which sinners can know the way to heaven – the Lord Jesus Christ (*John 14:6*). **“AND THEIR ENEMIES BEHELD THEM,”** or discerned them, meaning that they realized that the two witnesses are not dead.

**(11:13)** – This describes the beginning the fall of the Babylon, described as “*the great city*” in *11:8*, and may coincide with the destruction described in the sixth seal as described in *6:12* which begins to usher in the final destruction of all things by the second coming of Christ. A **“TENTH PART OF THE CITY FELL”** which shows the beginnings of destruction, not the full and final destruction of all who have denied and despised Christ, His church, and His Gospel truth. **“SEVEN THOUSAND”** are killed in the tumult of war and oppression, described here as **“THE EARTHQUAKE.”** *“Seven thousand”* is symbolic of the totality of God’s wrath upon all His enemies. All who stand against Christ and without Christ shall be destroyed. It is also interesting to note that *“seven thousand”* was the number of God’s elect remnant in Elijah’s day (*Rom. 11:1-6*), where it symbolizes the totality of God’s elect, all redeemed by the blood of Christ, clothed in His righteousness imputed, and certain to be called to faith in Him and repentance of dead works.

**“AND THE REMNANT WERE AFFRIGHTED, AND GAVE GLORY TO THE GOD OF HEAVEN”** – Even amidst this great destruction as Babylon begins to fall, God still saves His elect remnant. He commands, calls, and brings His people out from false religion – *“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”* (*Rev. 18:4-5*). All these will acknowledge the justice of God and the righteousness of His judgments upon those that were slain. They will testify of His mercy and goodness to them who are spared. By the power of the Holy Spirit, they will confess their transgressions and sins and give the glory of their deliverance, not to their idols and images, not to their works or will, but to the true God whose grace they now embrace in and by the Lord Jesus Christ. The only way sinners can truly give **“glory to the god of heaven”** is by believing in and embracing the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible tells us, for example, that Abraham *“staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, GIVING GLORY TO GOD; and being fully persuaded that, what HE had promised, HE was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness”* (*Rom. 4:20-22*). Man by nature thinks so highly of himself and his works that he despises salvation totally by grace which reigns through the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ freely imputed and received by God-given faith. When God brings His people to saving faith in Christ, they submit to Him and His righteousness. This glorifies the God of heaven.

**(11:14)** – All is now ready for final judgment. In spite of all these warnings as God has given sinners space for repentance, the world has remained impenitent and, in addition, has rejected the only way of salvation from the wrath of God – Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Now the world is ripe for judgment, and the final reckoning must come. The question is, “Where will we be in that day?” Will we stand on our own, in our own works, or will we stand in Christ? To stand on our own, in our own works, is certain eternal death. To stand in Christ is eternal salvation and glory forever and ever.

**(11:15)** – The revelation of the second woe has passed, and the revelation of the third woe (which is the seventh trumpet judgment) comes now. **“THE SEVENTH ANGEL”** sounds the trumpet. **“AND THERE WERE GREAT (loud) VOICES IN HEAVEN”** – This is a very public announcement heard by all. These are revelations of the final end of all things. The Gospel message of God’s grace in Christ and eternal salvation by His blood and righteousness is a “mighty disclosure” of the glory of God in our salvation. This seventh trumpet is a “mighty disclosure” of judgment against all the enemies of Christ. The message is that **“THE KINGDOMS OF THIS WORLD ARE BECOME THE KINGDOMS OF OUR LORD, AND OF HIS CHRIST; AND HE SHALL REIGN FOR EVER AND EVER.”** The *“kingdoms of this world”* have always belonged to our Lord, but for the purposes of His glory in Christ, God has allowed Satan to usurp His sovereign authority and bring this fallen world under his evil rule (*John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11*). Babylon, the city of man, has blasphemed and boasted of its supposed victory but now has fallen, and the New Jerusalem will take its place. Christ and His church have triumphed over all the enemies of God. Christ’s kingdom, unlike Babylon, will never end, and all His enemies are about to be made His footstool (*Psa. 110:1; Heb. 1:13; 10:13; Php. 2:5-11*).

**(11:16)** – These **“FOUR AND TWENTY ELDERS”** symbolize the whole church of the Lord Jesus Christ as stated in *Revelation 4:4*. They **“SAT BEFORE GOD ON THEIR SEATS,”** which speaks of their rest in Christ. They sit securely upon the finished work of Christ who is every believer’s Sabbath (*Heb. 4:9-11*). They are not trying to work for their salvation. They know that the final victory of the kingdom of God is in the hands of Christ, so they sit peacefully with the assurance of God’s power and grace in Christ. When they heard the “mighty disclosures,” they **“FELL UPON THEIR FACES,”** which is an act of humility before the greatness and glory of God in Christ. It is the posture of submission from the heart in obedience to Christ and His righteousness alone by which the church is accepted and glorified (*Rom. 10:4*). And they **“WORSHIPPED GOD,”** honoring Him as the God of salvation, the God of all grace and glory in Christ.

**(11:17)** – **“SAYING, WE GIVE THEE THANKS”** – First they give thanks to the Lord Himself and to Him alone, not to men, not to themselves. We who are saved by grace will spend eternity giving Him thanks for His eternal blessings. Next, they gave thanks for His eternal and unchangeable power and Godhead – **“O LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, WHICH ART, AND WAST, AND ART TO COME.”** If God could ever change, we would perish with the unbelieving world. Our hope of assurance is that His mercy and righteousness endure forever, and that He remembers His covenant forever (*cf., Mal. 3:6; Lam. 3:22; Psa. 107:1; 111:3; 105:8; 111:9*). Then, they give thanks for the way in which God used His power – **“BECAUSE THOU HAST TAKEN TO THEE THY GREAT POWER, AND HAST REIGNED.”** This is God’s reign over the universe in and by Christ which is eternal salvation and glory for His church. As God uses His great power to defeat and destroy His enemies, that same power is used to save and secure His elect people, His church. It is a mighty disclosure by the Holy Spirit when He brings us to see that Christ is the power and the wisdom of God for salvation (*1 Cor. 1:23-24*).

**(11:18)** – **“AND THE NATIONS WERE ANGRY, AND THY WRATH IS COME”** – The anger, hatred, and opposition of all nations together cannot stop or even hinder God’s wrath against sin. **“THE TIME OF THE DEAD”** is the time of final judgment – **“THAT THEY SHOULD BE JUDGED.”** The

wicked, **“THEM WHICH DESTROY (corrupt) THE EARTH,”** shall be judged guilty and given what they have earned – eternal death. God’s **“SERVANTS THE PROPHETS, AND TO THE SAINTS, AND THEM THAT FEAR THY NAME, SMALL AND GREAT”** shall be rewarded. This reward is not what they earn by their works, for salvation and all its blessings are totally free by His grace in the Lord Jesus Christ (*Rom. 4:1-5; Eph. 1:3; 2:8-10*). The reward that God’s children receive is the reward of grace which Christ alone earned by His obedience unto death as our substitute and surety. When the Bible speaks of the wicked being rewarded at Judgment based on their works, it speaks of what men by nature have earned – the wages of sin which is death (*Rom. 6:23a*). When the Bible speaks of believers being rewarded according to their works, it speaks not of what they have earned by their works but what they have in their possession in Christ as proven by their works. Their works are the fruit of God’s power and grace in Christ (*John 15:1-8; Rom. 7:4-6; Gal. 2:20-21; 5:22-24*). The works of believers at final judgment speak not of what these works have earned for them but what these works say about them concerning their standing in Christ (*Matt. 5:16*). Another thing that needs to be considered is that this final judgment will be a declarative judgment both for the ungodly and child of God. It will be declared in that day that the ungodly have no savior, no mediator, no righteousness. It will be declared in that day that the child of God stands in Christ, the one and only Savior, Mediator, the Lord our Righteousness. All who are in Christ have already been judged for all their sins at the cross (*2 Cor. 5:21*).

**(11:19) – Here we see the “TEMPLE OF GOD WAS OPENED IN HEAVEN, AND THERE WAS SEEN IN HIS TEMPLE THE ARK OF HIS TESTAMENT.”** This is the open revelation of God to the world of the one and only way of salvation by His grace in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the standard of all judgment as it reveals the glory of God in Christ. This open vision is the damnation of all who are not found in Christ – **“AND THERE WERE LIGHTENINGS, AND VOICES, AND THUNDERINGS, AND AN EARTHQUAKE, AND GREAT HAIL.”** These are all images of total destruction for sinners who are not found righteous in Christ. All true believers, however, can rejoice and take comfort. The apostle John wrote, *“Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because AS HE IS, SO ARE WE IN THIS WORLD”* (*1 John 4:17*). If we are in Christ, united to Him by faith, washed in His blood and robed in His righteousness imputed, the day of judgment will not be for us a dreaded day of doom, or even of sorrow, but a day of victory, triumph, and glory. The measure by which God judges and damns sinners who have not Christ is the same measure by which God has judged and saves all who are found in Christ (*Php. 3:7-9*). The revelation of the temple and the ark of the covenant proves that all who by the sovereign grace of God are found in Christ trust in His merits alone and not to their own merits and works. We expect to be rewarded but not because of our works. It is because of our Savior. This vision also shows that the day of judgment will be the beginning of perfect, everlasting communion between God and His people. The ark of the covenant, so long concealed from men, is now in open view. The fact that it is now open declares that God will forever dwell with his people in intimate, glorious, eternal fellowship. Through the sin-atoning sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in His glorious Person, we shall forever be accepted of God. This opening of the temple of God and the appearance of the ark of the covenant means that the covenant of grace, with all its promises and blessings are ours forever in Christ. But for the wicked and unbelieving, it means wrath, banishment, and death. It pours out upon the lost nothing but wrath.

**(12:1)** – This begins a new section of *Revelation*. It is a different angle of the time between Christ's first coming and His second coming (*Rev. 14:14-20*). Here we view that time from the perspective of THE GREAT WARFARE BETWEEN CHRIST AND SATAN AS IT DEVELOPS DURING THE LAST DAYS. This warfare has been going on from the beginning (*Genesis 3:15*), but the outcome has always been assured by the power and grace of God in Christ. Satan cannot and will not win. Christ is and will be victorious! In this vision we are reminded that *"we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places"* (*Eph. 6:12*). Our only hope of victory is to stand in Christ and live by the power and grace of God in Him.

**"AND THERE APPEARED A GREAT WONDER IN HEAVEN"** – This revelation is through signs and symbols that God gives to John for an understanding of the redemption and preservation of the church by Christ throughout the last days. The first symbol is **"A WOMAN CLOTHED WITH THE SUN, AND THE MOON UNDER HER FEET, AND UPON HER HEAD A CROWN OF TWELVE STARS."** Some believe this *"woman"* to be Even as Jesus Christ was prophesied as the seed of *"the woman"* (*Gen. 3:15*). Although the warfare between Satan and the seed of woman began back in the Garden, this *"woman"* is not Eve. Roman Catholic interpreters have argued that this *"woman"* is the virgin Mary whom they call the queen of heaven. They have used this to exalt Mary to a place of idolatry as if she is one to whom and through whom we must pray. It is true that Mary was the human instrument used of God to bring forth Messiah according to the flesh. Jesus Christ was sent forth by God as *"made of a woman"* (*Gal. 4:4*). Mary was certainly blessed *"among women"* (*Luke 1:28,42*), but not above women. She was a sinner saved by grace. Although, as we will see, there are some parallels to Mary's experience when her child was born, this *"woman"* is not Mary. Others say this *"woman"* symbolizes the nation Israel in the Old Testament. Again, there are some parallels to the nation Israel in their experience, but this is a revelation of the Gospel Age. The nation Israel was a type of SPIRITUAL Israel, the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, also called Christ's brethren (*Matt. 12:46-50; Heb. 2:11*). This *"woman"* symbolizes the true church. She is seen *"in heaven,"* and this is the church's position IN CHRIST, washed in His blood (*Acts 20:28*), and clothed in His righteousness – **"clothed with the SUN,"** *"the Sun of righteousness"* (*Mal. 4:2; cf. Isa. 61:10*). She is justified from all her sin and at rest in Christ. She is secure in HIM.

**"And the moon under her feet"** – The *"moon"* shines in the night by the reflective light of the sun, so this speaks of the church as the light of the world shining forth with the Gospel light in the darkness of the fallen, cursed earth (*Matt. 5:14-16*). She walks by the light of truth in Christ and shines in the glory of HIS light. Her beauty is the light and glory of Christ and the grace of God in HIM. The light of Christ (His Word) is *"a lamp unto [her] feet, and a light unto [her] path"* (*Psa. 119:105*). **"And upon her head a crown of twelve stars"** – The *"crown"* speaks of her victory in and by the Lord Jesus Christ (*Rom. 8:37; 2 Cor. 2:14*). The *"twelve stars"* are ministers preaching the Word of God. Notice the crown is **"upon her head."** Who is the head of the church? God's Word tells us – *"And HE [Christ] is the Head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things HE might have the preeminence"* (*Col. 1:18*). So the crown is actually upon HIS head, and HE is the crown of the church (*Isa. 28:5-6*). As the twelve tribes of Israel made up the entirety of the covenant people of God in the Old Testament, here the *"twelve stars"* symbolizes the entire church of the Lord Jesus Christ built up and held up by Him and which shines forth with HIS light of truth (*1 Tim. 3:15-16*).

**(12:2) – “AND SHE BEING WITH CHILD CRIED”** – The woman is with child and ready to give birth. The nation Israel AS A TYPE OF THE CHURCH was often pictured as a mother giving birth (*Isa. 26:17,18; 54:1; 66:7-12; Hos. 13:13; Mic. 4:10; 5:2,3; Matt. 24:8*). She agonized and suffered for centuries, longing for the Messiah to come and destroy Satan, sin, and death, and usher in the kingdom. As the nation Israel itself had a false idea of the Messiah, the true Israel (the church) sees Him as He is in all His glory and majesty. This could also describe the struggle the church goes through as Christ is faithfully brought forth by the faithful witness of His church whereby God the Holy Spirit brings forth Christ in the hearts of His people. Paul expressed this same kind of **“TRAVAILING IN BIRTH”** when he wrote to the Galatians, *“My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you” (Gal. 4:19)*.

**(12:3) – Here is “ANOTHER WONDER IN HEAVEN.” “AND BEHOLD A GREAT RED DRAGON”** – *Revelation 20:2* tells us that this **“red dragon”** is Satan himself. He is described as **“great”** because of his power and widespread influence over the fallen world. His power is limited as it is only to the extent Christ allows him to work. **“Red”** is a symbol for sin (*cf. Isa. 1:18*), and Satan promotes sin as well as accuses the brethren of sin. It also describes his war-like, murderous, and lying nature (*John 8:44*). **“HAVING SEVEN HEADS AND TEN HORNS, AND SEVEN CROWNS UPON HIS HEADS”** – This symbolizes Satan’s dominion over the world as foretold in *Daniel 7*. Although we cannot limit these symbols to historical references, we cannot ignore historical references. For example, **“seven heads”** could refer to Rome which sat on seven hills as an emblem of Satan’s evil opposition to Christ and His church (*Dan. 7:19-28*). **“Ten horns”** could symbolize how Rome was divided into ten separate kingdoms all raised up for God’s purpose. They represent the persecuting powers of Satan that operate through all the nations of the world throughout the Gospel Age. These are countries at Satan’s disposal to be used to persecute the people of God. **“Seven crowns”** could speak of the succession of Roman emperors, all which stood against the church of the Lord Jesus Christ (*Rev. 17:9-14*). The main lesson is that world empires and governments will oppose and persecute the church throughout this last age.

**(12:4) – “AND HIS TAIL DREW THE THIRD PART OF THE STARS OF HEAVEN AND DID CAST THEM TO THE EARTH”** – Many believe this describes the angels that fell with Satan (*Jude 6*), but the context more likely points to the persecution of the ministers of Christ, who are described as **“stars”** (*cf. Rev. 1:16*), as they shine forth with the light of Christ. **“The third part”** simply means that a great number of Christ’s witnesses were killed or **“cast them to the earth.”** However, many survived and spread the Gospel into the world. **“AND THE DRAGON STOOD BEFORE THE WOMAN WHICH WAS READY TO BE DELIVERED, FOR TO DEVOUR HER CHILD AS SOON AS IT WAS BORN”** – We can see how this describes Satan working through King Herod to kill Christ as soon as He was born (*Matt. 2:1-16; cf. Acts 4:26-28*). This can also describe Satan’s efforts to defeat the church after Pentecost (*Acts 8 and 9*). Satan has always tried to stop the salvation and growth of the church born of Christ through the preaching of the Gospel (*Matt. 13:19; 2 Cor. 4:3-4*). But we will see that Satan will not be successful in his attempts to defeat Christ and His church. Christ defeated Satan by his finished work of righteousness on the cross, and He will continue to defeat Satan as He brings His people to submit to Him and His righteousness for all salvation, eternal life, and final glory.



**(12:5)** – It is clear that as Satan stands in opposition to Christ and the church, he will not prevail. He did not prevail at the birth of Christ, and he has not and will not prevail in the building of the church. **“AND SHE,”** the woman who symbolically represents the church **“BROUGHT FORTH A MAN CHILD.”** This is Christ Who is God in human flesh (*Isa. 9:6-7; Matt. 1:21,23; John 1:14*), and from and in Him the church is saved, born, preserved, and lives forever. **“WHO WAS TO RULE ALL NATIONS WITH A ROD OF IRON”** – The **“man child”** is to be King of kings and rule all people with His scepter of righteousness and power (*Psa. 2:9*). We who believe in Christ take comfort in the fact that the same **“rod”** used to bring wrath upon His enemies is used to protect, rule, and comfort His people. **“And her child was caught up unto God, and to His throne”** – Christ was born to save His people by establishing righteousness in His obedience unto death to satisfy the justice of God and enable God to be a just God and a Savior. Upon finishing His work of redemption, He was raised from the dead and ascended unto His Father where He sat down at the right hand of God. He lives forever as Godman making intercession for His people, His church (*John 17:1-5; Acts 1:9; 2:33; Heb. 1:1-3; 12:2*). This book of **Revelation** is the unveiling of the risen, ascended, glorified Christ ruling over all things for the glory of God and the salvation of His people.

**(12:6)** – **“AND THE WOMAN FLED INTO THE WILDERNESS, WHERE SHE HATH A PLACE PREPARED OF GOD”** – As this parallels with Joseph and Mary under persecution from Satan and his followers taking the infant Messiah and fleeing to Egypt as it was foreordained and prophesied of God, the church can be said to have **“fled into the wilderness,”** which is the fallen, cursed, ungodly world. Believers are not of this world, but we are in this world. We are not citizens of this world but of the world to come. **“That they should feed her there”** – This parallels with the children of Israel being delivered from Egypt into the wilderness and fed by God with manna forty years. During the last days the church is in the wilderness of the world but not lost and abandoned. She is fed by God with the grace and the Word of God. She is protected from Satan’s attacks and given everything she needs during her exile in the wilderness until she enters final glory in Christ. Therefore, the church, like Israel, is in the midst of a great exodus from the city of man (John has already called it “Egypt”), wandering in the wilderness, protected by God Who feeds us with bread from heaven and Who gives us living water, until one day, He will bring us to the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem. As stated from *Revelation 11:1-2*, this **“thousand two hundred and threescore days”** is a symbolic number for the entire period of the last days in which the church is persecuted by Satan, the beast, and the false prophet.

**(12:7)** – Here we have a behind-the-scenes glimpse of the struggle in heaven which culminates in the banishment of Satan from the presence of God. **“AND THERE WAS WAR IN HEAVEN”** – This does not speak of any geographical location but of the nature of this warfare. This is the spiritual warfare between Christ and His kingdom as we (the church) by GOD’S power and grace fight against Satan and the world (*2 Cor. 10:3-5; Eph. 6:10-17*). **“MICHAEL AND HIS ANGELS FOUGHT AGAINST THE DRAGON; AND THE DRAGON FOUGHT AND HIS ANGELS”** – The name **“Michael”** means **“ONE WHO IS GOD.”** He is mentioned in *Jude 9* as **“the archangel”** meaning “the first angel or messenger.” In *Daniel 10:13* He is called **“one of the chief princes,”** but this would be better translated as “the first in rank.” **“Michael”** is **“ONE WHO IS GOD”** and who has the preeminence. This is none other than our Lord Jesus Christ. **“His angels”** are His messengers or ministers preaching the Gospel of

the kingdom of heaven – the Gospel of God’s free and sovereign grace wherein the “*righteousness of God*” is revealed (*Rom. 1:16-17*). “*The dragon*” is Satan, and “*his angels*” are his ministers, his false apostles who disguise themselves as ministers of truth and righteousness (*2 Cor. 11:13-15*).

**(12:8) – “And prevailed not”** – Satan and his false ministers have not and will not prevail over Christ and His church. We are assured of our victory in Christ by the finished work of Christ on the cross – “*Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die*” (*John 12:31-33*). When Christ put away the sins of His people by His precious blood, when He established a righteousness whereby God could be just to justify His people, Satan was “*cast out*” as to his power to accuse and condemn God’s elect in Christ. “**Neither was their place found any more in heaven**” – “**Place**” here means their “position.” There is no hope of salvation and eternal life but in Christ and as we, by the grace of God are positioned IN HIM (*Php. 3:7-10*). Satan and his ministers have one place, and it is a place of condemnation and eternal damnation.

**(12:9)** – This verse leaves no doubt as to the identity of the “**THE GREAT DRAGON.**” He is “**THAT OLD SERPENT,**” – This takes us back to the Garden of Eden. The Lord said that Satan “*was a murderer from the beginning*” (*John 8:44*). One of his main weapons in his warfare against Christ and the church is deception. He is a liar who deceives with religious lies leading sinners into condemnation with false views of salvation by works and human attainments and righteousness. “**CALLED THE DEVIL,**” which means “slanderer or accuser.” Slander and accusation are also weapons of Satan and his ministers in their warfare against Christ and the church. This is why we as sinners saved by grace need “*an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous*” (*1 John 2:1*). When Satan accuses us of deserving condemnation, our only defense is the blood and righteousness of Christ. “**SATAN**” means “adversary.” He is the enemy of Christ and of every true child of God (*cf. Matt. 13:38-39; Luke 22:31; 1 Pet. 5:8*). “**WHICH DECEIVETH THE WHOLE WORLD**” – As one of Satan’s weapons is deception, he works with lies disguised as truth. His deceptions come in the form of false messages (*Gal. 1:6-9; 2 Cor. 11:3-4, 13-15*) and false miracles (*Matt. 7:22-23; 2 Thess. 2:9-10*). His goal is to keep sinners from seeing God’s glory in the salvation of sinners by His grace in Christ (*2 Cor. 4:3-4*). “*The whole world*” here does not mean “all without exception.” It is true that even God’s elect begin life in spiritual death and darkness, deceived in religious pride and self-righteousness, but they do not remain deceived. God the Holy Spirit brings them to the light of truth in Christ (*John 3:19-21; 2 Cor. 4:5-6*). “*World*” here refers to those who are so bound to this evil, ungodly, unbelieving world that they never come to a saving knowledge of Christ as distinct from those who believe in HIM (*1 John 5:19-20*). As long as men seek righteousness and salvation by their works and efforts, they remain deceived and blinded. We must turn to Christ and Him alone for all righteousness and salvation.

**(12:9)** – As we continue this subject of warfare in heaven, it is revealed to John that Satan **“WAS CAST OUT INTO THE EARTH, AND HIS ANGELS WERE CAST OUT WITH HIM.”** This great victory was accomplished at the cross when the Lord Jesus Christ substituted Himself in the place of His chosen people to die for them, satisfy the justice of God, and bring in everlasting righteousness – *“Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me. This He said, signifying what death He should die” (John 12:31-33).* What seemed to the world to be Satan’s victory in the death of Christ was actually Satan’s defeat. Therefore, having been defeated by Jesus Christ, Satan is cast down to the earth, banished to the abyss, bound by the preaching of the Gospel. He is now enraged because his days are numbered. This casting out of Satan and his ministers is further defined in the next two verses.

**(12:10)** – **“AND I HEARD A LOUD VOICE SAYING IN HEAVEN”** – As a result of Satan’s defeat, heaven resounds with the cry of victory. **“NOW IS COME SALVATION, AND STRENGTH, AND THE KINGDOM OF OUR GOD, AND THE POWER OF HIS CHRIST”** – The salvation of God’s elect has always been conditioned on the obedience unto death of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was true of the Old Testament saints, and it is just as true of all New Testament saints. Abel was justified before God based upon the sure promise of God sending His Son into the world to die and establish righteousness whereby God could justify the ungodly. The last one of God’s elect who will be born again and called into the kingdom is justified on this same ground, the blood of Christ which is the righteousness of God in Him imputed to all His people and which they all receive by God-given faith. But as we are creatures of time, and as God works His eternal purpose and will in the process of time (*Gal. 4:4-6*), it was necessary that the Son of God in time be made flesh, obey the law, and die on the cross to save us from our sins. This **“now”** refers to the time of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Simeon was saved by the grace of God in Christ before the birth, life, and death of Christ, but when Christ came into the world, Simeon said, *“For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation” (Luke 2:30).* Since the beginning of time, Satan has sought to defeat Christ and His church. He has sought to deceive the people of God and bring them to condemnation. Being limited in his own knowledge and power, he actually imagined he could accomplish this. But upon the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ in time, Satan and his ministers have been fully and finally **“cast down.”**

Christ is the believer’s **“salvation.”** His name, Jesus, means “God our salvation.” **“Strength”** – Christ alone as Godman has the ability to put away our sin by the sacrifice of Himself and to work out a perfect righteousness whereby God can be just to justify sinners like us. *“Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb. 7:25).* **“And the kingdom of our God”** – Christ is the foundation and builder of the kingdom of God’s grace in the salvation of His people (*Matt. 16:18; Eph. 2:18-22*). **“And the power of His Christ”** – Christ, as He is presented, identified, and distinguished in the preaching of the Gospel, is *“power of God unto salvation” (Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 1:23-24).*

**“FOR THE ACCUSER OF OUR BRETHREN IS CAST DOWN, WHICH ACCUSED THEM BEFORE OUR GOD DAY AND NIGHT”** – This proves that the casting down of Satan has to do with his inability to accuse **“our brethren,”** all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, all who are washed in His blood and clothed in His righteousness. Remember that Satan’s main weapons in his futile attempts to war against Christ and the church are deception and accusation.

**(12:11)** – Consider how Satan is defeated. **“AND THEY OVERCAME HIM BY THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB”** – Even as believers, we are still sinners. Even though saved by the grace of God, we are yet not sinlessly perfect within ourselves. When Satan brings accusation against us, what then is our defense? It cannot be anything of our own works, our own righteousness, or our own religious exercises. IT IS ONLY **“BY THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB”** THAT WE CAN TURN BACK SATAN’S ACCUSATIONS – *“Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us” (Rom. 8:33-34).* Christ took our sins upon Himself as they were imputed (charged, accounted) to Him. He became guilty and cursed under the law of God in the place of His people, and in return we become *“the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21).* Christ paid our debt in full and satisfied the justice of God against us so that when Satan accuses, His accusations will not stick. We have Christ as our Advocate with the Father, and *“He is the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 2:1-2).*

**“AND BY THE WORD OF THEIR TESTIMONY”** – What is the **“testimony”** of God’s people? IT IS JESUS CHRIST AND HIM CRUCIFIED! It is the word of the Gospel of God’s free and sovereign grace in Christ. It is the blood of Christ as the full and final payment to God’s justice for all our sins. It is righteousness in and by Christ imputed to us so that we stand before God *“accepted in the Beloved” (Eph. 1:6).* Satan has no ground on which to stand when he brings accusation against the people of God because there is *“now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Rom. 8:1).* **“AND THEY LOVED NOT THEIR LIVES UNTO THE DEATH”** – When speaking of His death on the cross as the salvation of His people, the Lord interjected a note concerning the character of that salvation as it expresses itself in the hearts of His people. He said, *“He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve Me, him will my Father honour” (John 12:25-26).* Many of the saints have given their lives for the glory of God in Christ. We must admit that this is not within us naturally. It is only by the grace of God that a man or a woman would stand firm unto death in opposition to the world for the cause of Christ. This also speaks of true repentance that evidences for a believer that nothing in this world can eclipse or replace Christ and the salvation He has freely provided for us (*Php. 3:3-9*).

**(12:12)** – The reaction to all this is rejoicing for those who are citizens of the kingdom of heaven – sinners saved by the grace of God in Christ. But it is **“WOE (sorrow) TO THE INHABITERS OF THE EARTH AND OF THE SEA.”** Those who are so bound to the world that they refuse to seek the Lord and the salvation He freely gives by His grace in Christ are prey for **“THE DEVIL.”** His accusations towards them will stick as they have no advocate, no propitiation, no righteousness. The wages of sin is death, and that is what sinners without Christ have earned – eternal death. The devil’s **“WRATH”** is his raging anger over his defeat by Christ on the cross. Knowing he has **“BUT A SHORT TIME”** enrages him to go about zealously seeking to bring as many as he can into eternal damnation with him. The only way to defeat the devil is by looking to, believing and resting in Christ for all salvation.

**(12:13)** – Satan now realizes his defeat is immanent. He knows he has but a short time, but his rage is not diminished. He cannot defeat God’s people because we are sealed by the grace of God in Christ. We are preserved and protected by our sovereign Savior who is willing and able to save us to the end and bring us to glory. However, because of his hatred of Christ and the church, Satan still walks about this earth “*as a roaring lion ... seeking whom he may devour*” (1 Pet. 5:8). We know that Satan does so only by permission of God Almighty. God has His sovereign purpose in allowing Satan to continue for a short time. This purpose is ultimately God’s glory and the salvation of His people by the Lord Jesus Christ. Satan is allowed to persecute **“THE WOMAN,”** the church of the living God. **“PERSECUTED”** here means “to pursue” or “follow after.” It is the same word Paul was inspired to use in *Romans 14:19* – “*Let us therefore FOLLOW AFTER the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.*” It is also the same as in *Matthew 5:11* when the Lord said, “*Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and PERSECUTE you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.*” The point is this – It is not that in the last days Satan will always be allowed to physically torture, harm, and kill believers as with those who are martyred for the faith, but he will pursue, follow after, God’s people here on earth with his constant harassing, hounding, accusing, dividing, and any other means he can use. This is why as the true people of God we must be aware of and avoid Satan’s devices – “*Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices*” (2 Cor. 2:11).

**(12:14)** – **“GIVEN TWO WINGS OF A GREAT EAGLE”** – The **“WOMAN”** (the church) has no power of her own to flee and outrun Satan as he pursues her. It was and is only by the power and grace of God in Christ that she outruns and is protected from Satan (*Eph. 6:10-19*). The symbol here is taken from the Old Testament. In *Exodus 19:4*, the Lord said to Israel, “*Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto Myself.*” Isaiah used the same image in showing God’s power and protection of His people – “*But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint*” (*Isa. 40:31*).

She flew **“INTO THE WILDERNESS, INTO HER PLACE”** – The **“wilderness”** is a symbol of the world in the last days. Just as Israel fled Egypt and wandered in the **“wilderness”** for forty years, the church now wanders in the **“wilderness”** of this fallen world. However, like Israel of old, the church is protected, preserved, and provided for by the Lord – **“WHERE SHE IS NOURISHED FOR A TIME, AND TIMES, AND HALF TIME, FROM THE FACE OF THE SERPENT.”** Christ has not abandoned His church or left us to ourselves. He has put us in our place, the place of His appointment, to be witnesses in the earth as He calls His lost sheep unto Himself. Again, the phrase **“time, and times, and half time”** sets forth a short but definite period of time known only to God. It is the equivalent of the three and one-half years of *Daniel 9:25-26* where he prophesies of the death of Christ and the persecution that followed until the church in Judea was scattered. This three and on-half years of persecution, from Pentecost to Stephen’s death, was a foretaste of the persecution that would last throughout the last days until the second coming of Christ.

**(12:15)** – Satan is enraged because of his defeat and impending doom. He is frustrated by his inability to overcome Christ and His church. So he opens his **“MOUTH”** and spews forth **“WATER AS A FLOOD AFTER THE WOMAN, THAT HE MIGHT CAUSE HER TO BE CARRIED AWAY OF THE**

**FLOOD.”** This image is symbolic of Satan’s doctrine of deception. Just as the Son of Man opens His mouth to reveal a “*sharp two-edged sword*” (*Rev. 1:16*), which is the Word of God, the Word of truth and salvation for God’s people, Satan has his imitation (*John 8:44; 2 Cor. 11:13-15*). This is the spirit of antichrist which has already gone forth into the world to deceive the people of God through false teaching and which was already plaguing the churches described in the seven letters of *Revelation 1-3* (*cf., 1 John 2:18ff*). This is Satan’s lie of salvation by the works and efforts of men. It is a damning flood to the souls of men. Satan sows his tares, his false churches, throughout the world (*cf. Matt. 13:36-43*).

**(12:16) – “AND THE EARTH HELPED THE WOMAN, AND THE EARTH OPENED HER MOUTH, AND SWALLOWED UP THE FLOOD WHICH THE DRAGON CAST OUT OF HIS MOUTH.”** Here is a great testimony to the sovereignty of God who rules over the earth, the physical universe, to accomplish the salvation and preservation of His people in and by the Lord Jesus Christ. Consider how the Lord sent physical plagues to Egypt to force Pharaoh to let Israel go free. Consider how He opened the Red Sea to allow the people to cross over on dry land, and how He caused the waters to swallow up Pharaoh and his army. It is recorded in *Numbers 16* how the ground opened and swallowed up the false priests of Israel. This was God’s judgment on those who sought to deceive His people. As the ground swallowed these satanic enemies, so too, God will ensure that the flood of Satanic lies will not overwhelm and defeat His church. God’s truth will swallow up the river of Satan’s lies (*Isa. 43:1-2*).

**(12:17) –** Satan’s anger and hatred of Christ and His church does not cease or even diminish. It increases as he fails to accomplish his goal of deceiving God’s people. His attacks are against “**THE REMNANT OF HER SEED,**” which are the true children of God. They are identified and described here as they “**WHICH KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD, AND HAVE THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS CHRIST.**” Those who “*keep the commandments of God*” are not people who are found in perfect obedience to God’s revealed commandments. If this were the case, then no sinner could claim to be a true child of God. To “*keep the commandments of God*” is, first, to submit to Christ as the Lord our Righteousness (*Rom. 10:1-4*). It is to believe and rest IN HIM for all salvation, forgiveness, justification, eternal life, and glory. Then, it is to walk and live by faith in Him seeking to obey Him, not for salvation and righteousness, but because of His grace and love to us in Christ. All who do this “*have the testimony of Jesus Christ.*” Christ is our Banner, and His Word of truth is our sword by which we wage the spiritual battle (*2 Cor. 10:4-5*). We overcome the Devil and all his works by the blood of the Lamb. Therefore, we need not fear the sword of the beast, nor lies of the Devil. In fact, we need not fear even death itself. By the death of the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ, through His shed blood and imputed righteousness of Christ, we overcome all our enemies.

**(13:1)** – In 12:17 we were told that “*the dragon*” (Satan) was angry “*with the woman*” (the church in the last days), and that he would wage “*war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ*” (all who trust Christ for all salvation, righteousness, and eternal life). Satan was bound for a while when he was cast out by Christ on the cross, and the Gospel was spread throughout the world. But now he is loosed for a little season to make world-wide war on the church. This is all part of God’s plan for this world in judgment. Satan’s war is described in this chapter. The church is told of the trouble she will endure and the weapons Satan will use against her in the last days. **“AND I STOOD UPON THE SAND OF THE SEA”** –The “*sea*” symbolizes the nations of the world (*Rev. 17:15; Isa. 17:12; 57:20-21*). Satan’s warfare against the church is world-wide. All of God’s true children all over the world are engaged in this warfare. The whole world is against Christ and His people (*John 15:18–16:3; 1 John 5:19*), but not every individual in the world. God has His remnant, and this remnant is His church symbolized by the persecuted woman.

**“AND SAW A BEAST RISE UP OUT OF THE SEA HAVING SEVEN HEADS AND TEN HORNS”** – This “*beast*” is an agent of Satan symbolized here as a grotesque monster, but we must remember that Satan works in very subtle ways. He disguises himself as an angel of light (*2 Cor. 11:13-15*). He is not easily recognized. This “*beast*” is an image that represents the persecuting power of Satan working in and through the nations of the world and their ungodly empires and governments as they are set on making war with Christ and His church (*Rev. 17:7-15*). It bears the image of the dragon and mirrors Satan (*Rev. 12:3*) as it serves him and draws its power from him. But also notice how the **“TEN CROWNS”** are **“UPON HIS HORNS”** and not upon his head as they were in Satan’s case. This shows that his power and authority are from Satan. As stated in our comments on *Revelation 12:3*, this symbolizes Satan’s dominion over the world as foretold in *Daniel 7*.

In John’s day it could reasonably be said that the “*seven heads*” could have reminded them of Rome which sits on seven hills. This would be the Roman Empire as an emblem of Satan’s opposition to Christ and His church (*Dan. 7:19-28*). “*Ten horns*” could indicate how Rome was divided into ten separate kingdoms. “*Seven crowns*” could speak of the succession of Roman emperors, all which stood against the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not unreasonable to view the Roman Empire as an example of all the persecuting powers of Satan that operate through all nations. But it is wrong to limit this image to Rome. It represents all ungodly governments throughout the New Testament age.

**“AND UPON HIS HEADS THE NAME OF BLASPHEMY”** – This is slander and evil speaking against God and His Christ, His people, and His truth (*Matt. 5:10-11*). The philosophies, policies, and methods of this “*beast*” are in open opposition to the Gospel of God’s grace in Christ and His church. It is the ungodly claim that men cannot trust the true and living God but that men must trust the state and themselves. God’s people cry, “*Who is like unto Thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?*” (*Exod. 15:11*). Those who follow the cry, “*Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him?*” (*Rev. 13:4*). This is blasphemy.

**(13:2)** – This “**BEAST**” can be connected with the vision of the four beasts in *Daniel 7*. **“AND THE BEAST WHICH I SAW WAS LIKE UNTO A LEOPARD”** (*cf. Dan. 7:6; Hab. 1:8*). **“AND HIS FEET WERE AS THE FEET OF A BEAR”** (*cf. Dan. 7:5*). **“AND HIS MOUTH AS THE MOUTH OF A LION: AND THE DRAGON GAVE HIM HIS POWER, AND HIS SEAT, AND GREAT AUTHORITY”** (*cf. Dan. 7:4*) – Satan is said to be “*as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he*

*may devour*” (1 Pet. 5:8; cf. 2 Cor. 4:3-4; 11:13-15). We see our hope again the lion and the dragon in the merits and power of the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Lord Jesus Christ who is greater than Satan. Each beast in *Daniel 7* represented four different kingdoms (Babylon, Medo-Persian, Greek, Roman), but here they are combined because even with all their differences, their false philosophies and religions can all be combined into one – salvation by the works of men in opposition to sovereign grace of God in Christ. Their nature of their evil confederacy is described in *Acts 4:26-28*. While Daniel prophesied of this beast in connection with the beginning of the last days, John spoke of it as a present reality (cf. *1 John 2:18*).

**(13:3) – “AND I SAW ONE OF HIS HEADS AS IT WERE WOUNDED TO DEATH; AND HIS DEADLY WOUND WAS HEALED”** – This verse seems to reference the destruction and restoration of some particular great power known particularly for persecuting the church. Many commentators suggest that this is a direct reference to the Roman Empire. Rome hated the church. Some say this is a direct historical reference to the Roman emperor Nero who was a great persecutor of the church. Nero committed suicide, and many assumed that Rome was dead and persecution would end. However, Rome was not dead, and persecution of the church was resurrected under the succession of the next Roman emperors. The symbolic significance of this could be seen in the fall of the Roman Empire and the resurrection of that empire through the papacy and the Roman Catholic Church, which also became a great persecutor of the true church. **“AND ALL THE WORLD WONDERED AFTER THE BEAST”** – The false church of Rome, as both a political and religious institution has dominated much of the world in these last days. Men trust this false church because they trust their own righteousness and works rather than trusting Christ.

**(13:4) – “AND THEY WORSHIPPED THE DRAGON WHICH GAVE POWER UNTO THE BEAST: AND THEY WORSHIPPED THE BEAST”** – To worship in any other way than the way of Christ, the way of His blood and righteousness imputed (*John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Tim. 2:5*), is to worship **“the dragon,”** Satan himself (*John 8:44; 2 Cor. 4:3-4*). To worship **“the beast”** is to worship Satan and promote his false gospel of salvation by the works of men. This can be seen, for example, when people view the pope of Rome as the “vicar of Christ” as if to say he has the same power and authority. When sinners view **“the beast,”** political and/or religious, as their savior, they worship him. **“SAYING, WHO IS LIKE UNTO THE BEAST? WHO IS ABLE TO MAKE WAR WITH HIM?”** – People who are deceived by Satan and by their own self-righteousness and self-love, people who do not know and who reject Christ as the only way of salvation, view **“the beast”** as being gloriously unique and invincible. This is part of Satan’s deception as shown in the last days by his *“power and signs and lying wonders”* (2 Thess. 2:9). It is natural for fallen sinners to be enthralled and drawn to any government or religion that makes their relationship with God dependent upon their efforts to be righteous rather than submit to Christ and His righteousness as the only ground of justification and salvation.



**(13:5) – “AND THERE WAS GIVEN UNTO HIM A MOUTH SPEAKING GREAT THINGS AND BLASPHEMIES”** – This “*beast*” speaks “*great things*,” meaning his boasts of power to save and protect all who follow him. This is the opposite of true believer who boasts only in the cross of Christ (*Gal. 6:14*). He also speaks “*blasphemies*” which are things that dishonor and deny the true and living God. This is all philosophies, world views, and religions that oppose Christ and His truth (*2 Cor. 11:4,13-15; Gal. 1:6-9; 2 John 9-11*). **“AND THERE WAS GIVEN TO HIM”** – His lies are “*given*” to him by Satan who empowers him in this deception (*John 8:44*), but also, **“POWER WAS GIVEN UNTO HIM TO CONTINUE FORTY AND TWO MONTHS.”** All of this is ultimately under the sovereign will of God as a judgment against all who refuse to seek Him and find Him in Christ (*2 Thess. 2:9-12*). Satan and the “*beast*” can only work as God allows them for HIS purposes and glory. **“FORTY AND TWO MONTHS”** symbolizes the entire period of the last days up to the second coming of Christ to judge the world and gather His church unto Himself.

**(13:6) – “AND HE OPENED HIS MOUTH IN BLASPHEMY AGAINST GOD, TO BLASPHEME HIS NAME, AND HIS TABERNACLE, AND THEM THAT DWELL IN HEAVEN.”** God’s “*name*” refers to His glory – the glory of His Godhead and nature in His power, wisdom, and faithfulness, and especially in the salvation of His people in and by the Lord Jesus Christ. Just as Satan in the Garden of Eden brought Adam to question God’s faithfulness (*Gen. 3:1-5*), the beast does the same in telling men, “You cannot trust God for your physical or eternal salvation and well-being. You must trust us.” In this Satan and the beast claim to be God, and this is blasphemy. God’s “*tabernacle*” is Christ Himself as the Word made flesh and dwelling (tabernacling) among us (*John 1:14*). Christ is God’s way of salvation for sinners by the sacrifice of Himself. “*Them that dwell in heaven*” refers to all the saints of God, sinners saved by the grace of God in Christ, and who are citizens of “*heaven*,” not of the earth (*Php. 3:20-21; Heb. 12:22-24*). Satan and the beast blaspheme (slander) them by promoting false gospels of salvation by the works and wills of men rather than salvation only by the blood and righteousness of Christ. They also blaspheme them by their constant persecution which, in essence, is blaspheming God Himself (*Matt. 25:41-46*).

**(13:7) – “AND IT WAS GIVEN UNTO HIM TO MAKE WAR WITH THE SAINTS”** – This warfare waged by Satan out of his anger and hatred and for evil purposes is under the control of God’s sovereign power and purpose. It is neither an accident nor a surprise to God. And even though God cannot be charged with being the author of sin, this warfare is well within the parameters of God who works all things after the counsel of His own will (*Eph. 1:11*) and who insures that all things (good and evil) work together for His glory and our eternal good (*Rom. 8:28*). **“AND TO OVERCOME THEM”** – This corresponds with *Revelation 11:7* where the two witnesses (symbolizing the church in the last days) were overcome and killed, meaning that the Gospel would become so scarce that the church of the living God would appear to the world to be dead. God is allowing Satan and the beast to have a short-lived victory that, in reality, is no victory at all. Just as the two witnesses were revived, the church of the living God will be revived in the end and attain full, final, and eternal victory over Satan. However, at present, through his lies and deception, Satan is permitted by God to sow his tares in throughout the whole earth – **“AND POWER WAS GIVEN HIM OVER ALL KINDREDS, AND TONGUES, AND NATIONS.”**

**(13:8) – “AND ALL THAT DWELL UPON THE EARTH SHALL WORSHIP HIM”** – This describes all natural men who are so tied to the earth that they will not seek the Lord. They are spiritually dead and bound to this fallen world. They worship the beast because they see their hope of salvation in the power, will, and works of men. They are those **“WHOSE NAMES ARE NOT WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF LIFE OF THE LAMB SLAIN FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD.”** This is the book of God’s everlasting covenant of grace wherein He chose a people in Christ. The condition for their salvation is the **“the Lamb slain.”** God’s justice had to be satisfied by the death of **“the Lamb.”** This is what brings about the salvation to all whom God chose before **“the foundation of the world.”** All whose names WERE **“written in the book of life”** are described elsewhere as *“a remnant according to the election of grace”* (Rom. 11:5). They are all who Christ has redeemed at the cross and who are regenerated and called by the Holy Spirit. They are all who turn away from Satan to the Lord Jesus Christ for all salvation. This proves once again that salvation is ALL OF GOD’S FREE AND SOVEREIGN GRACE IN CHRIST (Rom. 9:15-16).

This is also a reminder to believers that the only difference between those who perish in sin and those who are saved is the grace of God in Christ. Christ has always been the Surety of the church. God justified the Old Testament saints based on the righteousness of Christ (*ex.*, 2 Sam. 23:5). Christ came and fulfilled all conditions for the salvation of all whose names were written in the *“Lamb’s book of life”* (Rev. 21:27). This should be a great encouragement for all who hear the Gospel to believe and be saved.

**(13:9) –** If God leaves us to ourselves, we will never turn away from Satan and to the Lord Jesus Christ. By nature we are spiritually deaf and blind (dead in trespasses and sins). This is why Christ told us when He spoke to Nicodemus, *“Ye must be born again”* (John 3:3-7; cf. Matt. 13:15-16). How are we to react to these great truths? It is simple – **“IF ANY MAN HAVE AN EAR, LET HIM HEAR.”** To **“hear”** means more than merely hearing physically. It means to listen intently so as to believe and obey having been convinced by the Holy Spirit of these truths, and having been brought to know, believe, and love Christ and His truth. These truths glorify Christ and put us in the dust where we belong. Those who claim that this makes God unfair or unjust only need to read God’s word to see that He is not but that He is gracious to all who come to Him pleading Christ and His righteousness alone (Rom. 9:14–10:13).

**(13:10) – “HE THAT LEADETH INTO CAPTIVITY SHALL GO INTO CAPTIVITY: HE THAT KILLETH WITH THE SWORD MUST BE KILLED WITH THE SWORD”** – This is a clear statement of God’s justice in all these matters. Abraham asked, *“Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”* (Gen. 18:25). The apostle Paul wrote, *“But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things”* (Rom. 2:2). Satan and this beast lead people into the **“captivity”** of sin and death. Satan and the beast murder the souls of people. They murder the saints of God with their sword. They will receive justice for their crimes as God will bring them into the eternal bondage of sin and eternal death. They and all their followers will perish by the sword of God’s righteous judgment.

**“HERE IS THE PATIENCE AND THE FAITH OF THE SAINTS”** – While we who are saved and preserved by God’s grace live in this anti-christian world, we are called upon to stand our ground. We are to endure all opposition and persecution. And it is not by our own power and goodness (for we have none), but by the power and goodness of Christ – *“These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world”* (John 16:33).

**(13:11)** – John sees **“ANOTHER BEAST COMING UP OUT OF THE EARTH.”** As the first beast arose out of the sea, this **“beast”** arises **“out of the earth,”** representing a more settled and firm, even organized beginning. **“AND HE HAD TWO HORNS LIKE A LAMB”** – As the first beast had ten horns, this beast appeared **“like a lamb,”** showing him to be an imitation of the true Lamb of God (Christ). **“HE SPAKE AS A DRAGON”** – He appears to be less harmful, but he is more dangerous and deadly than the first. He appears to have a message of salvation, but it is damnation inspired by Satan (*cf. John 8:44; 2 Cor. 11:13-15*). He is **“the false prophet”** (*Revelation 16:13; 19:20; 20:10*). Both beasts are antichrist, but this one disguises himself in false religion that comes out of the sinful, fallen world (*1 John 5:19*).

There are two ways of exercising power over men’s minds: (1) with warfare and violence as in the case of the Roman Empire; and (2) with subtlety and deception, coming in the name of religion, truth, love, and peace, but with a destructive message, as in the case of false religion of salvation by the works, will, and power of man. Many of the old writers identified this second **“beast”** with the papacy. They considered how the Roman Empire was considered dead (*Rev. 13:3*) but resurrected in the Roman Catholic Church. Although Rome and its religious offspring can be identified here with false religion that comes in the name of Christ, we must not restrict these symbols only to the papacy. The false prophet symbolizes all religions that come in the name of Christ but denies, compromises, and/or confuses the truth of Christ and His Gospel of salvation by God’s free sovereign grace. This also aligns with what Paul wrote in *2 Thessalonians 2:1-12* and what John wrote in *1 John 2:18-26* and *2 John 9-11* concerning a falling away from the true Gospel of Christ. This describes those who claim to preach and believe salvation by grace in Christ, but their doctrine, in reality, is a cleverly disguised system of works (*cf. Gal. 1:6-9; 3:1-3; 5:1-5*). Like a lamb, it seems holy, harmless, and good, but it is deadly to the souls of men.

**(13:12)** – The second **“beast”** **“EXERCISETH ALL THE POWER OF THE FIRST BEAST BEFORE HIM.”** The false prophet represents antichristian religion and serves the antichristian state. Both refuse to promote trusting the God of all grace in Christ. They refuse to submit to God’s way of salvation through the blood and righteousness of Christ. They insist on leading men to trust in the state, in themselves, in the earth. We can see this, for example, in how the Roman Catholic Church was in union with governments making kings and queens heads of the church. Their doctrine of salvation is not to the praise of the glory of God’s grace but to the praise of the state and the church. Their goal was to control the people. This is how, for example, the heretical practice of infant baptism began when they sought to control people by enlisting their children into the church.

**“AND CAUSETH THE EARTH AND THEM WHICH DWELL THEREIN TO WORSHIP THE FIRST BEAST, WHOSE DEADLY WOUND WAS HEALED”** – Those who **“dwell”** in the earth describes unbelievers who are so connected to this world that they refuse to seek the Lord and His way of salvation in and by the Lord Jesus Christ alone. The second **“beast”** is committed to leading men **“to worship the first beast,”** again, to trust the state (religious state), to trust in themselves and their works instead of Christ. Both beasts exalt man and man’s works above God in Christ. They promote worship of men such as when they say, “Caesar is Lord” (*cf. Eph. 4:4-6*); “the Pope is the vicar (substitute) of Christ” (*cf. 2 Thess. 2:3-4*); “the priests can grant absolution (forgiveness) for sin” (*cf. Luke 5:21*); “Mary is the queen of heaven through whom we pray” (*cf. 1 Tim. 2:5*). They exalt men by promoting salvation by man’s goodness, righteousness, works, and will. Again, the heresy of Roman Catholicism is only an

example of this antichristian spirit prevalent in the world in the last days. Many who call themselves “protestant” or “evangelical” stand against Roman Catholicism but still retain its view of salvation by man’s works and man’s will. They promote the heresy that “*gain is godliness*” (1 Tim. 6:5). False religion is driven by prosperity and materialism and an ungodly desire for physical health and riches as they judge that the healthier and wealthier a person is, the more God is blessing them.

**(13:13-14) – “AND HE DOETH GREAT WONDERS”** – The Gospel of God’s grace in Christ was accredited and authenticated through miracles and signs (*John 3:1-2; Acts 2:22; 5:12; Mark 16:17-20*). Just as Satan has his counterfeit gospel, he also has his counterfeit miracles and signs. Paul called them the “*mystery of iniquity*,” “*lying wonders*,” and “*all deceivableness of unrighteousness*” (2 Thess. 2:7-12). They appear to be “**FIRE COME DOWN FROM HEAVEN ON THE EARTH,**” as if they are the work of God. It is important that we understand that these things are impressive on “**IN THE SIGHT OF MEN.**” The unregenerate man cannot know, discern, or receive the things of God (1 Cor. 2:14). Spiritual things can only be discerned in light of God’s truth and as they lead sinners to Christ and God’s way of salvation in and by Him alone. Men judge by outward appearance – “*for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God*” (Luke 16:15). The Lord revealed this in Matthew 7:21-23 when he exposed the works of men to be “*iniquity*.” Whenever sinners stand before God and expect salvation, blessings, acceptance, or anything good based on their efforts to obey or anything other than the shed blood and imputed righteousness of Christ, they are no more than workers of iniquity. This is how the false prophet seeks to deceive men – with the deception of self-righteous, works religion that keeps sinners from submitting to Christ and His righteousness imputed alone for salvation (Rom. 9:31–10:4). His goal is to use deception to draw sinners away from Christ and the one true righteousness HE alone worked out and which God has imputed to all His elect.

The false prophet is very deceptive – “*For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect*” (Matt. 24:24). Who will he be able to deceive? He will deceive “*them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved*” (2 Thess. 2:10). Who are “*them that perish*”? They are those to whom “*the preaching of the cross is ... foolishness*” (1 Cor. 1:18). The “*preaching of the cross*” is the message of the glorious Person and finished work of Christ on the cross (1 Cor. 1:22-23; 2:1-2). It is preaching the Gospel wherein “*righteousness of God is revealed*” (Rom. 1:16-17), which is the obedience unto death of the Lord Jesus Christ by which God is just to justify us (Rom. 8:31-34; Gal. 6:14-16). We judge the false prophet, not by the impressiveness of miracles and signs but by his message. Just as the message of the cross is foolishness to them that perish, it is “*the power of God*” “*unto us which are saved*” (1 Cor. 1:18). The false prophet deceives by encouraging men to judge the power of God, the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, by supposed miracles and signs instead of the truth.

**“SAYING TO THEM THAT DWELL ON THE EARTH, THAT THEY SHOULD MAKE AN IMAGE TO THE BEAST, WHICH HAD THE WOUND BY A SWORD, AND DID LIVE”** -- This “*image*” is not physical but a representation, a likeness, created in the imagination of men. It represents what sinful men naturally think of as “god,” but is in reality an idol. We must take our beliefs and our stand in the Word of God – “*To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them*” (Isa. 8:20).

**(13:14-15)** – In *Revelation 13:12-14* we are told that the second beast (the false prophet), antichristian religion, serves the first beast, antichristian governments. This is false religion that comes in the name of Christ but denies the truth of Christ in league with ungodly governments. The power behind both is Satan who persecutes the church. Their goal is to divert the minds of sinful men from the glory of God in Christ (*2 Cor. 4:3-4*). Satan deceives men into worshiping false gods. His deception is subtle and deadly but impressive to unregenerate men. In *Revelation 13:14* we are told that the false prophet is able to deceive men with miracles aimed at inspiring men to **“MAKE AN IMAGE TO THE BEAST (first beast), WHICH HAD THE WOUND BY A SWORD, AND DID LIVE.”** We saw how many apply this to the evil Roman emperor Nero who was killed so that most thought that Rome was dead. But Rome arose again through another succession of ungodly emperors. Others apply this to the fall of Rome and its resurrection in the Roman Catholic Church. Either way, antichristian government and religion are alive and well throughout the last days.

The false prophet **“HAD POWER TO GIVE LIFE UNTO THE IMAGE OF THE BEAST, THAT THE IMAGE OF THE BEAST SHOULD BOTH SPEAK.”** Again, this is not a physical *“image”* but the imaginations of men. He gives life unto this image by deceiving men into believing and following a god of their own imagination rather than the living and true God. Men by nature will look to the state and to false religion for salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, help, and ethics rather than looking to Christ. To deceived minds this *“image”* has power to make them believe that their false god is real.

**“AND CAUSE THAT AS MANY AS WOULD NOT WORSHIP THE IMAGE OF THE BEAST SHOULD BE KILLED”** – There was great persecution for Christians from Rome, the Jews, and later under the reign of terror by the Catholic Church. There has been persecution from other antichristian states and religions. Many have been murdered for the cause of Christ. This goes on even today in some places. But another aspect of this statement concerns what unbelievers imagine. The blinded heart and deceived mind thinks the false god of his imagination can save him or kill him, and all who refuse to worship him shall be damned. This is why when God saves a sinner He begins a process of *“casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ”* (*2 Cor. 10:5*).

**(13:16)** – It is revealed here that no rank, station, or group of people who *“dwell on the earth”* are exempt from the deception of this false prophet. Man cannot save himself from this damnation. **“TO RECEIVE A MARK IN THEIR RIGHT HAND, OR IN THEIR FOREHEADS”** – We must stay with Holy Scripture to understand this *“mark.”* It shows subjection to a particular master. It shows what is in man’s heart (his mind, affections, and will) and determines what he does. John has already made it clear in *Revelation 7* that the 144,000 (the church upon the earth) are sealed with the name of Christ, protected from God’s wrath, though subject to persecution by the beast. He has also told us in *Revelation 13:8* that all those whose names are not written in the Book of Life worship the beast. This *“mark”* of the beast has to do with bringing people to acknowledge that someone other than the true Jesus Christ is Lord. It has an historical reference to those in the early church who were being forced to confess that “Caesar is Lord.” It could be applied to the time when Catholicism held such a hold on the state so as to persecute true Christians who would not bow to the pope.

The reality of this *“mark”* is not physical but spiritual (*cf., Exod. 13:6-9; 28:36-38; Deut. 6:4-8; 11:18-19; Rev. 7:3; 9:4; 14:1; 17:5; 20:4; 22:3-4*). The *“forehead”* symbolizes the mind and heart, and

it sets forth the purpose, motive, and goal of the one who is either sealed or marked. The **“right hand”** symbolizes the actions and works of the one who has this **“mark.”** As the worshipers of the beast receive a **“mark,”** the worshipers of the true God are **“sealed ... in their foreheads”** (Rev. 7:3). A **“seal”** is not only for identification, but also for protection and preservation. It signifies the believer’s security in Christ. A **“mark”** is for identification but makes no provision for security. If one has in mind to work for his salvation, he will set his hands to the task. The mind of a believer is the mind of faith in Christ and stands in the righteousness of Christ imputed. His hand is used to show the glory of God in Christ (Matt. 5:16), not to glorify an idol or himself. This **“mark”** of the beast stands in man’s righteousness, and he uses his hand to try to establish a righteousness of his own rather than submitting to Christ. The **“mark”** of the beast is the false gospels of men in opposition to CHRIST AND HIM CRUCIFIED.

**(13:17)** – Many claim this teaches that in the last days it will be so hard on believers, because they refuse to wear **“THE MARK, OR THE NAME OF THE BEAST, OR THE NUMBER OF HIS NAME,”** that they will not be able to buy or sell merchandise unless they wear a physical mark. Many speculate that this mark will come in the form of computer chips implanted in the forehead or right hand. Others speak of bar codes, credit cards, and government intervention into the private lives of citizens. A lot of these things may come about in the future, but it is important that we understand that there is no BIBLICAL basis for such speculations to identify the mark of the beast. The mark is identified by the phrase, **“the NUMBER of his name,”** and in the following verse.

**(13:18)** – **“HERE IS WISDOM”** – All wisdom comes from God IN CHRIST and BY HIS WORD. **“LET HIM THAT HATH UNDERSTANDING COUNT THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST”** – This is by revelation from God and not by the natural man (1 Cor. 2:14-16). It is clear that the identification of the mark is connected with counting or calculating the number. **“IT IS THE NUMBER OF A MAN,”** not God. What is this number? It is **“SIX HUNDRED THRESCORE AND SIX”** (666). What is the number of God when it comes to a right relationship with His people in Christ? It is SEVEN, or we could say seven hundred threescore ten and seven (777). As we know these numbers in *Revelation* are symbolic and have spiritual meaning. Many interpretations admit of the symbolism for some numbers but a literal interpretation for others with no Biblical basis for determining which is which. All these numbers are symbolic. The number 666 symbolizes man and his sin, his failure, the fact that he always falls short of righteousness (Rom. 3:23). The number seven symbolizes God’s perfection in His great works, especially His work of salvation for His people in and by Christ. Man, who is a six, will never and can never be a seven. He will always miss the mark. The only way sinful man can be righteous, a seven, before God is in and by the Lord Jesus Christ. Any sinner who rejects Christ and refuses to submit to His righteousness as the only way of justification before God, and man who seeks salvation some other way, wears the number 666, the mark of the beast.

## LESSON 44 – THE LAMB ON THE MOUNT

## Revelation 14:1-5

**(14:1)** – This is a revelation of Christ as the triumphant **“LAMB”** of God. It sets forth our Savior as the one and only Redeemer Who sacrificed Himself for His church (*cf. Rev. 5:5-13; 13:8; Acts 20:28*). The principle of redemption by blood was set down by God Almighty from the beginning (*Gen. 3:21*), that *“without shedding of blood is no remission”* (*Heb. 9:22*). It was also shown clearly that the blood of animals could not accomplish our redemption (*Heb. 10:4*). It took the blood of the Son of God, God in human flesh, to put away all the sins of God’s elect (*John 1:29; Eph. 1:7; Heb. 9:14; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; 1 John 1:7*). Christ has been the Surety of His people from eternity, and when He shed His blood on the cross for the payment of all our sins imputed to Him, He satisfied all the duties of His suretyship.

Notice His position – **“STOOD ON THE MOUNT SION.”** We are told that when Christ finished His work of redeeming His people, He *“sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high”* (*Heb. 1:3; 10:12*). His work was completely finished. The debt of our sins was fully paid and righteousness by which God is just to justify us was fully established (*2 Cor. 5:21*). But here He is revealed as standing. **“Mount Sion”** is His church, His people (*Psa. 125:1-2; 132:13-14; Heb. 12:22-23*). The church is built upon Christ, the Lamb, and upon the foundation of the merits of His shed blood and righteousness imputed to us. He is standing here to protect, preserve, and receive His church unto Himself. This is the victory of Christ and His church over the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet who tries to imitate the Lamb. Christ stands because He has the preeminence in the salvation of His church (*Col. 1:12-18*).

**“AND WITH HIM AN HUNDRED FORTY AND FOUR THOUSAND”** – This is a symbolic number (*cp. Rev. 7:9*) of the people of God, His church. God knows the exact number, but here they are symbolized by 144,000 which is the complete number of God’s elect, redeemed by the blood of Christ, and called into the fold of God. (Refer back to the notes on *Revelation 7:3-4*.) They are identified by **“HAVING HIS FATHER’S NAME WRITTEN IN THEIR FOREHEADS”** (*cf. Rev. 7:3*) – This is the revelation of God’s glory in Christ sealed in their minds and hearts (*cf. 2 Cor. 4:3-6*). Just as the beast marks his followers in their foreheads and/or right hand with his number and name, which is the false gospels of salvation by the works and will of man, Christ’s people are marked by the Holy Spirit with the truth of the Gospel that brings them to conviction of sin and leads them to submit to Christ and His righteousness alone for salvation, justification, forgiveness, eternal life, and glory.

**(14:2)** – This describes true worship in the church of the living God. God’s people worship Him through Christ. **“AS THE VOICE OF MANY WATERS”** – This is one unified voice made up of **“many waters,”** all of God’s people from all over the world (*Rev. 1:15*). Their song is the same – *“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing”* (*Rev. 1:12*). **“AND AS THE VOICE OF A GREAT THUNDER”** which symbolizes great power and authority from God in Christ. **“AND I HEARD THE VOICE OF HARPERS HARPING WITH THEIR HARPS”** – This is the string music of the soul and heart crying out praise unto the Lamb, worshipping God in spirit and in truth.

**(14:3)** – **“AND THEY SANG AS IT WERE A NEW SONG BEFORE THE THRONE”** – This song is new, not as to time, but as to its nature and quality. It is the song sung by the redeemed, the song of the Lamb. It is new compared to the old song we all sung by nature in our false religion – the song of salvation by works, of justification before God through our own righteousness. It is the song of God’s

grace in Christ which we sing out of grace, love, and gratitude, not out of legal fear of punishment or mercenary promise of earned reward. Also, the reality of God's grace is always new and fresh to His people. **"AND BEFORE THE FOUR BEASTS, AND THE ELDERS"** – These are the true ministers and the people of Christ singing this song together as they worship *"before the throne"* of God's majesty and glory in Christ.

**"AND NO MAN COULD LEARN (understand) THAT SONG BUT THE HUNDRED AND FORTY AND FOUR THOUSAND, WHICH WERE REDEEMED FROM THE EARTH"** – Christ told Nicodemus, *"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"* (John 3:3). Paul wrote, *"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned"* (1 Cor. 2:14). This song can only be sung by those whom Christ has redeemed and to whom the Holy Spirit gives life and revelation – *"And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life"* (1 John 5:20).

**(14:4) – "THESE ARE THEY WHICH WERE NOT DEFILED WITH WOMEN; FOR THEY ARE VIRGINS"** – This speaks of spiritual purity in Christ. The people of God are legally and spiritually pure before God. They are IN CHRIST justified by His righteousness imputed, cleansed of heart by God-given faith in Christ, and kept pure from spiritual adultery (false religion), married to one spouse, the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 11:2-3). **"THESE ARE THEY WHICH FOLLOW THE LAMB WHITHERSOEVER HE GOETH"** – They do not follow the great whore of Babylon (*cf. Rev. 18:3*). They follow Christ alone and cling to Him for all salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, eternal life, and glory. They follow Him in doctrine and in conduct. **"THESE WERE REDEEMED FROM AMONG MEN"** – Their legal and spiritual purity is not attributed to their works or their will but to the work of the Lamb in redemption by His blood. Having been redeemed by the Lamb, Christ Jesus, they are born again by the Holy Spirit and, therefore, **"THE FIRSTFRUITS UNTO GOD AND TO THE LAMB,"** the harvest of God's grace in Christ (*cf. Psalms 22:30-31*). *"The firstfruits"* of the harvest always belonged to the Lord.

**(14:5) – "AND IN THEIR MOUTH WAS FOUND NO GUILE"** – This pertains to their doctrine and testimony of Christ and the great salvation He has freely provided and given us by His grace. It means there is no deception and dishonesty as in the case of salvation by the works and will of men. It is connected to our sinlessness IN CHRIST – **"FOR THEY ARE WITHOUT FAULT BEFORE THE THRONE OF GOD."** All who belong to Christ stand before God *"without fault"* because of His righteousness imputed (*cf. Psalms 32:1-2; Romans 8:1, 33-34*). There is much sin in us and done by us, as we readily confess (Romans 7:24-25; 1 John 1:8,10), yet we stand before God *"without fault."* This is amazing grace. Christ came into the world to purge, remove, and bear away the sins of His people, His church. He as the Lamb has accomplished it. All the sins of God's elect were laid upon Him. He bore them in His own body on the tree, endured and fully satisfied the wrath of God for His people. He made an end of our sins and established righteousness for us. God has so thoroughly blotted out our sins that He does not behold them as He views us in Christ. All who believe in Christ stand before God washed in HIS blood and clothed in HIS righteousness – *"without fault."*



**(14:6) – “AND I SAW ANOTHER ANGEL FLY IN THE MIDST OF HEAVEN”** – The “*angel*” and the others that follow are messengers from God. The word “*angel*” literally means “*messenger*.” Some commentators believe that all these “*angels*” here are not angelic beings in their nature but appearances of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself as He is the “*Messenger of the covenant*” (*Mal. 3:1*), and this could be the case. But the message is the issue in each of these appearances, and each message has behind it the authority of Jesus Christ as the Lamb upon Mount Zion. This is the Word of the Lord.

**“HAVING THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL TO PREACH UNTO THEM THAT DWELL ON THE EARTH, AND TO EVERY NATION, AND KINDRED, AND TONGUE, AND PEOPLE”**

– This is not some kind of last-ditch effort of Christ to preach the Gospel to try to get people saved. At this point, all the elect of God have been sovereignly and powerfully brought into the kingdom under the Gospel (*cf. Rom. 1:16-17; 2 Thess. 2:13-14*). This preaching to “*them that dwell on the earth*” in all nations is for the judgment of God’s wrath upon all who are spiritual dead and remain in unbelief when the end comes. We must remember that the preaching of “*the everlasting Gospel*” can either be for the salvation of God’s elect or the damnation of reprobates (*cf. 1 Cor. 2:14-17; Heb. 11:6-7*). The righteousness of God revealed in the Gospel, which is the imputed righteousness of Christ, is the ground of the justification of God’s people. It is also the measure by which all who die in unbelief are condemned (*Acts 17:31; Rom. 2:16*).

**(14:7) – “SAYING WITH A LOUD VOICE, FEAR GOD, AND GIVE GLORY TO HIM; FOR THE HOUR OF HIS JUDGMENT IS COME:”** – As the righteous Judge God commands all His enemies to respect and acknowledge His sovereign authority, power, and judgment against them. Man by nature has “*no fear of God*” before his eyes (*Rom. 3:18*). He has no desire but to glorify himself, even in his desire for salvation. This is why man by nature refuses and rejects God’s way which leaves man no room to glory in himself. God’s way of salvation glorifies God alone in the glorious Person and finished, effectual work of the Lord Jesus Christ (*1 Cor. 1:29-31; Gal. 6:14; Php. 3:3*). But all men in the end of this age will bow to the claims of the King of kings. This is the final sentence of eternal damnation upon all who are found in the end without Christ – without His righteousness imputed to justify them. This will not take place until the end when those who are so connected the sinful, fallen earth and who continue in their unbelief will be forced to bow to Christ (*Php. 2:10-11; Rev. 9:20; 16:11*).

**“AND WORSHIP HIM THAT MADE HEAVEN, AND EARTH, AND THE SEA, AND THE FOUNTAINS OF WATERS”** – All who will be judged eternally damned in the end will be forced to bow to and worship God, not as their heavenly Father who justified, redeemed, and saved them from their sins in and by the Lord Jesus Christ, but as the sovereign Creator, Ruler, and Judge of the universe. The “*fountains of waters*” appearing alongside of “*heaven, and earth, and the sea*” could simply refer to the rivers that flow on land and quench the physical thirsts of men. But there could also be a reference here to Christ who is Himself “*the Fountains of waters*” (*cf. John 4:10-14; 7:37-38; Rev. 21:6; 22:1,17*). The meaning then would be that not only is God the Creator of the physical universe, but He is also the Creator of eternal life in and by the Lord Jesus Christ whom all who die in unbelief have rejected (*John 3:36; 2 Cor. 4:3-6*). People by nature will be diligent to cover the “*heaven, and earth, and the sea*,” but will neglect and deny “*the Fountain of waters*.” This is why the Lord’s command is – “*But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you*” (*Matt. 6:33*).

Those who dwell on the earth see the earth as their salvation. This is part of the message of antichrist – that man can save the world and himself.

**(14:8) – “AND THERE FOLLOWED ANOTHER ANGEL, SAYING, BABYLON IS FALLEN, IS FALLEN, THAT GREAT CITY,” – “Babylon”** represents the ungodly, unholy confederacy between antichristian government and antichristian religion. Its origin goes back to Genesis 11:6-7. It culminated in man’s hatred and murder of the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 4:26-28). It is symbolized here by both the beasts (out of the sea and the earth) in the service of Satan. The reason God’s final wrath will come upon her is **“BECAUSE SHE MADE ALL NATIONS DRINK OF THE WINE OF THE WRATH OF HER FORNICATION.”** This speaks of idolatry which is SPIRITUAL *“fornication”* and SPIRITUAL adultery. It has to do with a love of the world (its materials, its people, and/or its religion) that motivates sinners not to look to and follow the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, righteousness, forgiveness, eternal life and blessedness (James 4:4; 1 John 2:15). We need to understand that it is wrong for us to place any spiritual value on any physical land on this earth. In God’s view there are only two kingdoms – the New Jerusalem which symbolizes the kingdom of Christ made up of His redeemed people, and **“Babylon”** which symbolizes the kingdom of Satan and his dead and deceived people. We are citizens of one or the other. The citizens of the New Jerusalem are described in Revelation 14:1-5. The citizens of **“Babylon”** are described in the next verse.

**(14:9) – “AND THE THIRD ANGEL FOLLOWED THEM, SAYING WITH A LOUD VOICE, IF ANY MAN WORSHIP THE BEAST AND HIS IMAGE, AND RECEIVE HIS MARK IN HIS FOREHEAD, OR IN HIS HAND,”** – This describes all who are found in unbelief at the time of judgment, the end of the age. These are the ones who believe the false messages and false gospels of Satan and the false prophet (antichrist). The false ideas, false hopes, and false refuges concocted by men under the evil inspiration and deceptions of Satan are all described as the **“the mark in his forehead, or in his hand.”** This is the mark of the beast which is the lies that corrupt the natural man’s mind and works. It is by following and bowing to Satan’s lies that unbelieving men **“worship the beast and his image”** and refuse to worship the true and living God through the Lord Jesus Christ. It is important that we remember that throughout this last age, and even in the final day, God’s elect are safe and secure because of their **“Father’s name written on their foreheads”** (14:1) which indicates they have been **“redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and unto the Lamb”** (14:4; cf. 2 Tim. 1:12; Heb. 7:25). They are those who have been brought by God’s grace to love Christ and to love His Word, as opposed to those who **“received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved”** (2 Thess. 2:10).

The false philosophies and religions of today are founded upon and filled with humanism (self-worship, free-willism), relativism (no absolute truth), and pluralism (everything, even opposing ideas, are true). The false gospels of the world teach that salvation is in the earth and in man himself. They teach that salvation in some way at some stage and to some degree is conditioned on man’s works, what they believe is man’s inherent goodness, and/or man’s decisions. It goes back to Cain and Abel. Cain was a citizen of **“Babylon”** as he sought salvation and acceptance with God based on the works of his hands. He sought to ascend unto God by his efforts and not by God’s grace through the blood of the Lamb. Abel was a citizen of the New Jerusalem as he sought and found salvation and acceptance with God by the blood of the Lamb (cf. Rev. 12:11).

**(14:10) – “THE SAME SHALL DRINK OF THE WINE OF THE WRATH OF GOD,”** – The Bible says that man by nature drinks **“iniquity like water”** (cf. Job 15:14-16). This describes all of us by nature, but God has a people He has chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. God redeems them from sin and gives them a thirst and a hunger for righteousness that can only be quenched and filled in and by the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 5:6) and the righteousness He alone has established for them on the cross. But God in His sovereign will and wisdom has determined to let the rest of fallen humanity have their own way and continue in their unbelief. They will **“drink of the wine of the wrath of God, WHICH IS POURED OUT WITHOUT MIXTURE INTO THE CUP OF HIS INDIGNATION”** – God will give them what they deserve and have earned – His just hatred and wrath. This is why we who are saved by grace through the Lord Jesus Christ, first, ought to be so thankful to God and ever amazed in thinking of our salvation. There was and is absolutely nothing within us or done by us that would recommend us unto God. We are sinners and deserve nothing but to drink of this same **“wine of the wrath of God.”** But God in His love, grace, and mercy has freely given us the cup of His grace. It was Christ who drank the cup of our wrath for our sins imputed to Him. We drink the cup of His righteousness imputed to us, and we have nothing in which to boast in and of ourselves. Our glory is Christ crucified and risen from the dead. Secondly, this ought to give us an urgency to preach and witness the Gospel of Christ. We ought to beseech sinners to seek salvation, NOT based on what they think they deserve, have earned, or have done, but based solely upon the grace of God in the Lord Jesus Christ and based on His righteousness imputed.

The term ***“without mixture”*** describes the full measure of God’s wrath without being diluted with His forbearance or longsuffering. The cup of God’s wrath is full and ready to be poured out in full.

**“AND HE SHALL BE TORMENTED WITH FIRE AND BRIMSTONE IN THE PRESENCE OF THE HOLY ANGELS, AND IN THE PRESENCE OF THE LAMB”** – These are expressions of God’s final wrath on all who worship the beast and wear his mark on their foreheads and on their hands. They will be judged by Christ, ***“the Lamb,”*** and in the presence of the heavenly host. This proves that the “Jesus” that is preached in many religious groups, the “Jesus” who does nothing but love and never wants anyone to be damned, is a false “Jesus.” Christ the Lamb is both the ground of salvation for God’s chosen, redeemed, and regenerated people, and the standard by which those who die in unbelief are to be judged and condemned to eternal death and damnation (*Acts 17:31*).

**(14:11) – “AND THE SMOKE OF THEIR TORMENT ASCENDETH UP FOR EVER AND EVER”** – This judgment against all the wicked who stand before God in the end without Christ will be an eternal reminder that the Lord Jesus Christ was, is, and forever will be the salvation and hope of His people. Is there any doubt that God will and must punish those to whom sin is imputed? NO! Is there any doubt that the only hope, now and forever, for sinners is God’s grace in the Lord Jesus Christ and based on His righteousness imputed? NO! The message of God’s revelation of final judgment here is this – FLEE FROM THE WRATH TO COME; FLEE TO CHRIST! **“AND THEY HAVE NO REST DAY NOR NIGHT, WHO WORSHIP THE BEAST AND HIS IMAGE, AND WHOSOEVER RECEIVETH THE MARK OF HIS NAME”** – Someone has said, “There is no rest for the wicked.” While on this earth and still living in their false refuges there can be moments of rest for the wicked, but these moments will not last. In the end those who ***“worship the beast and his image and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name”*** will ***“have no rest day nor night.”*** There is eternal rest only in the Lord Jesus Christ who is the believer’s Sabbath (*Heb. 4:1-12*).

**(14:12) – “HERE IS THE PATIENCE OF THE SAINTS”** – *Here is a call for the endurance of those who are saved and set apart by the grace of God in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. “HERE ARE THEY THAT KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD, AND THE FAITH OF JESUS”* – *They persevere in the faith, looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of their faith (Heb. 12:2). They rest in Christ who as their Surety and Substitute suffered the full measure of God’s wrath for their sins imputed to Him. They stand in Him having been washed in His blood and clothed in His righteousness imputed. They have spiritual and eternal life from Him by the Holy Spirit, and He is their refuge and security of salvation. To “keep the commandments of God” does not mean they are sinlessly perfect within themselves or that their obedience measures up to the standard of perfect righteousness. They are sinners saved by the grace of God. While on this earth, in their struggles with the flesh, the only perfection they have and claim is their perfection in Christ – His righteousness imputed. When they die and go to be with the Lord, they will be perfect within themselves because they will leave the corruption of the flesh behind. They will be given incorrupt spiritual bodies in which their spirits will reside with Christ forever and ever. But while on earth, and in whatever age they find themselves, they persevere in the faith by the grace of God who preserves them unto glory through the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:33-39).*

**(14:13)** – After having shown the fall of Babylon and the total, eternal destruction of all who worship the beast, all who “*receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand*” (14:9), which is symbolic of the beliefs and works of men who are either ignorant of or not submitted to Christ and His righteousness alone for all salvation (*Rom. 10:1-4*), those who seek salvation by the works, ways, and will of man, he now gives a pronouncement of blessing for **“THE DEAD WHICH DIE IN THE LORD.”** To live and die “*in the Lord*” is to be chosen of God in Christ, redeemed by the blood of Christ, and sanctified and kept by the Spirit of Christ. This is all who live and die in the faith – believing and resting in Christ for all salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, eternal life, and glory. Those who “*die in the Lord*” are those who have been justified by the blood of Christ and stand before God without sin charged to their account (*Rom. 8:31-39*). They stand before God in the righteousness of Christ imputed (*Php. 3:8-11*). Those who “*die in the Lord*” are also totally free from the remaining presence, influence, corruption, and contamination of the sins of the flesh. They are perfect, not only in Christ, but now made perfect by Christ within themselves.

**“YEA, SAITH THE SPIRIT, THAT THEY MAY REST FROM THEIR LABOURS”** –

Those who “*die in the Lord*” are now in perfect peace and rest, and totally free from the toils and pains of this world in which all who live in this world must be engaged. Their warfare of the flesh against the Spirit is now over. Their warfare with the world and the devil who has persecuted them is over. They are no longer subject to the infirmities of the flesh – sorrow, sickness, and the pains of age. Their time of seeing through a glass darkly gives way to a full view of Christ with unhindered, sinless eyes (*1 Cor. 13:12; 1 John 3:2*).

**“AND THEIR WORKS DO FOLLOW THEM”** – The language here shows that the works of believers are not works by which we earn salvation, blessings, or any part of our eternal reward. Our works do not precede us so as to give us glory or draw attention to us, but they “*follow*” us as they evidence the grace, power, and work of Christ in our lives (*Gal. 2:20; Eph. 2:8-10; Php. 2:12-13*). They are the fruit of God’s power and grace by the Holy Spirit (*John 15:1-8; Gal. 5:22-26; 1 Thess. 1:2-3; James 2:14-26*). The judgment of a true believer’s works is not what our works do or gain for us but what our works say about us and evidence God’s grace toward us and our standing in Christ (*2 Cor. 5:10-11*). The issue of works at the Judgment settles the questions – Do our works give evidence of faith in Christ to the praise of the glory of God’s grace (*Matt. 5:16*)? Do our works show that we stand before God in the righteousness of Christ imputed, or do we seek to prove ourselves righteous based on our works (*Matt. 7:21-23*)? This is the issue of works at the Judgment. The works of God’s people give glory to Christ and not to ourselves.

**(14:14)** – **“AND I LOOKED, AND BEHOLD A WHITE CLOUD”** – Here John sees the Lord whom he knows and loves. This look here is an intent gaze upon the Son of God whom John knows as His Lord and Savior. Paul wrote, “*for I KNOW [same word] whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day*” (*2 Tim. 1:12*). This “*white cloud*” is a brightly illuminated cloud like the “*pillar of a cloud*” wherein the LORD went before the children of Israel to lead them in the wilderness (*Exod. 13:21-22*). Here is Christ in the glory of His majesty as the light of His people. This is the time the Lord spoke of in *Matthew 24:29-30*. As He ascended unto His Father in a cloud, He will come again “*in like manner*” (*Acts 1:9-11*). This “*cloud*” represents His presence, His dignity, throne, and glory. It is “*white*” which symbolizes His righteousness and purity.

**“AND UPON THE CLOUD ONE SAT LIKE UNTO THE SON OF MAN”** – There is no doubt who this is – the Lord Jesus Christ, God in human flesh, the glorified Messiah. Notice how He is sitting. He is resting in the glory of His majesty and power, and as one who has the authority of the judge upon the bench; for the Father *“hath committed all judgment unto the Son”* (John 5:22). **“HAVING ON HIS HEAD A GOLDEN CROWN, AND IN HIS HAND A SHARP SICKLE”** – This *“golden crown”* represents His deity and the full victory He has gained as King of kings. The *“sharp sickle”* represents His authority and power to reap the harvest of the earth in the last day. This is the *“sharp sickle”* of righteousness and judgment whereby He separates His people from the unbelieving world and brings all His enemies to justice in His wrath against sin (Acts 17:31). It will be declared before the whole universe exactly who the Lord’s people truly are and who His enemies truly are. Reality will be clear to all people.

*(14:15-16) – Remember the word “ANGEL” means “messenger.” It sometimes refers to the angelic beings, and sometimes to ministers of Christ who go forth under His authority to pronounce His truth. Here is “ANOTHER ANGEL,” one of the same kind as the Lord Himself, not the same in nature but the same in purpose as this is a messenger from the Lord. He “CAME OUT OF THE TEMPLE,” which is the dwelling-place of God wherein dwells righteousness. It sometimes refers to the church of the living God and the witness of Christ upon the earth. He is “CRYING WITH A LOUD VOICE TO HIM THAT SAT ON THE CLOUD, THRUST IN THY SICKLE, AND REAP:” – This “angel” is not giving orders or issuing commands to the Lord, for no created being can give orders or commandments to the Lord. He is simply announcing the good news of what the sovereign Lord has already determined to be done. This is the pronouncement of the time of the ingathering of the people of God in the last day – “FOR THE TIME IS COME FOR THEE TO REAP; FOR THE HARVEST OF THE EARTH IS RIPE.” This reaping is the ingathering of the “harvest” of God’s elect, the redeemed of the Lord, unto Himself. This “harvest” is “ripe,” or ready, as the Lord has brought in the last one of His elect into the fold of the Shepherd. Here the Lord separates the wheat from the tares, the sheep from the goats (Matt. 13:36-43; 25:31-46). As stated in 14:13, all who have died in the Lord will be eternally blessed based on the righteousness of Christ imputed, and all who are without Christ shall be damned.*

**(14:17-18)** – Here is “**ANOTHER ANGEL**” (messenger) from the Lord coming “**OUT OF THE TEMPLE WHICH IS IN HEAVEN,**” which is the dwelling-place of God wherein is nothing but righteousness. Again the “*temple*” can symbolize the church as the witness of the Lord on earth. The church is the bride of Christ and is clothed in the wedding garment of His righteousness imputed. He has “**A SHARP SICKLE,**” which symbolizes God’s judgment upon the world in separating His people from the ungodly. Notice this “**ANGEL ... CAME OUT FROM THE ALTAR, WHICH HAD POWER OVER FIRE.**” This is the altar of judgment against sin. Christ suffered upon that “*altar*” bearing the sins of His people, paying our debt to God’s law and justice, suffering the full measure of God’s wrath for us against our sin. But here there is no substitute, no sin-bearer or sin-offering. Here there is nothing but judgment against all sin. “**Fire**” symbolizes God’s just wrath against all sin, for to those who are found without Christ, “*our God is a consuming fire*” (*Heb. 12:29*). This messenger “**CRIED WITH A LOUD CRY TO HIM THAT HAD THE SHARP SICKLE, SAYING, THRUST IN THY SHARP SICKLE, AND GATHER THE CLUSTERS OF THE VINE OF THE EARTH; FOR HER GRAPES ARE FULLY RIPE**” – Again, he is merely by the command of the Lord pronouncing judgment upon the earth. Notice that God’s wrath falls upon those described as “*the clusters of the vine of the earth.*” God’s elect, redeemed by the blood of Christ, justified in the righteousness of Christ imputed, regenerated and called out by the Holy Spirit, are branches of the true Vine, Christ Jesus (*John 15:1-8*). They have life from Him. Those who are “*of the earth,*” the unbelieving world, are dead branches from a dead vine. These are the grapes of wrath which will perish eternally.

**(14:19-20)** – *John 3:36* states, “*He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life*” – To have Christ is to have eternal life. Christ is the only way of salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, eternal life, and glory. Our only hope of standing before God now and at final judgment and be declared not guilty is to be found in HIM (*Php. 3:7-10*). *John 3:36* goes on to state, “*and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.*” This describes all who die in unbelief and all who are found on earth in unbelief at the Lord’s return. They are described here in *Revelation 14:18-20* as “*the clusters of the vine of the earth,*” and “*grapes*” that are “*fully ripe*” for judgment and damnation. These verses describe the actual exercise of God’s wrath upon all who are without Christ. When the Lord of glory “**THRUST IN HIS SICKLE INTO THE EARTH**” and gathers up “**THE VINE OF THE EARTH, AND CAST IT INTO THE GREAT WINEPRESS OF THE WRATH OF GOD,**” this is the eternal damnation of all the grapes of wrath, every individual who have no blood for the forgiveness of their sins, who have no righteousness by which to be justified before a holy God.

This takes place “**WITHOUT THE CITY.**” This refers to the heavenly city of heavenly Jerusalem (*cf. Heb. 12:22*). This heavenly city is the dwelling place of the Lord and His people. There is no judgment in the heavenly city because all judgment of the Lord’s people has already taken place on the cross when HE died in our place. He took our curse, our wrath, and drank damnation dry for us. This verse speaks of judgment against sin. There is no sin in the heavenly city because all the sins of God’s elect were laid upon Christ. He bore them in His own body on the true, endured and satisfied fully the wrath of God for us. So the wrath of God against the sin of the world can only take place outside the city. We may recall that when Christ suffered the wrath of God for us, He was taken outside the earthly city of Jerusalem and taken to Golgotha. The wicked world judged Him to be unfit to be in their city, the earthly

Jerusalem (*Heb. 13:12*). Here the Lord shows that all who are found without Christ have no right, no title, and no fitness to occupy the heavenly city.

**“AND BLOOD CAME OUT OF THE WINEPRESS,”** – **“Blood”** here symbolizes death, *“for the wages of sin is death”* (*Rom. 6:23a*). These who are without Christ receive what they earned – eternal death. That is why we who are IN CHRIST are so thankful as we do not receive what we deserve. We receive the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (*Rom. 6:23b*). **“EVEN UNTO THE HORSE BRIDLES”** – Horses are symbols of warfare and symbolize here sinful man’s vain attempts to war against God. God’s just wrath against sin will not be hindered or defeated by man’s greatest attempts to attack God, His Christ, His church, and His way of salvation.

**“BY THE SPACE OF A THOUSAND AND SIX HUNDRED FURLONGS”** – This may be a symbolic reference to the physical measure of the land area of Israel (about 200 miles) which the Jews thought to be invincible and protected from all enemies. The Hebrews used the number **“thousand”** to symbolize an infinite measure of things, people, and time, known only to God. This probably sets forth symbolically the full extent of God’s wrath over the whole earth or in every place, even places men thought of as protected and invincible. There will be no place of safety and refuge for men without Christ.



**(15:1) – “AND I SAW ANOTHER SIGN IN HEAVEN, GREAT AND MARVELOUS”** – This next vision begins here and goes through *Chapter 16* which introduces seven “*vials of the wrath of God upon the earth*” (16:1). This brings God’s wrath to its completion with the return of Jesus Christ to judge the world, raise the dead, and make all things new at the end of the age. “*In heaven*” indicates the standing and position of the church of God IN CHRIST (Eph. 2:19; Php. 3:20; Heb. 12:22; Rev. 21:10-27). This vision is huge and breathtaking. “**SEVEN ANGELS HAVING THE SEVEN LAST PLAGUES.**” These “*seven angles*” represent the entire host of holy, elect angels to whom God gives authority, in His sovereign providence, to execute His judgments upon the earth. The “*seven last plagues*” are so called because they represent all of God’s judgments, exercised upon the inhabitants of the earth in these last days, which began with the first coming of Christ. “**FOR IN THEM IS FILLED UP THE WRATH OF GOD**” – Unlike the previous cycles of judgment these vials are much more destructive than either the seal judgments (which affected one fourth of all the earth), or the trumpet judgments (which effect one third of the earth). The seven bowl judgments are not constrained or tempered by the mercy and longsuffering of God, so they are much greater in scope and intensity. This will bring human history to its appointed end to the praise of the glory of God’s grace in Christ.

**(15:2)** – In anticipation of the glorious end of the age associated with the second coming of Jesus Christ, John sees the Lamb and His victorious church, who are also awaiting the great and glorious outcome of redemptive history. The Lamb’s people are no longer the persecuted suffering church, victims of the dragon, the beast and the false prophet. These are the first-fruits of the harvest mentioned in 14:15-16. They are triumphant in Christ – “*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*” (John 6:40). The redeemed of the Lord have taken their place on the heavenly sea described here as “**A SEA OF GLASS MINGLED WITH FIRE.**” They stand victorious in Christ and worshipping Him as the Lamb that was slain and risen – “**AND THEM THAT HAD GOTTEN THE VICTORY OVER THE BEAST, AND OVER HIS IMAGE, AND OVER HIS MARK, AND OVER THE NUMBER OF HIS NAME, STAND ON THE SEA OF GLASS, HAVING THE HARPS OF GOD.**” The beast may have taken their lives, but Christ has given them righteousness and eternal life.

The “*sea of glass mingled with fire*” invokes many images. We can consider the Hebrew children being brought by God through the red sea on dry land and that same sea becoming an instrument of God’s wrath upon the Egyptian army. We can compare this also to the revelation of God’s glory in the Gospel accompanied with the power of the Holy Spirit to convict us of sin and bring us to see clearly the glory of Christ, the Lamb of God. This clearly shows forth justification and eternal life in Christ for all the people of God as well as the condemnation and eternal death for all who are found at Judgment without Christ. To God’s people in Christ, it is as smooth and clear as “*glass,*” and they stand firm upon it. To the enemies of Christ, it is full of the fires of God’s judgment against sin.

**(15:3) – “AND THEY SING THE SONG OF MOSES THE SERVANT OF GOD”** – The “*song of Moses*” is recorded in *Exodus 15* when the people of Israel joyfully recounted the great and mighty deeds of Jehovah, to commemorate all that He had done for them in delivering them from bondage. “**AND THE SONG OF THE LAMB, SAYING, GREAT AND MARVELLOUS ARE THY WORKS, LORD GOD ALMIGHTY; JUST AND TRUE ARE THY WAYS, THOU KING OF SAINTS**” – Now, having

been totally delivered from the bondage of sin, Satan, the curse of the law, and having victory over the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet, in the presence of the Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ, they sin, not only the Song of Moses, but the New Song of the Lamb, recounting the great and mighty deeds of the Jesus Christ, Who has redeemed and saved them completely and eternally (*cf. Rev. 5*). Here is another scripture that proves what Christ said in *John 5:39*, and in *Luke 24:25-27, 44-47*, that all Scripture is about Christ and ultimately fulfilled in and by Christ. Notice how the song of the victorious redeemed exalts Christ and His mighty works and righteous deeds. The people of God are victorious because of the blood and righteousness Christ alone worked out on the cross, and we glory in Him and His mighty work forever (*Gal. 6:14-16*).

**(15:4)** – Here is the fulfillment of *Philippians 2:9-11* – “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” **“WHO SHALL NOT FEAR THEE, O LORD, AND GLORIFY THY NAME?”** – To “*fear*” God is to revere and respect Him for who He is and what He has done. In this day of final judgment, ALL will “*fear*” God, but we must make a distinction between the redeemed of the Lord in Christ and those who are found in unbelief without Christ. The people of God have been brought to “*fear*” God in their salvation by God’s grace in Christ. This is the “*fear*” of faith, love, and gratitude, which brings about true worship. The enemies of Christ will be forced into submission and to “*fear*” God in their condemnation. They will be like conquered enemies whom Christ makes His footstool. **“FOR THOU ONLY ART HOLY”** – God alone is “*holy*” and righteousness. Our holiness and righteousness is His and in Him (*Jer. 23:5-6; 33:15-16; Isa. 54:17; Psa. 22:30-31; Php. 3:7-10*).

**“FOR ALL NATIONS SHALL COME AND WORSHIP BEFORE THEE”** – God has a people out of every nation, redeemed by the Lord Jesus Christ, and they all shall be regenerated and called unto Christ by the Holy Spirit under the preaching of the Gospel (*John 6:37-45*). In the final judgment, all who are found without Christ shall be conquered and forced to bow before the Lord of glory. **“FOR THY JUDGMENTS ARE MADE MANIFEST”** – God’s righteous works will be made known to the whole world. This includes His justice in the salvation of the redeemed in Christ and the damnation of the unjust who have rejected Christ. Thank God we have who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ have been brought to see God’s righteous works in our salvation by Christ on the cross. Our sins were made His, and He paid our debt to God’s law and justice as our Substitute and Surety for us. His righteousness is made ours, and we stand before God at Judgment without sin. We stand before God IN CHRIST.

**(15:5) – “THE TEMPLE OF THE TABERNACLE OF THE TESTIMONY IN HEAVEN”** – This is the spiritual and eternal fulfillment of the earthly temple. The temple in the Old Covenant typified the glorious Person and the powerful finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ in the redemption and salvation of His people (spiritual Israel, God’s elect). **“Tabernacle”** here has the same root word used by John in *John 1:14* – “*And the Word was made flesh, and DWELT [lit., tabernacled] among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*” This is the dwelling place of the fullness of God’s glory which is only to be found in the Person of Christ – “*For IN HIM dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*” (*Col. 2:9*). We as believers find our fullness IN HIM – “*And ye are complete IN HIM, which is the head of all principality and power*” (*Col. 2:10*). The **“testimony in heaven”** is a direct reference to the ark of the covenant behind the veil where the mercy-seat was above the ark. This is where God communed with Israel through the high priest and based on the blood of sacrifice (*Exod. 25:21-22*). These symbolically describe the eternal high priesthood and sacrifice of Christ (*Heb. 7:22-28*). Here we find the true Israel of God, those He redeemed by His Son and regenerated and called by His Holy Spirit (*Gal. 6:14-16; Php. 3:3*). Unlike the Old Covenant temple in Israel, there are no continual sacrifices being offered here. The Lamb of God is here as the full and final fulfillment of all the types. Unlike the Old Covenant high priests who could only stand as their work was never complete, Christ as the Great High Priest is seated. His work of redemption is complete. **“In heaven”** refers to our position in Christ as citizens of the heavenly, eternal kingdom of God (*Php. 3:20; Heb. 12:22-23*).

**(15:6) – “SEVEN ANGELS”** are ministers of the Gospel having come **“OUT OF THE TEMPLE,”** the place of God’s glory in the Person and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. They are **“seven”** as they represent the completed testimony of God concerning the perfect work of Christ (our great High Priest) as Surety and Substitute of His people. Everything in the salvation of sinners and the damnation of sinners is directly related to the priestly work of the Lord Jesus Christ. It involves whether or not Christ is our Sacrifice for sins, our Redeemer from sins, our Intercessor and Advocate standing in our place and pleading the merits of His righteousness alone. We who are saved by God’s grace have a perfect righteousness before God by the Lord Jesus Christ. All who die in their sins have no sacrifice, no redeemer, no intercessor, and no advocate. They stand alone in themselves and will be sentenced to eternal death.

**“HAVING THE SEVEN PLAGUES”** – These **“plagues”** (like the plagues upon Egypt in the exodus) are God’s judgment against all sin and unrighteousness throughout the last days. These are the full and final work of God’s wrath upon the earth (*Rev. 15:1*). The Gospel is a message of good news, of salvation, for all to whom the Holy Spirit has revealed their sin and depravity and who flee to Christ for all righteousness, forgiveness, and eternal life. It is also a message judgment and wrath against all who refuse to seek salvation by God’s grace in Christ (*Mark 16:15-16; Rom. 9:31–10:4; Heb. 2:1-3; 11:7; 12:25-29*).

These **“seven angels”** are **“CLOTHED IN PURE AND WHITE LINEN”** which symbolizes the righteousness of Christ imputed (charged, accounted) to them and which they have received by God-given faith. They stand before God IN CHRIST, shielded from His wrath poured out upon the earth. They are washed in His blood and clothed in His righteousness (*Rom. 8:1*). This is the subject of their message (*Rom. 1:16-17*) and the standard by which all men will be judged (*Acts 17:31*).

**“AND HAVING THEIR BREASTS GIRDED WITH GOLDEN GIRDLES”** – These ministers of Christ are **“girded”** and ready to serve their Lord (2 Cor. 4:5; 5:20). They fulfill the commission given them by their Master, the Lord Jesus Christ. **“GOLDEN girdles”** show that their power and their message is not of themselves but of God in Christ (2 Cor. 2:14-17; 3:3-5). The true minister of Christ has been saved, called, equipped, commissioned, and empowered, ALL by the grace and power of God in Christ.

**(15:7) – “AND ONE OF THE FOUR BEASTS”** – Recall the **“four beasts”** (living creatures) in *Revelation 4:6-7* as four ministers of God proclaiming the Gospel of God’s grace in Jesus Christ. Each one of the four testify of Christ in each particular aspect of His Person and work – *“a lion”* which symbolizes His kingly office and work as emphasized in *The Gospel of Matthew*; *“a calf”* (young ox) symbolizing His office and work as the Servant of Jehovah emphasized in *The Gospel of Mark*; the *“face of man”* symbolizing His humanity emphasized in *The Gospel of Luke*; *“a flying eagle”* symbolizing His deity emphasized in *The Gospel of John*. Here we see only **“ONE of the four beasts,”** and it is the first one – the *“lion”* showing the power of Christ in punishing the wicked. The *“seven angels”* are not presenting Christ here as the Savior of His people but only as the powerful and righteous Judge who must punish all sin.

**“SEVEN GOLDEN VIALS FULL OF THE WRATH OF GOD”** – These **“golden vials”** symbolize the divine wrath of God measured out exactly in proportion to what is due to sinful man. God will deal with every man in terms of equal divine justice. Sinners without Christ will receive exactly what they deserve – eternal death. We who are in Christ are so blessed that HE alone took the full measure of God’s wrath upon Himself for our sins. His suffering unto death was the equivalent of eternal death for all of God’s elect. This is how precious the blood of Christ made full satisfaction for all our sins, and how valuable His righteousness is to give us a complete and eternal right standing before Almighty God.

**“WHO LIVETH FOR EVER AND EVER”** – This speaks of the eternal God before whom all men must stand and with whom all men must deal in Judgment. Make no mistake about it – *“Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do”* (Heb. 4:13). Sinners are doomed without Christ!

**(15:8) – “AND THE TEMPLE WAS FILLED WITH SMOKE FROM THE GLORY OF GOD AND FROM HIS POWER”** – *This smoke symbolizes the divine presence of Almighty God in the glory of His nature, specifically His just wrath against all sin (cf. Exod. 19:18; Isa. 6:1-4). It is the glory of God to punish ALL sin. “AND NO MAN WAS ABLE TO ENTER INTO THE TEMPLE, TILL THE SEVEN PLAGUES OF THE SEVEN ANGELS WERE FULFILLED” – No man can “enter into the temple” for salvation, blessing, communion, and forgiveness from God without Christ, without His blood and righteousness alone. But this refers to an entering into the temple for understanding the judgments of God as in Psalm 73:17 – “Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.” Men by nature do not understand God’s judgment and wrath against sin. But when they see all these things come about in light of God’s glory in Christ, they will then know why they are being punished for their sin. They will realize then that they have no savior, no mediator, no righteousness, nothing but sin that deserves eternal damnation.*

**(16:1)** – Here begins the actual pouring out of the **“VIALS OF THE WRATH OF GOD UPON THE EARTH.”** **“THE SEVEN ANGELS,”** which are ministers of Christ, are sent forth to announce these great events of God’s justice against the sinful earth. Commentators are divided as to the question of whether or not the vial judgments run throughout the entire New Testament Age, or whether they are limited to the time of the end and our Lord’s return. We know that manifestations of God’s wrath come throughout the last days, but as we come closer to our Lord’s return, they will grow in number and intensity. The important thing to know is that John is writing of what will happen to the earth and its unbelieving inhabitants when Jesus Christ comes again at the end of the age to judge the world, raise the dead, and make all things new. No one will escape.

**“GO YOUR WAYS, AND POUR OUT THE VIALS OF THE WRATH OF GOD UPON THE EARTH”** – By the time these vial judgments have run their course, God’s wrath against sin and unbelief will be complete. When men continue to refuse to seek the Lord and reject Christ and His righteousness as the only way of salvation, there will come a time when God gives them up to judgment. This is leading up to the seventh vial which is the great white throne judgment in which all men will be judged *“in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead” (Acts 17:31).* We must emphasize that God’s people in Christ have nothing to fear at this judgment because we have already been judged for all our sins in the Person of Christ on the cross when He died, put away our sins, and established righteousness by which God justifies us eternally.

Another important thing to know is that as these vial judgments are announced **“OUT OF THE TEMPLE.”** This judgment is all related to the glory of Christ as the great high priest of His people. We must acknowledge that they are all according to God’s sovereign purpose and plan and ultimately intended to glorify Himself in Christ. This shows also that each manifestation of God’s wrath has a spiritual significance, teaching a lesson concerning man’s sin and guilt, showing that men have no hope of salvation in themselves or this sinful fallen world. Man’s only hope is to turn to the Lord.

**(16:2)** – This first **“VIAL”** of wrath is physical disease represented by **“A NOISOME AND GRIEVOUS SORE.”** *“Noisome”* means worthless, bad, and evil; *“grievous”* means hurtful. Think back to *Exodus 9:8-12* when God struck Egypt with the plague of boils. These physical diseases are God’s testimony of judgment against sin and the fact that there is no hope of salvation in this physical body, that *“this body is dead because of sin” (Rom. 8:10).* False preachers tell us that all physical disease is of the devil, and that we can be cured if we have enough faith. This is not so. Disease and death are the tools of the Lord as punishment for all sin and as testimonies to the fact of the main sickness of all men without exception – SIN. We need salvation from sin. Men may find cures for some diseases, but other diseases will come along. This is a testimony from God that *“the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:23).* These acts of God’s judgment upon the wicked are foretastes of eternal wrath and death. **“UPON THE MEN WHICH HAD THE MARK OF THE BEAST, AND UPON THEM WHICH WORSHIPPED HIS IMAGE”** – God’s wrath abides upon all who do not believe in Christ, but who believe a false gospel (*John 3:36*). Believers suffer sickness and pain in this physical body as well, but to them these are the chastisements of God who loves His children (*Heb. 12:4-8*). These are consequences of remaining sin and living in a sinful world, but not indications of condemnation. Sin still affects and contaminates us while on this earth, but sin is not laid

to our account (*Rom. 4:6-8; 8:33-34*). For believers these things wean them from this world and drive them more and more to Christ for salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, eternal life, and glory. For the unbeliever these are signs of something much worse to come (*John 3:36*).

**(16:3)** – This **“SECOND ANGLE POURED OUT HIS VIAL UPON THE SEA.”** The **“sea”** represents the world, its societies, governments, religions, and its cares and possessions. Everything that this world is and has to offer will come to nothing (*cf. Hag. 1:5-6*). There is no eternal value in this world. ETERNAL LIFE IS FOUND ONLY IN CHRIST! **“AND IT BECAME AS THE BLOOD OF A DEAD MAN: AND EVERY LIVING SOUL DIED IN THE SEA”** – All this world really has to offer is death and decay – *“For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you”* (*1 Pet. 1:24-25*).

**(16:4)** – The third **“VIAL”** is poured out **“UPON THE RIVERS AND FOUNTAINS OF WATERS; AND THEY BECAME BLOOD.”** Think back to Exodus 7:19-22. The Nile River was the life of Egypt. In the Bible **“rivers and fountains of waters”** symbolize life for a people. In Revelation 16:12 we are told that **“the great river Euphrates”** was dried up and Babylon (false religion) fell. The plague of droughts upon this world when fresh waters dry up are God’s testimony that all that feed and nourish this world will eventually dry up and become **“blood,”** which is death. This especially applies to false religion. False religion says, **“I am the fountain of life, the water of life, the refreshing drink that you need. I am the river of eternal salvation.”** This is a lie. Christ said to the woman at the well, **“If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water”** (*John 4:10*). He went on to say, **“Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life”** (*John 4:13-14*). Man’s hunger and thirst after salvation can only be quenched by a **“hunger and thirst after righteousness”** (*Matt. 5:6*), only to be filled in and by Christ (*cf. Rev. 21:6; 22:1,17*).

## LESSON 52 – VIALS OF WRATH POURED OUT (2)

## Revelation 16:5-11

**(16:5)** – Here is a strong proclamation from **“THE ANGEL”** who administers God’s judgment against sin to the whole earth that God’s ways are **“RIGHTEOUS”** (just and true). God is the eternal, unchangeable God of righteousness, and He always judges according to truth. Rest assured that all who are judged under God’s wrath receive the punishment they justly deserve. There are loud echoes here from *Deuteronomy 32:4*, when, just before entering Moab prior to Israel’s conquest of Canaan, Moses proclaims of God, *“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.”* Abraham posed the question, *“Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”* (*Gen. 18:25*), to which the obvious answer is, “Yes!” We must consider that God is just in all His works, even in His great work of saving sinners by the shed blood and imputed righteousness of Christ. Christ came under God’s just judgment for the sins of God’s elect imputed to Him (*2 Cor. 5:21a*), and all His people, for whom He died, come under God’s just judgment and are justified by His righteousness imputed to them (*2 Cor. 5:21b*). God is just to save us for Christ’s sake, and He is just to condemn sinners for sin.

**(16:6)** – Here the Lord shows why the wicked deserve His wrath. All who are without Christ are worthy of judgment. He specifically points out their hatred, contempt, and ill-treatment of the **“SAINTS AND PROPHETS.”** Their hatred of the people of God shows forth their hatred of Christ and His truth (*Matt. 25:41-46; John 3:19-20; 15:18—16:3*). **“AND THOU HAST GIVEN THEM BLOOD TO DRINK; FOR THEY ARE WORTHY”** – For those who have shed the blood of the saints, will now be forced to drink their own blood – a symbolic way of showing how God’s just punishment perfectly fits the crime, as seen in *Isaiah*

*49:26*, where the prophet declares concerning God’s judgment, *“And I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh; and they shall be drunken with their own blood, as with sweet wine: and all flesh shall know that I the LORD am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob.”* Recall that in *Revelation 14:10*, John describes a scene in which the blood of God’s enemies would flow the length and breadth of Israel. In God’s judgments, the punishment always fits the crime. This is why the death of Christ on the cross as the sin-bearer of His people is so amazing. By His one offering for sin, He suffered the exact equivalent of eternal damnation for all of God’s elect (*Heb. 10:10,14*).

**(16:7)** – Upon witnessing the righteous nature of God’s judgment upon the earth, we read of the heavenly response from the suffering saints – **“AND I HEARD ANOTHER OUT OF THE ALTAR SAY.”** This is literally, “I heard the altar cry.” **“EVEN SO, LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, TRUE AND RIGHTEOUS ARE THY JUDGMENTS”** – God will avenge His suffering and persecuted servants, and heaven resounds with praise to God when the day of final retribution comes. This is news of great comfort to a suffering and persecuted church.

**(16:8)** – Here **“THE FOURTH ANGEL POURED OUT HIS VIAL”** of God’s just wrath against the earth, and it came **“UPON THE SUN.”** The **“sun,”** which is a natural source of warmth and light for the earth, which because of its gravitational pull helps to hold the earth in place, will be turned into an instrument of God’s wrath upon those who are found without Christ. There will be no salvation or relief from judgment for men in **“the sun.”** Recall that in *Revelation 8:12*, when the fourth trumpet sounds, the light of the sun, the moon and the stars will be diminished by a third. But the fourth **“vial”** of judgment

here results not in diminished light, but in a massive intensification of the sun's heat – **“AND POWER WAS GIVEN UNTO HIM TO SCORCH MEN WITH FIRE.”**

**(16:9) – “AND MEN WERE SCORCHED WITH GREAT HEAT”** – As this judgment from God falls upon sinful, unbelieving men, they continue in their rebellion – **“AND BLASPHEMED THE NAME OF GOD, WHICH HATH POWER OVER THESE PLAGUES: AND THEY REPENTED NOT TO GIVE HIM GLORY.”** The power of man's own self-righteousness and rebellion, the effects of sin upon the human heart, the deceptions of the beast and the false prophet, have so thoroughly deluded men that they continue to curse God even while His judgment is being poured out upon them. We are reminded once again that it is the goodness of God in Christ that leads sinners to repentance, not the wrath of God. Lest we forget the significance of this particular judgment, we need to recall to mind the words of *Revelation 7:16-17*, describing an earlier vision of the saints in heaven – *“They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”* God's people are protected from His wrath by Christ, while those who serve the dragon curse God, refuse to repent or give God glory, despite the ferocity of His judgment.

**(16:10-11) – “AND THE FIFTH ANGEL POURED OUT HIS VIAL UPON THE SEAT OF THE BEAST”** – Here is God's wrath *“poured out”* upon the throne (power) *“of the beast”* (antichrist). The *“seat of the beast”* is spiritual Babylon. This is the doomed kingdom of Satan in which he seeks to deceive through antichristian government, powers, and religion (*cf. 2 Cor. 4:3-4; 1 John 5:19*). It symbolizes the dominion of sin by which Satan dominates and controls the natural man (*1 Cor. 2:14*) and causes him to hate Christ and His truth (*John 3:19-20*). **“AND HIS KINGDOM WAS FULL OF DARKNESS”** – Recall that the ninth plague upon Egypt, before the exodus, was *“darkness”* so thick it could be felt, and they could not move around (*Ex. 10:21-22*). *Exodus 10:23* states, *“They saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days: but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.”* This was all symbolic of the spiritual *“darkness”* that prevails over the world and all natural men. As stated, by nature men love darkness – the darkness of sin, self-righteousness, self-love, religious pride, materialism – but men do not realize it is all darkness. Salvation comes to us when we are delivered from this natural *“darkness”* and brought by the Holy Spirit into the light of God's glory in Christ (*cf. 2 Cor. 4:6; Col. 1:13*).

*We see also that when God in judgment exposes this “darkness” it does not bring the world to repentance – “THEY GNAWED THEIR TONGUES FOR PAIN, AND BLASPHEMED THE GOD OF HEAVEN BECAUSE OF THEIR PAINS AND THEIR SORES, AND REPENTED NOT OF THEIR DEEDS.” Despite their agony, they continue to deny and rebel against God and against His Christ. For a while they blame God for their pain and refuse to repent “of their deeds” which have been exposed as evil in the sight of God (cf. Matt. 7:21-23). There will come a time when they will no longer blame God but themselves when they are forced to realize that it was their own sin that brings them to eternal damnation. Again, we are reminded that our only hope of salvation and eternal life, now and forever, is sovereign mercy and grace of God in Christ. There is no other hope for sinners.*



**(16:12)** – Here in the sixth vial judgment, we shift from various manifestations of God’s wrath against the sinful earth and its inhabitants to the final battle in which Christ will fully and finally crush all of His enemies. It is commonly known as the great battle of *Armageddon* which is the place identified in *verse 16*. **“AND THE SIXTH ANGEL POURED OUT HIS VIAL UPON THE GREAT RIVER EUPHRATES”** – As stated in the lesson on *chapter 9:14*, mention of **“the great river Euphrates”** has caused many modern commentators to point to a future war with Syria, Iraq, Arab nations, and even China. Throughout the Old Testament, the Euphrates River is a symbol of that which feeds and nourishes ungodly empires, such as Babylon and Assyria, and which feeds false religion. It is a symbol, therefore, of the wicked world. It was also the boundary beyond which lay exile and danger for the people of God. It was also the home of the hostile nations listed in *Ezekiel 38-39*, led by the mysterious Gog and Magog. Most importantly, it was beyond the Euphrates that Israel had been taken during the years of her exile and captivity in Babylon. Here it speaks of the boundary between peace and war, safety and destruction. It was the symbolic boundary between the city of destruction, Babylon, and the land of Canaan. In *9:14* there was a trumpet warning connected with this river, but the warning was not heeded. Left to himself man will not repent. Here begins the final destruction in God’s judgment against sin.

**“AND THE WATER THEREOF WAS DRIED UP”** – The **“great river Euphrates ... was dried up.”** This symbolically shows us that everything that feeds and nourishes wicked Babylon will cease. The Lord will cut off the life blood of all false religion. Remember, Babylon represents all religions of man that teach and promote salvation by the works and will of men. Grace and works for salvation cannot mix. It is either salvation totally by the sovereign grace of God in Christ and based on HIS righteousness imputed without our works, or it is salvation by the works and will of men which is deadly (*Rom. 11:5-6; Gal. 2:21; Eph. 2:8-10*). Under this vial judgment, the Lord exposes and condemns all false religions of men that stand in opposition to Christ and salvation by HIM alone.

**“THAT THE WAY OF THE KINGS OF THE EAST MIGHT BE PREPARED”** – Many commentators believe **“the kings of the East”** to be the great enemies of Christ and the church coming from **“the East”** to wage war against the church, but consider the following:

(1) In the Bible that which comes from the East symbolizes a new and glorious day, the sunrise, God’s light and glory in Christ (*Isa. 41:1-2*). The three wise men who followed the star seeking Christ came from the East (*Matt. 2:1-2*). Judah’s deliverance from Babylon came by God using the means of **“a ravenous bird from the East”** (*Isa. 46:11*), and this referred to Cyrus, King of the Medes and Persians. Cyrus was a type of the Lord Jesus Christ, the **“day star”** rising in the East to deliver His people, spiritual Israel and save them from their sins (*cf. 2 Pet. 1:19; Rev. 22:16*).

(2) When Israel was in captivity in Babylon (which is east of Israel) for seventy years, the Lord sent an army to liberate them, and they did so by damming up the Euphrates River which ran through the city of Babylon. This made a way for the people of Judah to return from the East to Jerusalem (*Isa. 44:24-28*). More than likely, then, this verse symbolically speaks of the preparation for final judgment and the final liberation of all the people of God, sinners saved by His grace in Christ, and who are made by Christ to be **“kings and priests unto God”** (*Rev. 1:6; 5:10*). Christ is truly **“the KING of kings”** (*1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 17:14; 19:16*).

**(16:13-14)** – Next, John sees **“THREE UNCLEAN SPIRITS LIKE FROGS”** – These are **“THE SPIRITS OF DEVILS”** (demons) that appear as poisonous frogs (reptiles). They **“COME OUT OF**

**THE MOUTH OF THE DRAGON, AND OUT OF THE MOUTH OF THE BEAST, AND OUT OF THE MOUTH OF THE FALSE PROPHET”** – These “*frogs*” symbolize the false gospels and false doctrines of the unholy trinity seeking to damn men’s souls with their poison. Just as a frog attacks with his tongue, false preachers attack with their tongues in preaching salvation by the works and the wills of men. The word “*frogs*” can be translated “fraud” or “fake.” It describes Satan’s false ministers (2 Cor. 11:13-15). This is the great deception that will take place as described in (2 Thess. 2:3-12).

They are “**WORKING MIRACLES**” which is the same as “*the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders*” (2 Thess. 2:9) meant to deceive men into a false security and assurance of salvation without Christ. This is also part of God’s just judgment against the inhabitants of the world “*because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved*” (2 Thess. 2:10). Paul wrote, “*And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness*” (2 Thess. 2:11-12). Just as the plague of frogs was sent upon Egypt because Pharaoh would not let God’s people go (Exod. 8:1-13), and subsequently darkness followed, the wicked unbelieving world will be more and more plagued with false religion and through the working of miracles (cf. Matt. 7:21-23).

**“WHICH GO FORTH UNTO THE KINGS OF THE EARTH AND OF THE WHOLE WORLD”** – *These false prophets have an unholy, evil goal – To deceive the “kings of the earth and of the whole world” by their false doctrine, and “TO GATHER THEM TO THE BATTLE OF THAT GREAT DAY OF GOD ALMIGHTY.” Their goal is to raise opposition and war against Christ, His church, and against the Gospel wherein the glory of God is revealed in salvation by His grace through the Lord Jesus Christ. This shows us that we must judge the truth preached by any man, not by perceived wonders and miracles, but by the gospel he preaches (Isa. 8:19-20; Gal. 1:6-9). Do they preach Christ and Him crucified? Does their message glorify God in His true glory? Does it put man in the dust of sin and depravity where he belongs? Does it exalt Christ as the Godman, the one and only Savior, the Lord our Righteousness? If not, then they are false prophets no matter what else they say and do.*

**(16:15) – “BEHOLD, I COME AS A THIEF”** – As the world follows Satan in their hatred and opposition to Christ and the church, they continue with no awareness of what is about to happen in the second coming of Christ to judge the world and gather His people unto Himself. To them He will *“come as a thief”* and take them totally by surprise. This does not mean that Christ will return silently (*Matt. 24:30-31; 1 Thess. 4:16-17*), but it means to the unbelievers He will come unexpectedly. Then, their perceived victory will in reality be their defeat. This is not so with the people of God – **“BLESSED IS HE THAT WATCHETH, AND KEEPETH HIS GARMENTS”** – Even though we as believers do not know the exact time of our Lord’s return, we do know that He is coming, and we walk on this earth in continual expectation and anticipation of His glorious return (*1 Thess. 5:1-5*).

*“Watcheth”* means to be awake and aware, to keep our eyes focused and settled upon Christ, His blood for the forgiveness of our sins, His righteousness imputed for our complete justification before holy God, and His Word (*Heb. 12:1-2*). It is more than a glance or a wink. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to fix our hearts and establish us upon Christ our sovereign Lord and Savior. We rest in Him, love Him, worship, and serve Him in all things.

*“Keepeth”* means to guard and cherish as precious, as life itself. This is not just a profession of religion. This is a life devoted to Christ and His glory. *“His garments”* means that we are not only to be awake, but we are also to be dressed and ready for battle. What are these *“garments”*? It is *“the righteousness of saints”* (*Rev. 19:7-8*), which is the righteousness of Christ imputed to them (*Rev. 7:14; cf. Psa. 22:30-31; Isa. 45:24-25; 61:10; Jer. 23:5-6; Rom. 1:16-17; 3:21-25; 10:4*). This is how the people of God are distinguished from those who are deceived by the false prophet (*Rom. 9:31–10:4*).

**“LEST HE WALK NAKED, AND THEY SEE HIS SHAME”** – Consider the first time man was in a position of shame. It was in the garden when Adam and Eve fell, and they both *“knew that they were naked”* (*Gen. 3:7*). Before the fall *“they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed”* (*Gen. 2:25*). What made the difference? Before the fall they were sinless, and they enjoyed and delighted in the glory of God in holiness. Afterward, they were in sin and exposed to God’s judgment and wrath (*Gen. 3:9-11*). In their shame, they attempted to cover their nakedness with fig leaves (*Gen. 3:7*). This is symbolic of man attempting to cover his shame with his own works seeking to establish a righteousness of his own. God removed their fig leaves, and *“unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them”* (*Gen. 3:21*). Here is a picture of God’s way of salvation from sin and God’s way of justifying His people – the shed blood and righteousness imputed of the Lord Jesus Christ. As God’s grace in Christ, based on His blood and righteousness alone, is our only defense against Satan’s accusations (*Rev. 12:9-11*), it is our only hope in the end, even in *“Armageddon.”*

**(16:16)** – Most commentators believe that **“ARMAGEDDON”** is a reference to the plains of Meggido, northeast of Jerusalem, and the site of several important battles in Israel’s history (*cf. Judges 5:19; 2 Kings 23:29*). In these battles, Israel was always in an impossible position unable to deliver themselves from the enemy, and God stepped in to win the battles. This is certainly the case of the final battle. We, the people of God, the church, cannot win this battle. The battle is the Lord’s, and He will win the final victory by His power, not ours. The most common interpretation of this verse is that at the end of the age, the armies of the world assemble on the plains of Meggido to defeat the nation Israel, or to fight against the armies of heaven, when Jesus Christ destroys them. Most believe it is a physical battle fought with physical weapons, even atomic bombs. Though there will be physical battles on earth up to the second

coming of Christ (*Matt. 24:6-7*), this battle is not physical but spiritual (*John 18:36; 2 Cor. 10:3-5; Eph. 6:10-18*). **“Armageddon”** is really “Har-Megedon,” or “Mount of Gathering” (“Assembly”). Some say it means “Mount of Slaughter.” It is symbolic of the final day of judgment where the last opposition to Christ, His church, and His truth will be defeated and judged forever, never to return again. In *Revelation 14*, we read that Jesus Christ stands triumphantly on Mount Zion among His people. In **“Armageddon”** we have an image of the kings of the earth being gathered together by the dragon to wage war against Mount Zion, which is symbolic of the church of Jesus Christ. This is the final battle between Christ and His enemies.

This battle is well within God’s sovereign purpose and plan from the beginning (*Eph. 1:11*). Satan and His followers never take God by surprise. The fact of this final battle, along with Satan’s continual attempts to war against Christ and His church from the beginning, has never meant that the outcome is uncertain. Even though Satan and his demons have been allowed to make war, Satan has, in essence, already been defeated (*John 12:31-33; Rev. 17:14*). God has allowed it to go on for the purposes of His own glory, for the eternal good of His people, and for judgment against the world. The victory has always been certain. His victory is our victory. Christ is our Rock of salvation, and the gates of hell will not prevail against Him and His church. On this day of **“Armageddon,”** Satan and all his followers (the beast and the false prophet), along with the kings and nations who serve them, will be totally and finally defeated. This is judgment day when God’s wrath is completed. The seventh vial judgment describes the battle and the victory of our Lord.

**(16:17)** – The sixth vial judgment, which is the preparation for the final battle, revealed that this final battle between Christ and all His enemies would be fought in *“a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon”* (Rev. 16:16). The seventh vial judgment describes that final battle which takes place at the second coming of Christ. Christ will return to gather His church unto Himself and to accomplish the final defeat of all His enemies. **“AND THE SEVENTH ANGEL POURED OUT HIS VIAL INTO THE AIR”** – The word *“air”* can describe the lower and denser regions as opposed to the higher regions. It describes the fallen, sinful, unbelieving world. *“Air”* is something all living beings must have and cannot avoid. It surrounds us. So here is God’s wrath poured out upon all who oppose Christ and His truth, all who are hateful towards Christ, His people, and His truth, and they cannot get away from it.

**“AND THERE CAME A GREAT VOICE OUT OF THE TEMPLE OF HEAVEN, FROM THE THRONE, SAYING, IT IS DONE”** – All opposition, all enemies of Christ and His people, will be finally finished. There will be no more opposition and no more unbelief. What a blessing of God’s grace it was when our Lord on the cross cried out, *“IT IS FINISHED”* (John 19:30). The final and complete redemption of His people was accomplished as He made an end of our sin and brought in everlasting righteousness for us to be justified before God. But here in Armageddon there is no blessing – only the wrath of God against sin. Here, all judgment against sin for the enemies of God *“is done”* (finished completely).

**(16:18)** – This is the spiritual language of God’s judgment against all sin and unrighteousness. **“AND THERE WERE VOICES”** – These are the shouts of the heavenly hosts proclaiming the justice of God in His wrath against sin. **“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”** – The *“voices”* will be accompanied with the most intense destructive forces upon the world that has ever been. The Apostle Peter described it – *“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, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up”* (2 Pet. 3:10). This destruction will reach every part of the sin-cursed earth along with all its inhabitants, but NOT for the children of God, those redeemed by the blood of Christ and justified in His righteousness imputed and received by God-given faith – *“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering TO US—WARD, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”* (2 Pet. 3:9). There is no condemnation for God’s chosen people in Christ (Rom. 8:1).

**(16:19)** – **“AND THE GREAT CITY WAS DIVIDED INTO THREE PARTS”** – The *“great city”* is **“BABYLON”** which is *“great”* only in the eyes of unbelieving men, but *“that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God”* (Luke 16:15). *“Babylon”* represents all false systems, organizations, and all doctrine that promotes the way of Cain – salvation by the works and wills of men. It is *“divided into three parts”* because, as the Lord said, *“Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand”* (Matt. 12:25). Its opposition to God was manifested in *“three parts”* – *“the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet”* (Rev. 16:13). All three will be *“divided”* against themselves, turning against each other. They will know then

that each one was the perpetrator of lies. **“AND THE CITIES OF THE NATIONS FELL”** – All nations associated and aligned with **“Babylon”** will be destroyed with her.

**“AND GREAT BABYLON CAME IN REMEMBRANCE BEFORE GOD, TO GIVE UNTO HER THE CUP OF THE WINE OF THE FIERCENESS OF HIS WRATH”** – God’s **“remembrance”** of **“Babylon”** is for her sins the judgment of eternal damnation. Her sins and iniquities are not taken away, not cleansed by the blood of Christ. Her sins are imputed (charged, accounted) to her, and she must bear the full measure of God’s wrath. Thank God that He assures all HIS people IN CHRIST, *“And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more” (Heb. 10:17)*. God does not hold our sins against us; God does not impute our sins to us BECAUSE CHRIST WAS MADE SIN FOR US (*Psa. 32:1-2; Rom. 8:32-34; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 John 2:1-2*). We who are IN CHRIST, who believe and rest IN HIM ALONE can say with David of old as he was inspired by God the Holy Spirit to describe *“the blessedness of the man, to whom God imputes righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin” (Rom. 4:6-8)*.

**(16:20) – “AND EVERY ISLAND FLED AWAY, AND THE MOUNTAINS WERE NOT FOUND”** – There will be natural disasters as the earth is destroyed, and this will pave the way for the new heavens and new earth (*2 Pet. 3:10*). But the essence of what will happen as recorded here is that all the prominent places on the earth, all places where men naturally seek safety, will be totally destroyed. All antichristian powers will be destroyed by the second coming of Christ, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in the glory of His mighty power in heaven and earth.

**(16:21) – “AND THERE FELL UPON MEN A GREAT HAIL OUT OF HEAVEN, EVERY STONE ABOUT THE WEIGHT OF A TALENT”** – Recall the plague of hail God sent upon Egypt (*Ex. 9:22-26*). Here is the final act of God’s wrath as He commands the elements for His purpose of punishing all who would oppose Christ. The hail stones weigh about seventy pounds each, enough to kill a man, so this speaks of death as the wages of sin. But instead of turning to God in repentance, **“MEN BLASPHEMED GOD BECAUSE OF THE PLAGUE OF THE HAIL; FOR THE PLAGUE THEREOF WAS EXCEEDING GREAT.”** This shows us two profound truths: (1) The natural pride, self-righteousness, and hardness of the natural man’s heart (*John 6:44; 1 Cor. 2:14*). We will not repent of our own will and power. It takes a mighty work of God’s sovereign grace in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit to bring sinners to repentance and faith – *“the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?” (Rom. 2:4)*. (2) At this time the day of grace and mercy will be over. A time is coming when God will no longer show mercy to any sinner – *“(For He saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)” (2 Cor. 6:2); “Seek ye the LORD while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near:” (Isa. 55:6)*.

**Another important thing to notice is the same spiritual lesson taught back in Exodus 9:26 – “Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, was there no hail.” The name “Goshen” means “drawing near.” Sinners draw near unto God by His grace and mercy in Christ and Him alone. Just as the Israelites in Goshen were protected from the destructive hail of God’s wrath, so all spiritual Israelites, all believers, are protected from this final plague of hail as they stand safe in Christ – “In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God” (Psa. 62:7).**

**(17:1)** – Here begins the nature and the history of Babylon, **“THE GREAT WHORE.”** She was judged in *chapter 16*, and here we are told why she is judged. The Scriptures often describe false religion by the symbol of a harlot (*ex. Prov. 7*). Her sin is spiritual whoredom enticing sinners by her deceptive appearance and empty love. She sits **“UPON MANY WATERS”** because her influence is worldwide as she deceives all nations. As she is empowered by Satan, her goal is to seduce sinners into false professions of religion and into false refuges of salvation drawing them away from Christ and His Gospel of grace (*2 Cor. 4:3-4*). Many who profess to believe in Christ but who have not been born again by the Spirit will be seduced by her lies. But true believers, those who are sealed by God in their minds and hearts with the glory of God in Christ, will not fall prey to her deadly doctrines (*1 John 2:18–3:10*).

There is an important contrast made between this harlot and the bride of Christ as set forth in *Revelation 21:9*. While very seductive because of her wealth, glamour, and celebrity, and because of her natural appeal to the religious pride and self-righteousness of unbelieving sinners, the beauty of the harlot is temporary and fleeting, lasting as John says but *“one hour”* (*Rev. 17:12; 18:10,17,19*). But the beauty of the bride of Christ is eternal, since the church is clothed in the perfect righteousness of her bridegroom, and is therefore, a radiant and spotless bride, beautifully adorned for her husband.

**(17:2)** – This speaks of the spiritual **“FORNICATION”** that evil **“KINGS”** and nations of the world have committed. Instead of seeking, believing, loving, worshiping, and serving the one true God, they align themselves with **“the great whore.”** The prophets often spoke of pagan empires and nations who were drunk on military power, great wealth, and/or false religion and self-righteousness (*ex., Ezek. 16:15-34; Nahum 3; Isa. 23; Jer. 50–51*). The apostle Paul wrote to the church at Corinth warning them of the danger of spiritual fornication and adultery (*2 Cor. 11:1-4*). **“WINE”** symbolizes her doctrine and influence saturating and controlling the minds, affections, and wills of all who follow her in false religion. Under her false teaching, men become drunk on their own pride and self-righteousness. They imagine they are safe within her walls, but it is a false security. To trust in anyone for salvation and blessing except Christ and based on His blood and righteousness alone is spiritual fornication and certain death. This is the case with the city of man in every age, which through self-righteous religion, wealth, celebrity, and luxury, seduces false Christians and others away from Christ, and who, after the seduction, will leave them with nothing but cursedness and eternal death.

**(17:3)** – John is **“CARRIED”** to the wilderness where he witnesses the destruction of Babylon. The **“WILDERNESS”** represents the fallen, sinful world in which we as the people of God reside but of which we are not citizens. The harlot is resting upon **“A SCARLET COLOURED BEAST”** which is the same one that arose out of the sea (*Rev. 13:1*). Sin is often symbolized under the color of **“scarlet”** – *“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool”* (*Isa. 1:18*). We who have been convicted of sin by the Holy Spirit thank God He has put our sins away by the blood of Christ. But, like all men by nature, the harlot is proud of her sin (*Luke 16:15*). She rides and rests upon sin in pride and self-righteousness. This is one reason she and her followers hate the light of truth in Christ (*John 3:19-20*). **“FULL OF NAMES OF BLASPHEMY”** – The **“beast”** upon which she sits is full of pride, self-righteousness, unbelief, and all titles and doctrines that dishonor and deny the Lord God and His way of salvation by grace in Christ. **“HAVING SEVEN HEADS AND TEN HORNS”** symbolizes, as before

(Rev. 13:1), the completeness of her rebellion and evil power in her attempts to overthrow Christ and His church.

**(17:4)** – She is dressed for seduction – **“AND THE WOMAN WAS ARRAYED IN PURPLE AND SCARLET COLOUR.”** Sin may appear to be beautiful, appealing to the eye, but it is deadly to the souls of men and women. **“AND DECKED WITH GOLD AND PRECIOUS STONES AND PEARLS”** – Sin may be judged by men to be of great value, even eternal value, but in reality it is fleeting and worthless. **“HAVING A GOLDEN CUP IN HER HAND FULL OF ABOMINATIONS AND FILTHINESS OF HER FORNICATION”** – Sin may be contained in a vessel of gold, but it is still intoxicating and poisonous and brings sinners to the judgment of wrath from a holy and just God. **“Abominations and filthiness”** are evil and deadly no matter how they appear or no matter what kind of vessel in which they are served.

**(17:5)** – **“AND UPON HER FOREHEAD WAS A NAME WRITTEN”** – Her evil is inscribed on her **“forehead,”** symbolizing her mind and heart. It is so much a part of her nature that she can do nothing else but lie, deceive, and seduce by her false gospel of self-righteous works religion. Her way of operation is to work from her own mind to the minds of men. Our warfare in preaching the Gospel is a spiritual warfare of the mind and heart (2 Cor. 10:1-5). Her name is **“MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.”** Remember, **“Babylon”** represents all false religion of salvation conditioned or dependent upon the works and will of man instead of wholly upon Christ and Him crucified. This is a great deception of Satan who works through this **“MOTHER OF HARLOTS.”** The only hope of salvation for sinners is to have her exposed by the Holy Spirit as He shows us the glory of Christ and His work of redemption. Unless God exposes this harlot, she will remain a **“mystery”** to us. That is why she is called **“MYSTERY, BABYLON.”** She is **“THE MOTHER”** of all vile things **“OF THE EARTH”** that dishonor God, deny Christ, and exalt sinners in pride and self-righteousness. She is the cause of sinners glorying in the flesh and not in Christ alone. She is the opposite of what Christ brings His bride to be (1 Cor. 1:30-31; Gal. 6:14).

**(17:6)** – *Her hatred for Christ, His church, and His truth is so intense, she is “DRUNKEN WITH THE BLOOD OF THE SAINTS, AND WITH THE BLOOD OF THE MARTYRS OF JESUS.” “Drunken” here means to be “satiated” or “full” because she thirst for the blood of all who expose and oppose her. Why is her hatred so intense? It is because the truth of God’s Gospel of grace in and by the Lord Jesus Christ exposes her for what she is (John 3:19-20; 15:18—16:4), and denounces her as an evil monster who promises life, blessing, and glory for sinners, but who delivers death, cursedness, and disappointment to all whom she deceives. She cannot get enough and is never satisfied to the point of quenching her thirst for the blood of “the saints” and “the martyrs of Jesus.” “AND WHEN I SAW HER, I WONDERED WITH GREAT ADMIRATION” – This certainly does not mean that John admired this evil harlot. The word “admiration” means “astonishment.” John was astonished and amazed that any who claimed and professed to be followers of Christ could kill men and women who truly bore testimony of Christ and His Gospel. John had seen open enemies of Christ and His church commit horrible and cruel crimes against true believers, but here he sees the apostate church, boldly proclaiming to be followers of Christ, but who in reality hate the true Christ and His people.*



(17:7) – When we left off in the last lesson, John stood in amazement at the vision given him of the great harlot, “*MYSTERY BABYLON*,” the mother of all spiritual harlots and all “*abominations of the earth*” (17:5-6). John was astonished at this great deception by which men could claim to believe in and follow Christ, but actually be deceived and lead others into that deception. “**THE ANGEL**” asks John, “Why are you so astonished?” The angel says, “**I WILL TELL THEE THE MYSTERY OF THE WOMAN, AND OF THE BEAST THAT CARRIETH HER, WHICH HATH THE SEVEN HEADS AND TEN HORNS.**” The explanation of “*the mystery of the woman*” comes next. This is much like Paul’s explanation of Satan’s ministers in 2 Corinthians 11:13-15 – “*For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.*” The point is that we as God’s people are not left to ourselves to figure these things out. God reveals them to us by His Word in Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. These things must be understood as they stand in relation to Christ and the Gospel of God’s free and sovereign grace in and by Him. All religions that do not point sinners to the one and only way of salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, eternal life, and glory by the grace of God in Christ are false and damning to men.

(17:8) – “**THE BEAST THAT THOU SAWEST WAS, AND IS NOT**” – This “*beast*” is the same one that arose out of the sea (Rev. 13:1), and represents all ungodly kings, nations, empires, and political systems and organizations that oppose Christ, His church, and His Gospel. This “*beast*” does not want men to worship and serve God in and by the Lord Jesus Christ. He wants people to worship, depend upon, and serve him. “*Was*” refers to the past when this beast was open and evident to all, with no claim of Christianity, as seen in ungodly systems like the Roman Empire. “*And is not*” refers to what appears to be the death of this beast. As stated in the lesson on Revelation 13:3, some scholars point to the death of the Roman emperor Nero as the fulfillment of this. When Nero died, multitudes rejoiced thinking that Rome itself had fallen forever. “**AND SHALL ASCEND OUT OF THE BOTTOMLESS PIT, AND GO INTO PERDITION**” – This refers to the reappearance of the beast to lead men to eternal ruin. Those who point to the death of Nero as the fulfillment of the past believe the succession of Roman emperors after Nero is the fulfillment of this prophecy. Others see the fulfillment of all this in the actual fall of the Roman Empire and its reappearance in the Roman Catholic Church. This is “*the beast*” under the guise of false religion coming in the name of Christianity but denying the truth of Christianity. This deception would be implemented by the great whore, Babylon.

“**AND THEY THAT DWELL ON THE EARTH SHALL WONDER**” – Those who are so connected to this earth, who are content to be tied to this fallen sinful world, will “*wonder*” (stand in awe) at the presence of this “*beast*.” The mystery, the deception of “*the beast*” and the great harlot, will not be revealed to them (2 Thess. 2:7-11). Those who remain deceived are those “**WHOSE NAMES WERE NOT WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF LIFE FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD,**” meaning God’s chosen, redeemed, and regenerated people. “*The book of life*” is God’s purpose of election before the world began (Eph. 1:3-12). It is God’s record of His eternal mind and purpose to save His chosen people in Christ. It is the election of grace (Rom. 11:5-6) which reigns through Christ, based

on the righteousness He worked out and established on the cross (*Rom. 3:24-25*). The only distinction made in the Bible as to the ground of salvation between those who perish in their sins and those who are saved unto eternal life and glory is the sovereign grace and mercy of God in Christ. If we are truly saved, it is not due to our works or our wills, but of the mercy of God (*Rom. 9:14-16; 2 Thess. 2:13-14*).

**“WHEN THEY BEHOLD THE BEAST THAT WAS, AND IS NOT, AND YET IS.”** – Again, this symbolizes the ungodly governments and empires that were prominent, then appeared to be dead, but which reappear in a more deceptive form. **“The beast”** is not yet dead, but his doom is certain.

**(17:9) – “AND HERE IS THE MIND WHICH HATH WISDOM”** – This is **“the mind”** enlightened by the Holy Spirit through the Word of God. **“THE SEVEN HEADS ARE SEVEN MOUNTAINS, ON WHICH THE WOMAN SITTETH”** – **“Seven heads”** are seven kings. **“Seven mountains”** is an allusion to Rome that sat upon seven hills, but it is symbolic of all ungodly governments and empires which, like Rome, hated and persecuted God’s people. The word **“mountains”** means “to rise or rear up.” These seven kingdoms are prominent seats of power which oppose the Lord God of heaven and His Christ. We see an example of this as described in *Acts 4:26-28* – *“The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against His Christ. For of a truth against Thy holy child Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done.”* This ungodly, rebellious spirit is carried forth throughout the last days in these seven ungodly kingdoms. They are prominent areas of rebellion on the earth. **“THE WOMAN,”** who is the great harlot Babylon (false religion), sits upon these seven kingdoms. She derives her support and power from these ungodly, evil governments.

**(17:10) – “AND THERE ARE SEVEN KINGS”** (or kingdoms) as described above. **“FIVE ARE FALLEN”** – In John’s time, five of these kingdoms had already fallen, **“AND ONE IS,”** presently in power in John’s day. There are as many theories identifying these kingdoms as there are so-called scholars. Some identify them from the Old Testament as Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece as the five that **“are fallen.”** The present kingdom then would be the Roman Empire in John’s day. Others identify these as the succession of Roman Emperors leading up to its fall. Still others claim that the number **“seven”** is purely symbolic of the complete universal acceptance of false religion throughout the world in the last days. It has been suggested by some that the one **“NOT YET COME”** might be the collective title for all antichristian governments from the fall of Rome unto the second coming of Christ, existing in that **“SHORT SPACE”** of time called the Gospel Age (*Rev. 11:2, 3; 12:6, 14; 13:5*). We must not, however, become trapped in trying to pin down these details and miss the message of this revelation from God. The **“mind which hath wisdom”** may not know the specific identification of all these particular kings and kingdoms, but we can recognize them by their antichristian, ungodly doctrines, philosophies, and methods (*Gal. 1:6-9; 2 John 9-11*). These kingdoms are inspired by **“the beast.”**

**(17:11)** – The **“BEAST”** and the **“SEVEN”** kings are spoken of collectively. They are together as one. Just as Christ, the King of kings, and His church are one, united in purpose and truth, the **“beast”** and **“seven”** kings or mountains are one, united in purpose and in lies. Collectively they make up **“THE EIGHTH”** kingdom identified by the **“beast”** himself. This may seem confusing, but the point is to show the collective rebellion and evil of the whole unit headed by the **“beast.”** Some identify this **“beast”** (or king) as the papacy, the Roman Catholic Church, whose influence pervades all false Christianity and all antichristian governments – self-sufficiency, self-righteousness, and legal, works religion. **“THAT WAS, AND IS NOT”** refers to what seemed to be the death of this **“beast,”** but it rises again. **“AND GOETH INTO PERDITION”** – It is headed for eternal destruction and death. Its doom is certain.

**(17:12)** – **“THE TEN HORNS”** of the beast are **“TEN KINGS,”** rulers of the world, raised up by Satan for brief periods of time to make war with Christ and His church. They are not mighty emperors, just little presidents, senators, congressmen, governors, legislators, prime ministers, etc., who are given a brief time, **“ONE HOUR,”** of power to oppose the cause of Christ. They are probably the same as the **“kings”** revealed in *Revelation 16:14* who are deceived by the three demonic spirits and who do the bidding of the beast. We cannot be certain as to whether or not these are literally **“ten”** rulers, the number **“ten”** is symbolic of God’s prescribed order of things in the last days as to His judgment upon men for sin. God uses these instruments to bring judgment upon the world for rejecting Christ and the one way of salvation and eternal life by God’s grace in Him (*2 Thess. 2:11-12*). Again, many are hindered because of their attempts to identify these **“ten kings”** as specific countries and governments and miss the wisdom of God in exposing them by their opposition to Christ, the Gospel, and His church. The spirit of antichrist exhibits itself in these **“ten horns,”** and we identify them by their unbelief and hatred of Christ and His truth – the doctrine of His glorious Person as God in human flesh, the doctrine of the power of His redemptive work on the cross to put away the sins of His people and establish righteousness for them by which they are justified before God, and the doctrine of eternal life given to them by the Holy Spirit in the new birth.

**(17:13-14)** – As stated earlier, these evil kings and rulers **“HAVE ONE MIND,”** one single purpose and goal – to **“GIVE THEIR POWER AND STRENGTH UNTO THE BEAST,”** and **“THESE SHALL MAKE WAR WITH THE LAMB”** – Their hatred of Christ, the Lamb of God, is so intense that their one goal in life is to destroy Christ and His church. **“AND THE LAMB SHALL OVERCOME THEM”** – There is no possibility of victory for the beast and his allies over the Lamb. Christ as the Lamb on the cross has already defeated Satan and all who would stand against the kingdom of God – *“Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me. This He said, signifying what death He should die”* (*John 12:31-33*). *“We are more than conquerors THROUGH HIM that loved us”* (*Rom. 8:37*). By His obedience unto death, Christ’s one sacrifice for our sins has already accomplished His great work to *“finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy”* (*Dan. 9:24*). By His *“one offering HE hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified”* (*Heb. 10:14*). The grip of Satan upon His people has been broken, and now all who are IN CHRIST have free access into the

very presence of God. Though Satan and his allies wage war upon the Lamb and upon His church, these enemies cannot touch them and most certainly cannot defeat them. Christ has obtained for us the victory over sin, over Satan, over death, and hell.

**“FOR HE IS LORD OF LORDS, AND KING OF KINGS”** – **“For”** could be translated “because,” as it sets forth the reason that the **“Lamb”** (the Lord Jesus Christ) **“shall overcome them.”** This describes the mediatorial lordship of Christ. As God the eternal Son, the second Person of the Holy Trinity, Christ in Himself has always been Lord of this universe. He is co-equal with the Father and the Holy Spirit in this sovereignty. But as GOD-MAN, He had to earn this position of Lordship over the kingdom of grace (*John 4:34; 17:1-5; 19:30; Acts 2:36*). Consider *John 17:4* where the Lord in His high priestly prayer prayed to His heavenly Father to be glorified based on this fact – *“I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do.”* John Gill described this work as His “obedience to the will of God, the destruction of all spiritual enemies, as sin, Satan, the world, and death, and the redemption and salvation of His people, which was ‘given’ Him to do. He did not take it upon Himself, but being called to it He readily accepted of it. It was appointed, and cut out for Him in the council and covenant of grace. He was thoroughly acquainted with it, and though it was difficult, it was pleasant and delightful to Him; nor did he leave it till He could say it is ‘finished.’ As it was by Himself alone, without the help of man, and is so complete that nothing can be added to it, and so firmly done, that it cannot be unraveled by men and devils. He speaks of it as done because the time was come to finish it, and He was sure of the accomplishment of it.” CHRIST HAS BUILT HIS CHURCH, AND THE GATES OF HELL WILL NOT PREVAIL AGAINST IT (*Matt. 16:18*).

**“AND THEY THAT ARE WITH HIM”** describes all who will be victorious with the Lamb. *They are all sinners saved by the grace of God, all who are washed from all their sins in the blood of the Lamb. They are all who stand IN CHRIST as justified before God based on the righteousness of the Lamb imputed to them. They are described here as “CALLED, AND CHOSEN, AND FAITHFUL.” The “called” here is the same word as in Romans 8:28 – “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are THE CALLED according to His purpose.” This word means “to be summoned” by God. It is the effectual and invincible calling of the Holy Spirit in the new birth when He brings a sinner under the preaching of the Gospel of Christ and empowers this Word to give him spiritual life, bringing him to faith in Christ and true repentance (Rom. 1:16-17; 10:13-17; 2 Thess. 2:13-14; James 1:18). Christ said in John 6:37, “All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me.” Why? Because He redeemed them by His blood, and this is their distinction, their identification. “And Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.” None who come to HIM shall ever be turned away. “Chosen” refers to their election of God before the foundation of the world (Rom. 8:28-30; 9:11-16; Eph. 1:3-6; Col. 3:12; 2 Tim. 1:9; 1 Pet. 1:2). “Called” precedes “chosen” here, not because the effectual calling precedes election, but because election can only be known by calling -- “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall” (2 Pet. 1:10; cf. 1 Thess. 1:4). “Faithful” refers to the fact that all whom God has chosen, redeemed, and called will, by His power and grace, remain “faithful” to Christ (Php. 1:6; 2:12-13; 2 Tim. 1:12; Heb. 7:25; Jude 24-25). All whom Christ saves are saved forever, and they cannot be defeated by Satan or sin or death. They will persevere in the faith by the grace and power of God as they continually look to and rest in Christ (Heb. 12:1-2).*

(17:15-16) – Here is revealed the future destruction of **“THE WHORE”** and all nations, all peoples, that follow her in her false religion. It is very much like the destruction of the tower of *“Babel”* (*Gen. 11*) where all those who sought to be saved by their works were confused and scattered. Here **“THE BEAST”** and the *“ten horns,”* all her supporters and followers, will turn with hatred against **“the whore.”** They will bring her to ruin and leave **“HER DESOLATE AND NAKED.”** They will **“EAT HER FLESH AND BURN HER WITH FIRE.”** What is happening here? God by His judgments of wrath is exposing her for what she is – a liar and deceiver who is instrumental in damning the souls of men. All her pretended beauty (17:4) will be exposed in the fullness of its ugly reality. All that she has promised to her supporters and followers (salvation, blessings eternal life) based on the works and wills of men will be exposed as nothing but lies. Men will be forced to see that what they thought was their salvation, what they judged as good and righteous is in reality evil and unrighteous, even their destruction. God is sweeping away their *“refuge of lies”* (*Isa. 28:16-21*). Like the false preachers in *Matthew 7:21-23* who stood before the Lord and boasted of their works as their righteousness, the same that was said to them will be said to all who follow **“the whore”** of false, self-righteous, works religion – *“And then will I [Christ] profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity”* (*Matt. 7:23*).

So her followers will turn against her and seek to destroy her because of their disappointment and anger. Such horrible events show us our only hope of salvation and eternal life is to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ and have our sin and unrighteousness exposed so that we turn to HIM alone for righteousness before it is too late (*John 3:19-21*). God must turn our natural love for sin and self to hatred so that we *“hate every false way”* (*Psa. 119:104, 128*). He must turn our natural hatred of the light of Christ and HIS way of salvation by God’s free sovereign grace so that love we HIM and HIS grace to save us from our sins. He must bring us to repentance in light of the glory of Christ (*Php. 3:7-9*). He must empty of us of self and fill us with His Spirit so that trust Christ and Him alone for all salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, eternal life, and glory.

(17:17) – These are like the people described in *2 Thessalonians 2* who before this time had been deceived by Satan *“with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness”* (*2 Thess. 2:10-12*). They are like those whom Jeremiah described in his day – *“The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?”* (*Jer. 5:31*). Here is *“the end thereof”* – **“FOR GOD HATH PUT IN THEIR HEARTS TO FULFIL HIS WILL, AND TO AGREE, AND GIVE THEIR KINGDOM UNTO THE BEAST, UNTIL THE WORDS OF GOD SHALL BE FULFILLED.”** This is God’s judgment upon the unbelieving world for their rebellion and pride. We who are saved in and by the Lord Jesus Christ must always be reminded that if it were not for the free sovereign grace of God, we would be in this number of those perishing in unbelief. If God had chosen to leave us to ourselves, we would be no better off than the ones described here in this destruction. We also need to realize that this is God’s justice to sinners who are found in this terrible day without Christ. They have no savior, no surety, no substitute, and no mediator. They have no forgiveness, because forgiveness from God can only come

under His justice by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. They have no righteousness, because without Christ (without having HIS righteousness imputed), there is no righteousness for sinful men. Their sins are charged to their account, therefore, they have no blessing from God. This is why we who are saved by grace pray –

***Philippians 3 – (8) Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, (9) And be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:***

***(10) That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death; (11) If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.***

By exposing the deceptions and lies of the great whore to all her supporters and followers, God turns their love for and devotion to her into hatred and uses them as instruments of His judgment against her. God will ***“put it in their hearts”*** to accomplish His purpose by agreeing to give the beast their power to rule until God’s words are fulfilled. What will be happening here is that when the end finally comes, Satan’s kingdom will be divided against itself. ***“The beast”*** upon whom the harlot sat will become the agent by which God destroys her.

**(17:18)** – The point here is to show that the glories of the city of man are superficial and fleeting. The beauty, celebrity, and wealth of the great prostitute are only illusions. The harlot uses her charms to lead men and women away from the Lamb for salvation, away from the Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, so that men and women become involved in her idolatrous adulteries, her way of salvation by the works and will of men rather than by the sovereign grace of God in Christ. This is why we must never forget that TRUE BEAUTY AND TRUE SALVATION CAN ONLY BE FOUND IN THE PERFECT RIGHTEOUSNESS OF JESUS CHRIST. Our hope of salvation is in Christ Who has come *“to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He might be glorified” (Isa. 61:3).* And what the LORD has planted will prosper and cannot be destroyed (Psa. 1).

Let us, therefore, be watchful and guard this great truth with our lives so that we will not be deceived by the harlot (Rev. 16:15). It is the blood of the Lamb that purifies us from all our sins. His blood alone washes away every imperfection. He has made us into a holy people, without spot or blemish in Him. And for this, Satan, the beast, and the harlot, along with the world which worships them, will hate us and make war against us (John 15:18–16:3). Remember that in Jesus Christ, we will overcome them all, because HE HAS ALREADY OVERCOME THEM!

## LESSON 60 – BABYLON IS FALLEN, IS FALLEN

## Revelation 18:1-5

**(18:1)** – “**AFTER THESE THINGS,**” refers to the vision of the seven vials of God’s final wrath upon earth, and exposing “*Babylon*” as the “*mother of harlots and abominations of the earth*” (17:5).

**“ANOTHER ANGEL COME DOWN FROM HEAVEN”** – This is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, the Messenger of the covenant, coming “*down from heaven,*” where He makes His abode as He sits “*at the right hand of the Majesty on high*” (Heb. 1:3; cf. Col. 3:1), and where He ever lives “*to make intercession*” for us (Heb. 7:25; cf. Rom. 8:34; 1 John 2:1-2). Christ is our Advocate, and we who know Him and are found in Him are justified and secure in Him. His blood cleanses us from all sin, and His righteousness imputed to us, which we have received by God-given faith, gives us a complete and eternal right standing before God. He is described as **“HAVING GREAT POWER AND THE EARTH WAS LIGHTENED WITH HIS GLORY”** – As the one Mediator between God and men, and having accomplished redemption for His people, Christ has been given all power to rule, reign, and dispose of all things for the glory of God in the salvation of His people (Matt. 28:18; John 17:1-4). “*His glory*” is His nature and power to save as “*in HIM dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in HIM, which is the head of all principality and power*” (Col. 2:9-10). We see “*the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*” (2 Cor. 4:6). Here is His return, His second coming, in the end to gather His church and destroy His enemies.

**(18:2)** – “**AND HE CRIED MIGHTILY WITH A STRONG VOICE**” – All people will hear this.

**“SAYING, BABYLON THE GREAT IS FALLEN, IS FALLEN,”** – John is given a glimpse of the future here, when “*Babylon the great*” will come to her appointed end, but this also speaks of her fallen condition as the apostate church (2 Thess. 2:3). The repetition is for emphasis to assure us of no possibility of “*Babylon*” being revived. She is spiritually dead (Rev. 3:1), and she will experience the second death. Remember, “*Babylon*” is “*great*” in the eyes of men only, NOT in the eyes of God (Luke 16:15). She represents all false, man-centered and man-founded religions that teach salvation by the works, wills, and righteousness of men (Rom. 9:31–10:4). “*Babylon*” hates the doctrine of Christ, especially His finished work of redemption to save His people fully, put away their sins, and establish righteousness (Christ’s righteousness imputed) whereby God can be just and justify His people. Many times “*Babylon*” comes in the name of Christ but denies the doctrine of Christ (2 Cor. 11:3-4, 13-15; Gal. 1:6-9; 2 John 9-11). **“AND IS BECOME THE HABITATION OF DEVILS, AND THE HOLD OF EVERY FOUL SPIRIT, AND A CAGE OF EVERY UNCLEAN AND HATEFUL BIRD”** – “*Babylon*” is the dwelling-place of every evil spirit and the source of every false gospel inspired by Satan (Matt. 13:32). She will be exposed for what she is.

**(18:3)** – “**FOR ALL NATIONS HAVE DRUNK OF THE WINE OF THE WRATH OF HER FORNICATION**” – Remember in Revelation 17 “*Babylon the great*” was exposed as the “*mother of harlots and abominations of the earth*” (17:5), and that she sat “*upon many waters*” (17:1). Her evil influence of false doctrine and spiritual “*fornication*” has spread throughout the world. She is allowed by God to dominate the cursed world. This is God’s judgment upon all who refuse to believe and love His truth of salvation by His grace in Christ (2 Thess. 2:10-12; Jer. 51:5-7). **“The wine of the wrath of her fornication”** is the same as in Revelation 17:4. The apostate church does not care for the true Gospel but designs her own gospel – a works gospel that gives man room to glory. Contrast this with the true Gospel ministry (1 Cor. 1:29-31).

**“AND THE KINGS OF THE EARTH HAVE COMMITTED FORNICATION WITH HER”**

– The harlot Babylon has seduced, and will continue to seduce, the kings of the earth with her wealth, power and beauty. She has inspired them to commit spiritual **“fornication”** with her, which is idolatry. She seduces the **“kings of the earth”** with the allure of her supposed wealth, power, and beauty. **“AND THE MERCHANTS OF THE EARTH ARE WAXED RICH THROUGH THE ABUNDANCE OF HER DELICACIES”** – **“Merchants”** symbolize the commerce of the world and are made to grow rich because of Babylon’s power over people. False, self-righteous, works religion has always made merchandise of men’s souls (2 Pet. 2:1-3), and it has always been a powerful device used by evil men to make money. They use legal fears and mercenary promises of reward to get gain *“for filthy lucre’s sake”* (Titus 1:10-11). This is *“covetousness, which is idolatry”* (Col. 3:5-6).

**(18:4) – “AND I HEARD ANOTHER VOICE FROM HEAVEN”** – This is the voice of the Holy Spirit who proceeds forth from the Father and the Son to give life to His people and call them out of the world. **“SAYING, COME OUT HER, MY PEOPLE”** – This declaration that God’s judgment is coming upon Babylon is also intended to serve as a clarion call to all of God’s people to flee from the evil city before it is too late. This, in essence, is a call to faith in Christ and repentance of dead works and idolatry. It is the effectual call of the Holy Spirit in the preaching of the Gospel as *“the power of God unto salvation”* (Rom. 1:16-17; cf. 2 Thess. 2:13-14). He calls them **“MY people,”** as they belong to Him by ELECTING grace, REDEMPTIVE grace, and REGENERATING grace (Rom. 8:31-39; Gal. 4:4-7). God the Father chose them, gave them to Christ, and conditioned all of their salvation upon Him. God the Son incarnate, the Lord Jesus Christ, redeemed them by His blood and established righteousness whereby God could be just and justify them. God the Holy Spirit gives them spiritual life and effectually calls them to Christ for salvation. **“THAT YE BE NOT PARTAKERS OF HER SINS, AND THAT YE RECEIVE NOT OF HER PLAGUES”** – To be in fellowship with Babylon is to take part with her in **“her sins”** of spiritual fornication and idolatry. As the wages of sin is death, to take part with her is take part in her utter destruction. Why perish with Babylon when there is life in the Lord Jesus Christ?

**(18:5) –** Babylon and all who follow her will perish because **“HER SINS HAVE REACHED UNTO HEAVEN, AND GOD HATH REMEMBERED HER INIQUITIES.”** Having no mediator, no substitute or surety to pay her debt to God’s law and justice, having rejected Christ, they stand in themselves and their sins and iniquities are imputed (charged) to them – *“If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?”* (Psa. 130:3). No sinner can stand before God and be accepted without Christ. This is why *“David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin”* (Rom. 4:6-8). Our only hope is to be found in Christ, not having our sins imputed to us, but having His righteousness imputed to us (2 Cor. 5:18-21; Php. 3:7-10). God is just to remember Babylon’s sins and punish her for them, but God says of His people in Christ, *“And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more”* (Heb. 10:17). By His death on the cross, Christ has put away all the sins of all His people so much so that God will not hold them against us or charge them to us. We who are IN HIM are truly *“made the righteousness of God IN HIM”* (2 Cor. 5:21).



**(18:6)** – As God has remembered the iniquities of Babylon, as her sin(s) is imputed (charged, accounted) to her, the next thing spoken of her here is that she shall be judged so as the punishment fits the crime. The voice from heaven cries, **“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.”** Her punishment is *“according to her works”* because she has no substitute, no mediator, no sin-bearing sacrifice, no offering for sin. She has rejected and despised the Lord Jesus Christ, the only way of salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, eternal life, and glory (*John 14:6*). God’s people will not be judged according to their works but as they stand in Christ. Their works will follow them as evidence of their standing in the grace of God in Christ (*Rev. 14:13*). They will stand before God as they washed clean from all their sins in the blood of Christ, clothed in the righteousness of Christ imputed to them and which they received by God-given faith. Christ has suffered for them exactly what their sins deserved. Their works, which are the work of Christ and the operation of the Holy Spirit in them (*Gal. 2:19-21*), will testify of their standing in Christ by the grace and power of God.

The fact that Babylon is to receive *“double unto her double”* does not mean she will be punished more than she deserves or more than she has earned. God is a just God, and He always judges according to truth. This statement is made in view of Babylon’s treatment of Christ’s witnesses here on earth. *“As she rewarded you”* refers to her persecution of the people of God because of her hatred of Christ, His church, and the Gospel (*John 3:19-20; 15:18—16:3*). *“Double”* here refers to the fact that she will receive in the end a *“double”* punishment compared to what she inflicted on true believers. Their punishment was only temporal, and if it was unto death, it was their passage into glory. It is nothing compared to her punishment which will not only be terrible on earth in the end of the world but also doubly terrible as she steps out into eternity.

**(18:7)** – The essence of her sin, her crime, is stated here – **“HOW MUCH SHE HATH GLORIFIED HERSELF.”** Babylon has lifted up herself, in her pride and self-righteousness, to seek to exalt herself in her own works and will, inspiring men to establish their own righteousness before God rather than submitting to Christ as the Lord their righteousness (*Rom. 10:1-4*). We as God’s people glory only IN CHRIST, in the cross, the blood and righteousness of Christ as our only ground of salvation and title to eternal life and glory (*Gal. 6:14*). Any and every sinner who seeks salvation from a holy God based on their works in any way to any degree at any stage is, in essence, glorifying himself. The Lord said, *“And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted”* (*Matt. 23:12*). Babylon **“LIVED DELICIOUSLY,”** which is to live in the luxury, comfort, and peace of the sinful, perishing world. The people of God are persecuted in this world while Babylon and her followers are at peace in this world. Babylon is connected to the world, and the world is her home, her love, and her goal. **“SO MUCH TORMENT AND SORROW GIVE HER”** – Turn her comfort into judgment unto wrath. Turn her joy into sorrow. This is the destiny of all who stand in unbelief of and opposition to Christ and His righteousness for justification before God, His blood for the forgiveness of all sin, His Gospel as the power of God unto salvation.

**“FOR SHE SAITH IN HER HEART, I SIT A QUEEN, AND AM NO WIDOW, AND SHALL SEE NO SORROW”** – This is Babylon’s boast, and it is a lie (*John 8:44*). We can compare this to Isaiah’s prophecy of judgment against the nation Babylon, which was prophetic of the final judgment described here for *“mystery Babylon”* (*Isa. 47*). These lies and false confidence is the expression of *“her*

*heart,”* her innermost being. This is her pride and self-righteousness in which she glories. **“I sit a queen”** – She imagines she is secure and safe in her own power and goodness. She boasts how she is worthy to be worshiped. Compare this with *Isaiah 47:1* in which God commands her *“sit on the ground”* in defeat and humility, for *“there is no throne.”* She boasts that she is **“no widow,”** meaning she lacks nothing and she is not barren. Compare this to *Isaiah 47:8* where she boasts of the same thing. She believes she still has the power to produce many children, many coverts. She sincerely believes that she will **“see no sorrow.”** She promises salvation, peace, safety, and happiness to herself and her followers. She is like the false leaders of Judah in Isaiah’s day who boasted, *“We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves”* (*Isa. 28:15*). The Lord God will lay judgment *“to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place”* (*Isa. 28:17*). All who fail to measure up to His righteousness in Christ will be destroyed (*Isa. 28:18; 47:4*).

**(18:8)** – Babylon is confident of victory, but it is a pipe-dream that will be destroyed in the end. **“HER PLAGUES”** are the wrath of God upon her in full and final judgment against her sins. **“IN ONE DAY”** symbolically describes a very short span of time (*Isa. 47:9*). When God’s final wrath comes to her, without restraint, it will come swiftly, and there will be no opposition as her power will be gone. **“DEATH, AND MOURNING, AND FAMINE”** describes the results of God’s just wrath upon her. There will be no life for her because eternal life can only be found in Christ (*John 14:6*). Without HIM there is only eternal separation from God. There will be no joy in her, for there is eternal joy only in Christ (*Isa. 29:19*). There will be no fullness for her, for the fullness of the Godhead dwells only in Christ, and there is fullness for us only in Him (*Col. 2:9-10*). **“AND SHE SHALL BE UTTERLY BURNED WITH FIRE”** – This describes her utter destruction in the end. **“FOR STRONG IS THE LORD GOD WHO JUDGETH HER”** – The Lord God is omnipotent and righteous in all His judgments. No one can withstand Him or defeat Him. When God judges, He judges sovereignly and powerfully. We see this in His judgment here upon Babylon and all her followers. But thank God that we who believe in Christ see His strength in judgment for our sins on the cross of Calvary as the Lord Jesus Christ went under the just wrath of God for our sins imputed to Him. In Christ, as God is **“strong”** in judgment against our sins, we also see that God is **“strong”** in judgment in our salvation. As He cannot be defeated in His **“strong”** judgment against the wicked, He cannot be defeated in His **“strong”** judgment to save His people from their sins in and by the Lord Jesus Christ.

**(18:9)** – While heaven celebrates Babylon’s fall into ruin, the nations will weep and mourn. For **“THE KINGS OF THE EARTH, WHO HAVE COMMITTED”** spiritual adultery with the harlot will be brought to ruin with her. Her destruction will be their destruction. They looked to her for salvation, blessing, and righteousness, and they discover in this day of wrath that there is no salvation, blessing, or righteousness in her. They had *“lived deliciously with her,”* in the lap of luxury and in the stupor of false security, but they **“SHALL BEWAIL HER, AND LAMENT FOR HER, WHEN THEY SHALL SEE THE SMOKE OF HER BURNING.”** She boasted in herself and promised her followers security, fruitfulness, and *“no sorrow”* (18:7), but she delivers only destruction, barrenness, and misery. This is the state of all sinners without Christ, without the grace of God in Him, without His righteousness imputed and received by God-given faith to stand before God’s judgment and be justified.

**(18:10)** – Whereas once *“the kings of the earth”* embraced this harlot, now they are found **“STANDING AFAR OFF FOR THE FEAR OF HER TORMENT.”** They see now that all who embrace and follow her will be destroyed with her. They cry out **“SAYING, ALAS, ALAS, THAT GREAT CITY BABYLON, THAT MIGHTY CITY!”** They stand in astonishment that all their hope of salvation and blessing, founded upon the religion of Babylon (false religion of salvation by man’s works and will), is now exposed as dead works and idolatry, fruit unto death, and destroyed by God’s judgment. What they before saw as **“GREAT,”** glorious and high, as **“mighty,”** invincible and secure, is now exposed as the sinking sand false religious hopes. **“FOR IN ONE HOUR IS THY JUDGMENT COME”** – Some versions translate this as *“the hour of her judgment is come,”* meaning the exact time appointed by God to judge this great harlot. The Bible teaches us that there is a fixed time for death and judgment – *“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment”* (Heb. 9:27). It could also be, as translated here, that they are amazed at how quickly God’s power and justice brings her down to utter destruction. They spent a lifetime supporting, feeding, following her, and **“in one hour”** her complete destruction is complete.

**(18:11)** – As the *“kings of the earth”* symbolize the governments of this world that feed, support, and follow the harlot, **“THE MERCHANTS OF THE EARTH”** are those who build upon and gain riches from her. They too **“SHALL WEEP AND MOURN OVER HER”** because as she was the means for the accumulation of their riches, now, because of her destruction under God’s judgment, **“NO MAN BUYETH THEIR MERCHANDISE ANY MORE.”** The ones who were deceived by the whore as her evil goods were sold by these **“merchants of the earth”** are no longer deceived by her and no longer buy her bill of goods. As the wrath of God is poured out upon her, they now know that she sells death and damnation.

These *“merchants of the earth”* can certainly include people who spend their whole lives accumulating the material wealth of this world to the point of having no interest in and spending no time in searching out the things of God, of eternity, of salvation, of truth (Matt. 13:22; Luke 12:15-21). God’s Word tells those whom God has blessed in this world with material wealth that they are to use these riches for His glory, the spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and for the good of others in need (1 Tim. 6:17-19). This is why we are commanded by our Lord, *“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also”* (Matt. 6:19-21); and to seek

*“first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33).* However, we will miss the real message of these symbols if we confine them only to those who seek to gain material wealth. These **“merchants of the earth”** are false preachers who seek to profit from their support of the harlot and her spiritual idolatry and fornication. God’s Word exposes all false prophets who use their false, self-righteous, works-oriented religion for gain in the way of *“filthy lucre”* (Titus 1:11; 1 Pet. 5:2), and, even worse, to make *“merchandise”* of the souls of men (2 Pet. 2:3; cf. Matt. 23:15).

**(18:12)** – Here begins a list of what these *“merchants of the world”* were selling. This is a symbolic description of their treasure. As we look at these things, let us rejoice in the contrast between their treasure which is corrupt and fades away and the true eternal treasure that we who believe in Christ possess – the truth of *“the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”* (2 Cor. 4:6). Christ Himself is our treasure, and in Him we have *“an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for”* us (1 Pet. 1:3-4). The Gospel of God’s grace in Christ, His precious blood and infinite righteousness, is our treasure. We have *“the riches of His glory,”* (Eph. 3:16; Col. 1:27), *“the riches of His grace”* (Eph. 2:7), together which are called *“the unsearchable riches of Christ”* (Eph. 3:8). Our riches in Christ will never lose their value, and we will never lose them because of God’s grace and power in HIM.

Again, we must realize that these *“merchants of the earth”* were not simply people who were trying to make a living. They are those who follow the great harlot, Babylon, which is false religion, and gain from their association and support of her in her fornication and idolatry. These *“merchants of the earth,”* therefore, symbolize false preachers. Their **“MERCHANDISE”** consists of doctrine and things that give people a false hope of salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, blessing, and eternal life, but it will all fade away and perish. The things listed here symbolize the corruptible, perishable things of this world on which men by nature place high value. We will go through this list in the next lesson, but the main lesson here is this – ANY AND ALL HOPE OF SALVATION, BLESSING, AND ETERNAL GLORY BASED ON ANYTHING OTHER THAN CHRIST, HIS SHED BLOOD AND RIGHTEOUSNESS IMPUTED, WILL IN THE END PROVE DEADLY AND DAMNING TO THE SOULS OF MEN.

## LESSON 63 – THE MERCHANDISE OF DAMNATION (1)

Revelation 18:12-13

**(18:12)** – As stated in the last lesson, the “*merchants of the earth*” in v. 11 symbolizes false preachers who follow the harlot, Babylon (which is false religion), and gain from their association with and support of her in her fornication and idolatry. They sell false religious refuges to any who fall for their deceptions and buy their bill of goods. Here begins a list of their “**MERCHANDISE**” of death and damnation. It consists of doctrine and things that give people a false hope of salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, blessing, and eternal life, but it will all fade away and perish. These are the corruptible, perishable things of this world on which men by nature place high value and which symbolize any and all hopes of salvation, blessings, and eternal glory based on anything other than Christ, His shed blood and righteousness imputed, and they will in the end prove deadly and damning to the souls of men. We can view them in the following categories:

**(1) “THE MERCHANDISE OF GOLD, AND SILVER, AND PRECIOUS STONES, AND OF PEARLS”** – These are precious metals and gems that make men appear wealthy, and things with which men try to buy happiness, health, security, and reputation. Remember how the harlot herself was described as “*decked with gold and precious stones and pearls*” (*Rev. 17:4*). These are symbolic of how the natural man in his sin and depravity imagines vainly that he himself and his works are good and valuable enough to save him and earn God’s favor and blessings. He sees salvation as something he can buy with his deeds, his attempts to obey the law, his faith, his religious exercises in seeking to work out and establish a righteousness of his own. God’s Word is clear that this is certain death and damnation – “*Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin*” (*Rom. 3:20*). Salvation comes to sinners only by the grace of God in Christ and by what Christ has purchased with His own blood (*Rom. 3:21-26; Eph. 2:8-9; 1 Pet. 1:18-19*). All else dishonors God and denies the value of Christ Himself and the work He alone accomplished on Calvary.

**(2) “AND FINE LINEN, AND PURPLE, AND SILK, AND SCARLET”** – These symbolize the things with which lost, self-righteous people clothe themselves in order to appear righteous before men. “*Fine linen*” symbolizes man’s works-righteousness; “*purple*” symbolizes man’s claim to be children of God, the king; “*silk*” shines and symbolizes man’s claim of glory for himself; and “*scarlet*” is the color of blood symbolizing man’s claim of working righteousness through his own suffering. Christ spoke of the scribes and Pharisees saying, “*Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity*” (*Matt. 23:28*). He spoke a parable of a rich man and a poor man, and he described the rich man as “*clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day*” (*Luke 16:19*). The rich man’s outward appearance hid the depraved state of his evil heart. This is why Christ said, “*except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven*” (*Matt. 5:20*). The “*merchants of the earth*” sell human merit and works-righteousness to all who will buy from them, but this kind of flawed righteousness will not stand in the Judgment (*Matt. 7:21-23*). **WE MUST HAVE THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN CHRIST, THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST IMPUTED TO US, ELSE WE PERISH!** Notice that whenever “*fine linen*” is used in *Revelation* to describe the righteousness of Christ imputed to His people for justification before God, it is described as “*pure and white*” (*Rev. 15:6*), “*clean and white*” (*Rev. 19:8,14*), meaning that Christ’s righteousness in which His people stand is flawless. Those who are saved by God’s grace in Christ stand before God not in the filthy rags of their own works (*Isa. 64:6*) but in the righteousness of Christ imputed to them (*Php. 3:7-10*). They are clothed in the “*purple*” vestment

of Christ the true King; they shine forth in the “silk” of His glory; and they are covered in “scarlet,” which is His precious blood for the complete forgiveness of all their sins.

(3) **“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”** – These are materials used for building. *“Thyine wood”* is a sweet, perfumed, and costly. It is an evergreen from which costly vessels were made. These symbolize man’s efforts to build his place of habitation, comfort, and safety, a place that will shield him and stand in the day of God’s wrath. False preachers try to sell men all the materials of legalistic, works religion with which to build their house, but it will not stand (*Isa. 28:17*). The only house that will stand is the house that built upon the Rock, Christ Jesus (*Matt. 7:24-27*). The only place of peace, comfort, and safety from the wrath of God is the Ark, Christ Jesus (*Gen. 7:19-23*). Man’s works, man’s righteousness is no more than a house of cards. The sinner’s only hiding place is Christ and Him crucified (*Psa. 32:7; 119:114*).

**(18:13) – (4) “AND CINNAMON, AND ODOURS, AND OINTMENTS, AND FRANKINCENSE”** – These were ingredients used in the oil of incense and symbolize here what smells sweet and pleasant to men by nature but which smells foul and odious to God. False preachers sell these ingredients to people claiming that their religious efforts, their attempts at worship, prayer, and service are a sweet savor unto God, but it is all in reality fruit unto death which stinks in God’s nostrils (*Isa. 65:1-7*). Religious works and efforts aimed at attaining or maintaining salvation, aimed at establishing one’s own righteousness before God, dishonor God and deny the glory of Christ (*Isa. 1:10-15*). We must see that the only thing that smells sweet to God, the only one whom He will accept as pleasing, is the *“sweet smelling savour”* of Christ and Him crucified (*Eph. 5:2*). This was typified in Noah’s sacrifice which showed forth the grace and mercy of God towards His people in Christ (*Gen. 8:20-21*). It was typified in the altar of incense which showed forth the intercessory work of Christ our great high priest who intercedes for His people, even in our prayers and in the preaching of the Gospel, to make them a sweet smelling savour unto the Lord (*2 Cor. 2:14-15*).

(5) **“AND WINE, AND OIL”** – These are symbols of joy and healing and life. False preachers promise men these things if they will believe enough, do enough, and give enough. These are religious quacks and hucksters who promise what they cannot give. It is only by the sovereign, invincible work of God the Holy Spirit that believers have the true joy of healing and life in and by the Lord Jesus Christ. Through Christ, the Holy Spirit gives us new hearts, a new spirit, and new life (*Isa. 61:1-3*). He points us to Christ and His blood for all cleansing, and through whose death we have life, joy, righteousness, and peace (*Rom. 14:17; 15:13*).

(6) **“AND FINE FLOUR, AND WHEAT”** – These symbolize what false preachers claim is good for food to nourish men savingly and spiritually but in reality deadly to their souls (*cf. Prov. 4:14-19*). Just as man fell into sin and death by eating (*Gen. 2:17*), man stays in death by eating the poison bread of false religion. Christ is the one true and only Bread of life (*John 6:48-58*). He is the **“wheat”** of life because through His death, we have life (*John 12:24*). The meal offering spoken of in *Leviticus 2:1* was of *“fine flour”* which typified the perfection and purity of Christ, the Godman. We feed upon Him and upon the righteousness He established in His death on the cross. And the true Bread of life is free (*Isa. 55:1-2*).

(7) **“AND BEASTS, AND SHEEP, AND HORSES, AND CHARIOTS”** – These symbolize power as false preachers attempt to show men where they can have power with God. They lead men to believe that power with God is in their so-called good works, sincere prayers, and earnest worship. The Word of God, however, tells us that Christ and Him crucified is both the power and the wisdom of God for the salvation of His people (*Rom. 1:16-17; 1 Cor. 1:23-24*). The power is the power of HIS Person as God in human flesh without sin. The power is the power of His blood to take away all our sins (*1 John 1:7*). The power is the power of the Holy Spirit to give us spiritual life and bring us to conviction – faith in Christ and repentance of dead works and idolatry (*John 16:7-11*). The power is the power of Christ to save and preserve His people unto final glory in heaven (*Jude 24-25*).

(8) **“AND SLAVES, AND SOULS OF MEN”** – The word for **“slaves”** here is literally *“bodies.”* The indication is that the *“merchants of the earth”* (false preachers) are not doing what they do for the glory of God but only to possess control over men, body and soul. **“Souls”** are the spirit of life in men and includes their minds, affections, and wills, their very hearts. This is in line with what Peter called making merchandise of men’s souls (*2 Pet. 2:3*). It is like modern-day false evangelism that seeks to get men down an aisle claiming to “believe in Jesus,” but with no reality in the truth of the Gospel of God’s grace in the Lord Jesus Christ. They make men legal **“slaves”** bound up in self-righteous religion while claiming to believe in salvation by God’s grace (*Gal. 1:6-9*). They seek to possess men’s **“souls”** and count them among their converts, which they claim is an indication of their success and the validity of what they preach.

**(18:14) – “AND THE FRUITS THAT THY SOUL LUSTED AFTER ARE DEPARTED FROM THEE”** – They lust after the souls of men, and they believe these souls are truly converted to the Lord, but, like the Pharisees of old, they are deceived (*Matt. 23:15*). Christ said in His sermon on the mount there would be false preachers, wolves in sheep’s clothing (*Matt. 7:15*), and He said we would know these

false preachers “*by their fruits*” (Matt. 7:16). These “**fruits**” here are the same, people who follow these false preachers, these “*merchants of the earth*,” and who claim to believe in Christ but who remain lost in their sins. At the time of Christ’s second coming, the false preachers will see that these “**fruits**” which they “*lusted after*” are gone – “**AND ALL THINGS WHICH WERE DAINTY AND GOODLY (THINGS THAT APPEARED TO BE SUMPTUOUS AND GOOD) ARE DEPARTED FROM THEE, AND THOU SHALT FIND THEM NO MORE AT ALL.**” No sinner is saved under the preaching of a false gospel. It is only the fruits of God’s grace and power in Christ, sinners saved by the grace of God, who are given life by the Holy Spirit under the preaching of the Gospel and brought to faith in Christ, and who are filled with the fruit of the Holy Spirit, who will remain (Rom. 1:16-17).

**(18:15-16)** – Like the “*kings of the earth*” who supported the harlot, Babylon, the “**MERCHANTS OF THESE THINGS, WHICH WERE MADE RICH BY HER, SHALL STAND AFAR OFF FOR THE FEAR OF HER TORMENT.**” They will try to disassociate themselves from her because as she is now exposed for what she is, and seeing the destruction of God’s wrath upon her, they will attempt to avoid that same destruction upon themselves. It will be to no avail because God’s wrath cannot be avoided simply by distancing oneself from false religion. The only way sinners can be safe from God’s just wrath is by fleeing to Christ, the only refuge and hiding place from God’s wrath.

“**WEeping AND WAILING**” – These “*merchants*” will be found crying and mourning the destruction of the harlot. This shows their lack of repentance and the fact that they have no concern for God’s glory. They will cry, “**ALAS, ALAS, (“woe, woe”) THAT GREAT CITY, THAT WAS CLOTHED IN FINE LINEN, AND PURPLE, AND SCARLET, AND DECKED WITH GOLD, AND PRECIOUS STONES, AND PEARLS!**” Those who were made rich by the harlot and who also participated in her idolatry are now terrified by her destruction. They not only cry in sorrow over the loss of the wealth, but they lament the sight of her burning in the fires of God’s wrath. As the harlot has been consumed, so will they be. Since God’s judgment is just, all those who participated in the fornication and idolatry of the harlot must now watch all that they have worked to attain go up in the flames, flames which also foreshadow the judgment that awaits all those whose hands are covered in blood of men and who have exploited God’s people in order to increase ill-gotten gains. Again, this is a great and solemn reminder to us that our only hope of salvation, of escaping the just wrath of God, is by Jesus Christ and Him crucified. We trust our risen Savior and Lord because His blood cleanses us from all our sins, and His righteousness imputed justifies us before God.



**(18:17) – “FOR IN ONE HOUR SO GREAT RICHES IS COME TO NOUGHT”** – As they watch the destruction of Babylon, all who were in fellowship with and who followed and supported her in her fornication and idolatry are amazed at how quickly all her *“great riches”* burn up and come to nothing. **“AND EVERY SHIPMASTER, AND ALL THE COMPANY IN SHIPS, AND SAILORS, AND AS MANY AS TRADE BY SEA, STOOD AFAR OFF, AND CRIED WHEN THEY SAW THE SMOKE OF HER BURNING”** – These represents all who buy and distribute the merchandise of damnation. *“Shipmaster”* means “governor, steerman, or pilot,” and symbolizes those in positions of authority, who oversee the delivery of the merchandise of damnation to the nations. *“All the company”* means “the coasters” and refers to those who sail from coast to coast keeping within sight of land never venture too far out to sea. This could possibly symbolize men and women who just coast along in religion, never really seeking the Lord and His Word, never truly considering what they hear or what they claim to believe. They settle for a mere profession of faith upon which they occasionally act. It is interesting in light of this to note the warning given us in *Hebrews 2:1* – *“Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.”* *“Let them slip”* here is literally “drift on by” without getting and keeping a firm grip on the Gospel of God’s grace in Christ. In other words, do not be a coaster and miss Christ. *“Sailors”* means “boatman, seaman” and symbolize those who diligently work for the *“shipmaster”* to deliver the merchandise of damnation to the nations. **“AND AS MANY AS TRADE BY SEA”** – These are all the evil workers of false religion, deceived by the beast and the harlot, all which stand in opposition to Christ and the Gospel of God’s grace in Him. They **“STOOD AFAR OFF, AND CRIED WHEN THEY SAW THE SMOKE OF HER BURNING”** – They distance themselves from the harlot because they do not want to be destroyed with her, but they mourn over her death. There is no repentance here. There is only sorrow for their great loss of all their work and their riches.

**(18:18)** – They look in amazement and sorrow as all that they worked for and hoped goes up in the flames of God’s just wrath. Man’s religion, man’s philosophies, man’s works, and man’s righteousness will do him no good in this day of wrath. Without Christ, there is nothing for sinful man but death and destruction. Man’s works and righteousness will not stand the judgment of God (*Acts 17:31*). Only Christ’s blood and righteousness imputed will shield us from God’s wrath. **“SAYING, WHAT CITY IS LIKE UNTO THIS GREAT CITY!”** – This expresses their utter horror at witnessing the destruction of the city they thought was so great and indestructible.

**(18:19) – “AND THEY CAST DUST ON THEIR HEADS, AND CRIED, WEEPING AND WAILING, SAYING, ALAS, ALAS, THAT GREAT CITY, WHEREIN WERE MADE RICH ALL THAT HAD SHIPS IN THE SEA BY REASON OF HER COSTLINESS”** – Here is a description of astonishment and sorrow over the destruction of Babylon. They spent so much time and effort in making her and themselves rich. She costs them much as they sought to build her up and make her their refuge, but **“IN ONE HOUR IS SHE MADE DESOLATE”** – That which took them a lifetime to build is destroyed in a very, very short period of time.

**(18:20)** – The destruction of Babylon, which is such a source of sorrow and horror for the kings and merchants of the earth, is a cause of great rejoicing for the people of God, the church of the Lord Jesus

Christ, as symbolized by the **“HOLY APOSTLES AND PROPHETS.”** As Babylon spent much time and effort in building herself up with the riches of ungodly governments and false religion, she also spent much time and effort in persecuting the true church. These **“*holy apostles and prophets*”** are men whom God called and gifted to preach His Word of grace in Christ by which He called out and established His church (*Eph. 2:19-22*). **“FOR GOD HATH AVENGED YOU ON HER”** – Babylon’s destruction is not only God’s just wrath against her sin but also God’s just vengeance upon her for her evil and cruel treatment of the witnesses of Christ (*Rom. 12:19*). Their testimony of Christ as the one and only true salvation from sin and the wrath of God, the only Ark of safety from the flood of God’s wrath, was an affront to the harlot served by all the kings and merchants of the earth.

**(18:21)** – Just as the prophet Jeremiah took a stone and bound it to his book after he had read it and cast it into the river Euphrates as a sign of the destruction of old Babylon (*Jer. 51:63-64*), this action by this agent of God’s wrath signifies the total destruction of the harlot, spiritual Babylon – **“THUS WITH VIOLENCE SHALL THAT GREAT CITY BABYLON BE THROWN DOWN, AND SHALL BE FOUND NO MORE AT ALL.”** Babylon will never rise again.

**(18:22)** – The festivals and holidays of Babylon, religious or otherwise, will cease to be held. There will be no more joy, no more celebrations of idolatry and spiritual fornication. All false religious worship and will cease. Also, all skilled laborers that work for the harlot, especially those who crafted religious artifacts and idols, **“SHALL NOT BE FOUND”** any more. **“THE SOUND OF A MILLSTONE SHALL BE HEARD NO MORE AT ALL IN THEE”** – This indicates that the grinding of corn to make bread will cease, because there will be a great drought. There will be no more food upon which Babylon can feed.

**(18:23)** – Whatever **“LIGHT”** Babylon did have, such as the light of conscience and nature, and the light of God’s Word which she either ignored or abused, will be gone. There will be no more marriage unions and no more children. **“FOR THY MERCHANTS WERE THE GREAT MEN OF THE EARTH”** – The **“*merchants*”** of Babylon exalted themselves, sought to be exalted by others, and lusted after the fame and honor of this world, not the glory of God in Christ and in the salvation of sinners by His grace. **“FOR BY THY SORCERIES WERE ALL NATIONS DECEIVED”** – The methods of deception were the religious works that impress men and turn them even more away from Christ (*2 Thess. 2:9-11*).

**(18:24)** – The final reason given for her destruction is her murderous treatment of God’s **“PROPHETS, AND OF SAINTS, AND OF ALL THAT WERE SLAIN UPON THE EARTH.”** They persecuted and killed the witnesses of Christ because they hate the light of Christ which exposed their false religious refuge (*John 3:19-20; 15:18–16:3*). This sin, as well as all their sins, will be accounted to them as they have no substitute, no mediator, and no savior. Christ is the only hope of salvation for sinners. It is His substitutionary work on the cross in the shedding of His precious blood, as He bore the sins of God’s elect in His own body on the tree, which provides the complete payment for all their sins. To reject Him is to reject His redemptive work and leave the rejecter with no hope of salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, and eternal life. Christ is the only ship of deliverance for sinners.

**(19:1)** – This chapter opens, as does the previous chapter, with the sound of rejoicing in heaven at the news of the destruction of Babylon the Great, who, for so long, had persecuted the suffering church upon the earth. But this time heaven rejoices not only because of the harlot's final destruction, but because the long anticipated marriage of the Lamb has now come (19:7). The Messiah and Redeemer of God's people is ready to take His bride, which is His church for whom He died. In fact, it is important to notice that some five times in the first six verses of what follows, we hear "hallelujahs" coming from the company in heaven, which includes not only the angels, but all the saints throughout all of redemptive history. They are those who have been washed clean from all their sins in the blood of Christ and who stand before God in the righteousness of Christ imputed. They are those who have been born again by the Spirit and who are kept by the power of God in faith. They are all who have died in Christ, believing God's promise to save sinners and longing for this great day to arrive. They cry "**ALLELUIA**" which means "praise to the Lord." They recognize that "**SALVATION, AND GLORY, AND HONOUR, AND POWER**" belong only "**UNTO THE LORD OUR GOD.**" They attribute no glory or power to themselves. Salvation is of the Lord, and it comes to sinners by God's grace through Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

**(19:2-3)** – They praise God for justice in all His ways. God's judgment of "**THE GREAT WHORE**" is "**TRUE AND RIGHTEOUS**" against the specific sins of spiritual "**FORNICATION**" (idolatry) and persecution and murder of God's "**SERVANTS.**" These crimes of hatred and unbelief deserve the complete wrath of God. God has now "**AVENGED THE BLOOD OF**" all who suffered for righteousness' sake. His vengeance is just, and the punishment fits the crime. "**AND HER SMOKE ROSE UP FOR EVER AND EVER**" – This expresses Babylon's final ruin. She will not rise again.

John describes a great multitude singing God's praises. This is the same multitude described earlier in *Revelation 7:9* as being so large that no one could count them. They come from every nation. All of them have come out of great tribulation, which is the entire period of time between the first coming and second coming of Christ. These are the same people who, in *Revelation 6:10*, "*How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?*" Although they have suffered greatly on earth, the time has now come for them to celebrate. God has judged the earth and avenged them!

**(19:4)** – The sight of Babylon going up in smoke not only inspires shouts of praise to God from the multitude of all saints but also from the court of witness – "**THE FOUR AND TWENTY ELDER AND THE FOUR BEASTS FELL DOWN AND WORSHIPPED GOD THAT SAT ON THE THRONE, SAYING, AMEN; ALLELUIA.**" As we have seen before (*cf. Rev. 4*), these represent the collective body of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ and the ministers of the Gospel. They are revealed separately here not because of some hierarchy in heaven, but to show that the authority and foundation of the church is the witness of Christ in the Gospel throughout the earth. The worship and rejoicing of the multitude is grounded upon the glory of God in Christ as supported by the witness of His Word in Christ. They worship "**GOD THAT SAT ON THE THRONE**" – This is the sovereignty, glory, and majesty of God as revealed in the glorious Person and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ as Mediator of the everlasting covenant of grace.

**(19:5)** – Here, another voice is heard directing the multitude of redeemed saints to worship God Who has delivered His people from the hands of all their enemies. This is directed towards all of God’s bondservants who serve Him willingly from the heart out of grace, gratitude, and love for Christ. It is to those who **“FEAR HIM”** with the reverence and respect of faith that trusts God and glorifies Him as He revealed Himself in Christ. **“BOTH SMALL AND GREAT”** does not describe various degrees of station and standing in heaven for believers. All who are saved by God’s grace in Christ are equally saved, equally forgiven, equally righteous, and equally entitled to heaven’s blessings and glory, all based on the blood and righteousness of Christ. God’s sovereign grace is the great equalizer of the brethren. Here on earth we cannot get beyond the sight of our distinctions that separate us, but in heaven all these distinctions will be totally removed. This is a declaration of such. All of us who revere and worship God in Christ, all worshipping saints, **“small and great,”** from all intellectual abilities, all social strata, all levels of spiritual progress, all distinctions and ranks of all kinds are completely transcended here – *“For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”* (Gal. 3:26-28)

**(19:6)** – **“AND I HEARD AS IT WERE THE VOICE OF A GREAT MULTITUDE”** – This indicates the combined chorus of all the elect of God in Christ singing His praises. This is worship in spirit and in truth. **“AND AS THE VOICE OF MANY WATERS”** – The same symbol is used of the voice of Christ Himself in *Revelation 1:15*. The saints of God have always been justified by the righteousness of God in Christ imputed to them. Now, they are in complete harmony with Christ in every way having been made perfectly conformed to His image. His voice and their voice is the same as it is the refreshing Word of God. **“AND AS THE VOICE OF MIGHTY THUNDERINGS”** – Their praise rings forth loudly and powerfully with the authority of God Himself. The whole universe will hear their praises to Christ for the glory of His grace. **“SAYING, ALLELUIA: FOR THE LORD GOD OMNIPOTENT REIGNETH”** – They express that upon the fall of Babylon, the Lord now reigns and rules over everything in the way of grace and justice. This does not mean that God has not ruled over all prior to this moment. God has always sovereignly ruled over this universe and worked all things according to His sovereign rule and will. But until this moment, God’s sovereign rule has been accompanied with His long-suffering towards the wicked, even tolerating evil in the actions of the dragon, the beast, the false prophet, and the harlot persecuting His people. Here, God’s wrath is now complete, and the dragon, the beast, the false prophet, and the harlot are completely destroyed. God’s rule now is one of complete and total compliance with His righteousness and glory. Here God’s rule is seen in its culmination as all enemies of Christ and His church are destroyed. The kingdom which came in the Lord Jesus Christ and was established by Him, in His redemptive work on the cross in putting away sin and establishing righteousness for His people, is now complete.

**(19:7) – “LET US BE GLAD AND REJOICE, AND GIVE HONOUR TO HIM”** – Here is great reason for the children of God, the redeemed of the Lord, to be happy and to have joy in giving due honor to the Lord God of heaven. **“FOR THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB IS COME”** – The **“Lamb”** is none other than our Lord and Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, the same who is described by John the Baptist as *“the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world”* (John 1:29), the chosen of God all over this world. He is worshipped by *“the four beasts and four and twenty elders”* (Rev. 5:8), and the whole multitude of the redeemed cried, *“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing”* (Rev. 5:12), and worshipped *“the Lamb for ever and ever”* (Rev. 5:13; cf. 7:9-17). He is the Lamb who opened the seals of judgment and brought wrath down upon His enemies (Rev. 6:1,16). He is the one by whose blood the children of God turn back the attacks of Satan (Rev. 12:11). He is the one who was purposed by God from the foundation of the world to be slain as the Substitute and Surety of His people (Rev. 13:8), and who was typified and pictured in all the lambs slaughtered in the Old Testament to show forth His great work of redemption for the sins of His people. This is Christ in His mediatorial glory as the Savior, Protector, and Preserve of His bride.

**“AND HIS WIFE HATH MADE HERSELF READY”** – **“His wife”** is the church, the elect of God and redeemed of the Lord. They were betrothed to Christ before the foundation of the world when God the Father chose them in sovereign electing grace and gave them to Him (Eph. 1:3-4; 2 Thess. 2:13-14; 2 Tim. 2:10; 1 Pet. 1:1-2). Christ paid the dowry for His bride when He redeemed her with His own precious blood (Acts 20:28; Gal. 3:13; 1 Pet. 1:18; Rev. 5:9). Hereby He removed all legal obstacles in the way of the marriage union by cleansing her of all her sins and by establishing a righteousness whereby God the Father is just to justify her. This righteousness imputed (charged) to her is symbolized in the Bible as her wedding garment (Isa. 61:10-11; Rev. 19:8). The elect are espoused to Christ at their conversion, when God the Holy Spirit applies all the blessings of salvation and eternal life that Christ secured for them at Calvary within them in the new birth (Rom. 7:4; 2 Cor. 11:2). Here is the wedding feast and open, public marriage of Christ and His church before the whole universe. She has **“made herself ready”** by God-given faith whereby she has put on Christ and the wedding garment of righteousness which He made for her (Gal. 3:27; Rev. 16:15). By the power of God’s grace she believes in, love, follows, rests in, and takes the name of her Bridegroom (Jer. 23:5-6; 33:15-16). Her readiness is not her own works, but her standing and state in Christ, as well as her heart is drawn to Him who is her Husband and Head.

It is very important that we understand that the true people of God, the ones included in the true church (the Bride of Christ) make themselves **“ready”** for this **“marriage”** feast not by trying to be better people but by trusting in Christ for all salvation, even the forgiveness of sin, righteousness, eternal life, and glory. This does not mean that true believers should not strive to be better people in their character and conduct. All true believers should do their best to fight all sin, to obey God’s Word, to be conformed to Christ and not to the world, to cultivate the fruit of the Spirit in their lives. All believers should make the most sincere and concerted efforts to be better Christians and better people in general. But this is not how the Bride of Christ makes **“herself ready”** for **“the marriage of the Lamb.”** Her efforts to be better do not qualify her to be married to Christ. It is the grace of God based on the merits of Christ’s

righteousness imputed to her that qualifies her for this marriage. And this is evidenced by her faith in and love for Christ, the Bridegroom.

**(19:8)** – The bride of Christ is **“ARRAYED IN FINE LINEN, CLEAN AND WHITE,”** and this garment is identified here as **“THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF SAINTS.”** Notice this **“fine linen”** here is different from the **“fine linen”** sold by the **“merchants of the earth”** in service to the harlot (*Rev. 19:11-12*). The **“fine linen”** sold by the **“merchants of the earth”** represent the righteousness of men which sinful, self-righteous men attempt to gain by their works, and this is never accepted by God (*Rom. 3:19-20*). It always falls short of the standard of righteousness found only in Christ (*Acts 17:31*). The **“fine linen”** here is **“clean and white,”** as it represents the righteousness of God in and by the Lord Jesus Christ (*Rom. 1:16-17; 3:21-26; 10:4; 2 Cor. 5:21; Php. 3:9; 2 Pet. 1:1*). This is the righteousness God imputes (charges) to the account of all His chosen people (*Psa. 32:1-2; Rom. 4:6-8*). It is the righteousness that all of God’s people submit to and receive by God-given faith when in the new birth they are brought by God to believe in Christ and repent of dead works and idolatry. Notice how this holy garment is **“GRANTED”** to her. It is freely given to her by God’s grace in Christ, not earned or deserved. Many claim this **“righteousness of saints”** is the works of God’s people done for Him, but this could not be. It is true that the people of God are to be dedicated to Him in obedience and works of faith, but their obedience and works could not equal the righteousness of God required in the law for the salvation of His people. **“Saints”** here describes sinners saved by the grace of God and made righteous in Christ and Him alone as described by Paul in *Ephesians 5:25-33*.

**(19:9)** – Some claim that this describes other believers distinct from the bride, but this is not so. This is simply a statement of blessing (beatitude) showing how God is gracious and merciful to all who **“ARE CALLED UNTO THE MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB.”** John is told to **“WRITE”** this down because it is an effectual, power, and invincible call of the Holy Spirit to all who hear the Gospel of God’s grace in Christ as **“the power of God unto salvation”** (*Rom. 1:16*). It is a summons to faith in Christ. This statement emphasizes to all who would read this book that there is no other savior but Christ, no other righteousness but His for us to stand before God and be **“BLESSED”** with salvation and all the blessings of God in Christ. **“AND HE SAITH UNTO ME, THESE ARE THE TRUE SAYINGS OF GOD”** – Being true, there is no doubt they are of God, and being of God, it is certain they are true; for He is the God of truth, and cannot lie, and therefore may be depended upon.

**(19:10)** – Being overwhelmed by the glory of this pronouncement, John instinctively, without thinking, **“FELL AT HIS FEET TO WORSHIP HIM,”** but he is told he must not worship the messenger. He must worship God alone. This messenger was a servant of the same Lord as John whom he identifies as his **“FELLOWSERVANT”** and one of the **“BRETHREN”** who has **“THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS”** in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead (*Col. 2:9-10*). **“WORSHIP GOD”** is the testimony of all God’s true servants, and the only way sinners can **“worship God”** acceptably is through the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. **“FOR THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS IS THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY”** – The Gospel is the spirit, life, and soul of the prophecy of this book and the whole Bible. As all the prophets bore witness to Christ, so does the Spirit of God in this testimony (*John 16:13-15*). God the Holy Spirit points sinners to Christ as the only One to be worshipped.

**(19:11) – “AND I SAW HEAVEN OPENED”** – Here is further revelation from Christ concerning His second coming. As we saw in the last lesson how Christ, the Lamb of God, will come again to take His bride, the church, unto Himself into eternity in that glorious marriage union, He is also coming to judge the wicked, unbelieving world in righteousness. He came the first time to open the way of heaven, salvation, for us who are God’s elect by the shedding of His own precious blood unto death for our sin imputed to Him. In that first coming He judged and made war with sin, Satan, and the curse of the law, and defeated all that would bar our way to God. In and by His righteousness imputed to us, we see **“HEAVEN OPENED”** for us by the *“the Captain of our salvation”* (Heb. 2:10). As He came the first time as a babe born in a manger, here, Christ comes the second time riding **“A WHITE HORSE,”** which symbolizes the purity of His power, truth, and justice. It also symbolizes His victory over all His enemies.

He is identified here as **“FAITHFUL AND TRUE.”** As in His first coming He was *“Faithful and True”* to His covenant promises in the redemption of His church, His bride, wherein He gave Himself as our Substitute and Surety in the fulfillment of all the conditions of our salvation, here in His second coming He is **“Faithful and True”** to execute righteous judgment over all His enemies. Faithfulness and truth are part of His holy nature and His glorious name. **“AND IN RIGHTEOUSNESS HE DOTHTH JUDGE AND MAKE WAR”** – He judges in *“righteousness”* (cf. Acts 17:31). When He makes war against His enemies, He does so in *“righteousness.”* His cause is always *“righteousness.”* The reason that we who are IN HIM do not have to fear this day of judgment and war is because we stand IN HIM having His *“righteousness”* imputed to us. We have already been judged and punished for all our sins in the Person of Christ our Substitute and Surety (Php. 3:8-10; 1 John 4:17). He will make war and defeat all who have by their unbelief and sin declared war on God.

**(19:12) – “HIS EYES WERE AS A FLAME OF FIRE”** – This speaks of His omniscient, all-seeing eyes by which He knows and judges all the sins of all who are found without His soul-cleansing blood and righteousness imputed (Heb. 4:12-13; 12:25-29). No one will escape the judgment of God. **“AND ON HIS HEAD WERE MANY CROWNS”** – These *“crowns”* indicate the multitude of all His many victories and the extent of His royal dominion which reaches throughout this universe. Christ has defeated and will defeat all His enemies, and His rule and dominion will be manifested over all creation. **“AND HE HAD A NAME WRITTEN, THAT NO MAN KNEW, BUT HE HIMSELF”** – Some believe this refers to the unknown depths of His Divine essence and perfections to which we as human beings cannot attain. There is a depth to His glory and majesty that can never be fully comprehended by the human mind, not even the regenerate mind. But this could refer to the fact that His enemies upon whom His wrath falls could not know His name as Savior, Redeemer, Mediator. The Lord said, as recorded in Matthew 11:27, *“All things are delivered unto Me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and He to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.”* This *“name written”* can only be known as Christ Himself reveals it to His people in the power of the Holy Spirit by Whom we call upon His name in salvation. The ones upon whom God’s wrath falls will never know this name savingly, but they will bow to the Lord of glory as they are forced into submission to His judgment against their sin (Php. 2:9-11).

**(19:13) – “AND HE WAS CLOTHED WITH A VESTURE DIPPED IN BLOOD”** – This speaks of His redemptive glory in the salvation of His people through His obedience unto death as their Substitute and Surety. The robe of righteousness which is imputed to His bride (the church) is that which He accomplished by shedding His precious blood for the sins of His church (*Rom. 3:21-25*). This is the ground upon which He rules the whole universe as the Lord of glory. Here He is coming to shed the blood of His enemies in vindication His honor and glory and in vindication of His people (*Isa. 63:1-3*). **“AND HIS NAME IS CALLED THE WORD OF GOD”** – This is the name that belongs exclusively to the Lord Jesus Christ as the revelation of God to His people and as the redeemer of His people (*John 1:1-14*). There is no doubt that the one spoken of here is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.

**(19:14) – “AND THE ARMIES WHICH WERE IN HEAVEN FOLLOWED HIM UPON WHITE HORSES”** – This the church, the Lord’s redeemed, following Him, for as we were one with Him in His death, burial, and resurrection, we are one with Him in His victory over all enemies. **“CLOTHED IN FINE LINEN, WHITE AND CLEAN”** – All of us who are Christ’s people have His righteousness imputed, charged, to them so that we stand holy, pure, and invincible against all that would come against us. We are what we are by the grace of God. We have been *“made the righteousness of God IN HIM”* because He took our sins upon Himself, suffered unto death, and defeated the curse of the law against us (*2 Cor. 5:21*). Our robes have been washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb.

**(19:15) – “AND OUT OF HIS MOUTH GOETH A SHARP SWORD”** – This is the sovereign, powerful Word of God in Christ. No one can stand against or overcome His Word. **“THAT WITH IT HE SHOULD SMITE THE NATIONS”** – Christ will destroy the ungodly **“nations”** with the power and authority of His Word of righteousness. The same Gospel that God uses as *“the power of God”* for His people as He reveals in Christ the *“righteousness of God”* for our salvation (*Rom. 1:16-17*), He will use as a judgment unto wrath for all who are found in that day without Christ (*Rom. 2:16; Acts 17:31*). **“AND HE SHALL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON”** – This is taken from *Psalms 2:9* – *“Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.”* They will be brought down to humility and submission by the power of His Word. **“AND HE TREADETH THE WINEPRESS OF THE FIERCENESS AND WRATH OF ALMIGHTY GOD”** – (*cp. Rev. 14:19-20; Isa. 63:3,6*) – Christ will trample down all His enemies in the severity of God’s just wrath against all sin and unrighteousness. This is another great testimony to the sinner’s need of Christ as Substitute and Surety, as One to take upon Himself in our place, the severity of God’s just wrath to save us from our sins. Thank God for His free and sovereign grace!

**(19:16) – “HIS VESTURE”** refers to the royal robe of Christ, the same which was *“dipped in blood”* (*19:13*). This is the robe He wears as the victorious Redeemer of all His people and the mighty conqueror of all His enemies. It was on the **“HIS THIGH”** where warriors wore their sword and kept it ready to fight (*Psalms 45:1-5*). **“His thigh”** symbolizes His almighty, sovereign power to accomplish all His work and enforce His rule over all things. **“KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS”** is His name (*1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 17:14*). There is no king or lord above Him who is our salvation and eternal life.



**(19:17)** – Here is “**AN ANGEL,**” a messenger from God “**STANDING IN THE SUN.**” This “*angel*” could be one of the elect angels or a minister of Christ, the same as described in *Revelation 14:1-5*. He abides in the light of the glory of the victorious Christ, the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ Who is “*the Sun of righteousness*” (*Mal. 4:2*). As the Savior of His people, He has come “*with healing in His wings*” (*Mal. 4:2*), but as the righteous Conqueror, He now comes to bring about the final defeat and destruction of His enemies. “**AND HE CRIED WITH A LOUD VOICE**” – His voice will be heard throughout the world, far and near. There will be no place where he will not be heard, and this shows that there will be no place for the wicked to hide from the judgment of Christ against all sin and unrighteousness.

“**SAYING TO ALL THE FOWLS THAT FLY IN THE MIDST OF HEAVEN**” – In the Bible these are usually birds of prey that feed on the dead and symbolize the devil, his angels, and his ministers (*Matt. 13:4,32; Mark 4:4,32; Luke 8:5; 13:9*). They fly in mid-heaven which is the sky. This reference could be taken from Ezekiel’s prophecy as recorded in *Ezekiel 39:17-20* where these are part of God’s wrath against His enemies. “**COME AND GATHER YOURSELVES TOGETHER UNTO THE SUPPER OF THE GREAT GOD**” – THIS “**SUPPER**” is the end of the enemies of Christ and the church.

**(19:18)** – The feast is described here. The angel uses all these as symbolic and representative of all the enemies of Christ and His church. These are all the enemies of Christ who will fall in the battle of Armageddon (*Rev. 16:14; 19:19*). The birds of prey will feast on “**THE FLESH**” of the highest and the lowest of men who stood as enemies of Christ and His church.

**(19:19)** – As stated, this is another description of the final battle, Armageddon, in which all the enemies of Christ will gather together to attempt to defeat Him. Also, as stated, we know all their attempts throughout history have been a failure, and so will this final battle. They will gather “**TOGETHER TO MAKE WAR AGAINST HIM THAT SAT ON THE HORSE, AND AGAINST HIS ARMY**” – Their enemy is Christ and the church, and they will express their hatred and opposition as they have always done (*John 15:18—16:3*). This is not a physical battle or physical gathering of all nations in one geographical area of the world. First of all, the world does not expect the second coming of Christ (*cf. Matt. 24:37ff.; Luke 17:26ff.*). Christ will come upon the world like a “*thief in the night*” (*1 Thess. 5:2*). Secondly, this gathering is the world’s union of unbelief in opposition to Christ (*Acts 4:26-28*) and is fulfilled in the last days by a great apostasy from the Gospel truth (*Matt. 24:24ff.; 2 Thess. 2:1-12*). We might note also again that the “*army*” of Christ (His church) carries no physical weapons (*2 Cor. 10:3-5*). It is stated that they come to battle only as they are “*clothed in fine linen white and clean*” (*Rev. 19:8,14; cf. 1:5; 7:14; 12:11; 16:15*). Our only weapon and defense against our enemies is the shed blood and imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ in Whom we stand sure, steadfast, and safe (*Php. 3:8-11*).

**(19:20)** – “**AND THE BEAST WAS TAKEN**” – As soon as the battle has begun, the leader in this futile onslaught is brought down, subdued, and carried away captive. The sure defeat of Satan and “**the beast**” has already been stated in *Revelation 13:10*. This is the work of Christ in His power to destroy “**the beast**” with the breath of His mouth and the brightness of his coming (*2 Thess. 2:8*). “**AND WITH HIM THE FALSE PROPHET**” – This is the second beast (*Rev. 13:11-14*) who is none other than antichrist. This the deceptive religious element of Satan’s usurped and temporary rule over the fallen world (*2 Cor.*

4:3-4). Notice the mention again of his methods – **“THAT WROUGHT MIRACLES BEFORE HIM, WITH WHICH HE DECEIVED THEM THAT HAD RECEIVED THE MARK OF THE BEAST, AND THEM THAT WORSHIPPED HIS IMAGE.”** This describes religious deceptions that come in the name of Christ and the power of God but which deny the truth of the Gospel of salvation by the grace of God in Christ (2 Thess. 2:99-12).

Recall **“THE MARK OF THE BEAST”** in *Revelation 13:16-18*, and remember that this **“mark”** is not physical but spiritual (*cf.*, *Exod. 13:6-9; 28:36-38; Deut. 6:4-8; 11:18-19; Rev. 7:3; 9:4; 14:1; 17:5; 20:4; 22:3-4*). The **“forehead”** symbolizes the mind and heart, and it sets forth the purpose, motive, and goal of the one who is either sealed or marked. The **“right hand”** symbolizes the actions, works, efforts, power, and ability of the one who has this **“mark.”** As the worshipers of the beast receive a **“MARK,”** the worshipers of the true God are **“sealed ... in their foreheads”** (*Rev. 7:3*). A **“seal”** is not only for identification, but also for protection and preservation. It signifies the believer’s security in Christ. A **“mark”** is for identification but makes no provision for security. If a sinner has on his mind to work for his salvation, he will set his hands and feet to the task. The mind of a true believer is the mind of faith in Christ and stands in the righteousness of Christ imputed. His hand is used to show forth the glory of God in Christ (*Matt. 5:16*), not to glorify an idol or himself. This **“mark”** of the beast stands in man’s righteousness, and he uses his hand to try to establish a righteousness of his own rather than submitting to Christ. The **“mark”** of the beast is the false gospels, philosophies, and ideals of men in opposition to the one way of salvation – CHRIST AND HIM CRUCIFIED.

This description is stated again here **19:20** for emphasis so that the people of God in the last days will be warned again to stand watchful, ready and aware, and seek to be skillful in the word of righteousness so as not to be deceived. **“THESE BOTH WERE CAST ALIVE INTO A LAKE OF FIRE BURNING WITH BRIMSTONE”** – These are symbols of eternal damnation, death, and eternal separation from God. This is the **“second death”** (*Rev. 21:8*).

**(19:21) – “AND THE REMNANT WERE SLAIN WITH THE SWORD OF HIM THAT SAT UPON THE HORSE”** – This is stated to show that when Christ slays His enemies, it will be a total destruction. There will be no **“remnant”** left. Up to this point, whenever we saw manifestations of God’s wrath against the wickedness of Israel, there was always a remnant spared, a remnant according to the election of grace. But here, there will be no such remnant. All of God’s elect in Christ will have been gathered unto Him and taken out of the way of destruction. **“WHICH SWORD PROCEEDED OUT OF HIS MOUTH”** – As in *19:15*, this **“sword”** symbolizes the power and authority of the Word of God. It is the pronouncement of the sentence of guilt upon all His enemies and the execution of justice against them. This is the same Word which in Christ and by His grace is the power of God unto salvation for His elect – **“for therein is the righteousness of God revealed”** (*Rom. 1:16-17*). The same Word which is the salvation of God’s elect in Christ will be damnation of all who stand in opposition to Christ (*Acts 17:31; Rom. 2:16*). This is why we are told that **“NOW is the day of salvation”** (*2 Cor. 6:2*). Do not delay; run to Christ NOW. **“AND ALL THE FOWLS WERE FILLED WITH THEIR FLESH”** – This describes the certain and final defeat of the enemies of Christ and His church. As God is faithful and true to His promises to save His people in and by the Lord Jesus Christ, He is just as faithful and true to His threats of the eternal destruction of all stand against Him and His truth.

## LESSON 70 – THE BINDING OF SATAN

## Revelation 20:1-2

**(20:1-2)** – This is the last of the seven visions given by the Lord to the apostle John describing the whole New Covenant Gospel Age from the first coming of Christ to His second coming. Consider how the entire prophecy of the **Book of Revelation** is based on the structure of the number seven – seven churches, seven seals, seven trumpets, seven angels, and seven vials. Up to now we have seen the development of the world to its very end from six points of view. Here in **Revelation 20** the Lord shows us the seventh vision of the world in the last days and coming to its very end.

The central revelation of this vision is the binding and loosing of Satan by Divine decree so that he is prevented from accomplishing his desire to deceive the nations and then is set free to be used as an instrument of God's judgment upon the unbelieving world. From here to the end of the book, Christ shows His dominion over Satan during the time of the New Covenant and, ultimately, the destruction of Satan as well as the glory of the New Jerusalem. The order of events is as follows: (1) Our Lord's first coming followed by a long period of time, symbolized by a "*thousand years*" in which Satan is bound. (2) At the close of this Gospel Age Satan is loosed for "*a little season*," a short period of time. (3) This is followed by Christ's glorious second coming to gather His church unto Himself, judge the world, and make all things new. This vision begins with a revelation of the first coming of Christ into the world to redeem His people from their sins. This is when Christ **"LAID HOLD ON THE DRAGON, THAT OLD SERPENT, WHICH IS THE DEVIL, AND SATAN, AND BOUND HIM A THOUSAND YEARS."** |

The **"ANGEL"** in **v. 1** is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself Who is the Angel of the covenant, the Angel of God's presence, for "*in HIM dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily*" (*Col. 2:9*). Remember, the word **"angel"** is literally "messenger," and does not always apply to angelic beings, though they sometimes are. It is sometimes used to describe the ministers of the Gospel as in the angels of the churches referred to in *Revelation 2* and *3*. But this is the Lord Himself as He is also described in *Revelation 7:2* and *10:1*. He is the only one who can defeat and bind Satan (*20:2*). He is, literally, coming **"DOWN FROM HEAVEN,"** which describes His incarnation, the Word made flesh and dwelling among us (*John 1:14*) and taking upon Himself the form of a servant (*Php. 2:5-9*). He came to earth as the Surety and Substitute of God's elect (His church) to put away their sins by the sacrifice of Himself on the cross, to establish an everlasting righteousness of infinite value whereby God could be just to justify them, and in that great work cast out and bind up Satan (*John 12:31-33; Heb. 2:14-15*).

**"HAVING THE KEY OF THE BOTTOMLESS PIT"** – cf. *Revelation 9:1-3* – Satan has no power but that which he is given by God to be an instrument of God's judgment against the wicked. Since the fall of man Satan has been allowed by God to dominate this fallen world – "*the prince of this world*" (*John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; Eph. 2:2*). He was allowed by God to roam the earth and deceive the nations throughout the Old Testament age (*Job 1:6-7; Luke 10:17-18; 1 Pet. 5:8*). In *2 Peter 2:4* we read, "*For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment.*" The word translated "*hell*" here is "*tartarus*," which means "realm of darkness." Satan's realm is darkness, and when God saves His chosen people, they are delivered "*from the power of darkness*," and "*translated into the kingdom of His dear Son*" (*Col. 1:13*).

**"The bottomless pit"** is not, as some say, hell. Nowhere in Scripture does God tell us that Satan will be cast into hell, then brought out again to deceive the nations. It is the realm of darkness on this fallen and cursed earth into which Satan was cast and bound by the Lord Jesus Christ when Christ died.

The defeat of Satan (here, the binding of Satan) is described as being the work of Jesus Christ on the cross (*John 12:31-33*). Satan was “cast out” by the death of Christ. He was bound up for a while so that he could no longer deceive the nations in the sense of hindering or even prohibiting the Gospel going out to the nations.

“**AND A GREAT CHAIN IN HIS HAND**” – This “*great chain*” symbolizes Christ’s power to bind up anyone who would stand against Him in His purpose to glorify God in the salvation of His people and in the damnation of the wicked. It is symbolic of His Word of power and authority. This same power that works under Him for the salvation of His people (*Rom. 1:16-17; 1 Cor. 1:24*), works to bind and hinder Satan and his followers. Ultimately it will shut them up in the unbelief and despair of eternal death.

“**And He laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan**” – Satan is identified here in the many facets of his evil nature and work. “*The dragon*” speaks of his ferocious appetite for destruction. He is “*that old serpent*” which takes us back to the Garden of Eden. The Lord said Satan “*was a murderer from the beginning*” (*John 8:44*). One of his main weapons in his warfare against Christ and the church is deception. He is a liar, and deceives with religious lies leading sinners into condemnation with false notions of salvation by works and human attainments and righteousness. “*The Devil*” means “slanderer or accuser.” Slander and accusation are also weapons of Satan and his ministers in their warfare against Christ and the church. This is why we as sinners saved by grace need “*an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous*” (*1 John 2:1*). When Satan accuses us of deserving condemnation, our only defense is the blood and righteousness of Christ imputed (*Rom. 8:33-34*). “*Satan*” means “adversary.” He is the enemy of Christ and of every true child of God (*cf. Matt. 13:38-39; Luke 22:31; 1 Pet. 5:8*).

Christ has “**laid hold on**” (took hold of and overpowered) Satan and “**bound him for a thousand years.**” Binding here means to restrain, hinder, forbid, or prohibit. It refers to Satan’s power as limited by God. It does not mean that Satan is totally inactive during the “*thousand years*,” but that his power is largely limited as Christ has taken hold of him. Satan (and the spirit of antichrist) is being held back to a great degree until the time, prior to the second coming of Christ, that Christ will let him loose upon the world (*20:7-8; cf. 2 Thess. 2:6-8*). He will be “**bound**” for “*a thousand years*,” which is a symbolic number for the time period between Christ’s first coming and second coming. Many have wrongly interpreted this passage in terms of a Jewish millennium. They claim this teaches that before the end of the world, there will be a glorious thousand years where the Jews, under the headship of Christ ruling from Jerusalem, will evangelize the world. They believe the whole world will believe in Christ. This term, “*thousand years*,” appears five times in **Revelation 20:1-6**, so we need to spend some time to find its true meaning. A fundamental error of the Jewish millennium is that it states that Christ will come two more times before the end of the world. But the Scriptures speak of only ONE second coming of Christ, and His second coming marks the end of the world.

For our lesson today, understand that by His death on the cross Christ cast out Satan and bound him so that the Gospel would go out for the salvation of God’s elect in every nation. By His death on the cross, Christ established and set forth the Gospel Age wherein Satan’s rule over the entire Gentile world would cease. We must remember that before the cross, Satan was free to deceive the nations. After the cross, specifically after Pentecost (*Acts 2*), the Gospel was sent throughout the world, and many Gentiles have been saved (*Matt. 24:14; 2 Cor. 4:3-6*). God’s elect out of every nation will be brought to Him (*John 6:37-45; Matt. 12:24-29*).

**(20:3)** – As we saw in *verses 1-2*, Satan has been “*bound*” by the Lord Jesus Christ for “*a thousand years*,” which represents the period of time from the first coming of our Lord to His second coming. This “*thousand years*” is the fullness of the time of Christ building His church in the New Testament age. He redeemed His church by His precious blood. They are all justified in Him based on His righteousness imputed. They shall all be called by the Holy Spirit and the preaching of the Gospel into the kingdom of God (*John 6:37-45*). Satan cannot stop or even hinder the building, progress, and growth of the church of the living God. Here we are told that Christ “**CAST HIM INTO THE BOTTOMLESS PIT, AND SHUT HIM UP.**” This is not a literal hole in the ground, or even hell. It is the realm of darkness upon this fallen and cursed world. This is why Satan is called “*the god of this world*” (*2 Cor. 4:4*), and “*the prince of the power of the air*” (*Eph. 2:2*). Satan has been given a limited power over this world, the realm of darkness, but he is on a leash controlled by God as he has been “*bound*” by Christ in his ability to deceive the nations. During this “**THOUSAND YEARS**” Christ has “**SHUT HIM UP**” in that “*bottomless pit*” and “**SET A SEAL UPON HIM.**” This is the “*seal*” of authority and power of the King of kings, the Lord Jesus Christ to restrain Satan in his work of deception (*2 Thess. 2:6-7*). During this time period Christ will build His church (throughout the world) and the gates of hell will not prevail against it (*Matt. 16:18*). It is important to remember that Satan has not been totally shut up so that none on earth are deceived, but in the sense that his total rule over the nations of the world has now ceased – “**THAT HE SHOULD DECEIVE THE NATIONS NO MORE.**” The Gospel would go out freely into all the nations of the world.

“**TILL THE THOUSAND YEARS SHOULD BE FULFILLED: AND AFTER THAT HE MUST BE LOOSED A LITTLE SEASON**” – At the end of the New Covenant Age, just prior to the second coming of Christ, and as a judgment upon the unbelieving world, Christ will set Satan free to deceive the nations again. The Apostle Paul describes this in *2 Thessalonians 2:1-12*. This is God’s judgment upon the unbelieving world, and the only salvation and security from such deception is to be found in Christ, believing and loving His truth (*2 Thess. 2:13-16*). In that brief season, the world will be religious but utterly ignorant of the true and living God and the way of salvation and righteousness in and by the Lord Jesus Christ (*Rom. 10:1-4*). Satan’s deception will be as widespread as it was before the thousand-year reign of Christ upon the earth. The world will be deceived with false religion (*Matt. 24:22; 2 Thess. 2:1-12; Rev. 16:12-14*). God’s elect, however, will not ultimately and finally be deceived (*2 Thess. 2:13-14*). Christ Who bought them with His own precious blood will have them as His own. They will be brought to believe the Gospel and will never leave it because they are preserved by and secured in Christ (*1 John 2:20-29*). Satan cannot harm or even accuse God’s true children because they are IN CHRIST. They cannot be condemned and no charge can be brought against them as they stand in Christ with His righteousness imputed to them (*Rom. 8:1,32-39*).

**(20:4)** – “**AND I SAW THRONES, AND THEY SAT UPON THEM**” – Notice the word “*thrones*” is plural. This symbolizes the authority given to Christ’s ministers in the preaching of the Gospel during this thousand-year reign of Christ. Christ alone sits on THE throne of glory and rules over all. He alone is “*King of kings, and Lord of lords*” (*1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 17:14; 19:16*), but His ministers under Him have power and authority as His ambassadors preaching HIS word (*2 Cor. 5:20-21*). These are thrones of judgment – “**AND JUDGMENT WAS GIVEN UNTO THEM.**” The “*judgment*” given to the ministers of Christ is the Gospel message of judgment in righteousness concerning the salvation of

sinner by His grace through the Lord Jesus Christ and the damnation of sinners who continue in sin and unbelief. This **“judgment”** is a separation or a distinction made by God’s preachers proclaiming the judgment God has already rendered of His people in Christ and of the wicked without Christ. What separates and distinguishes the people of God (God’s elect) from the world? It is believing the Gospel of God’s free and sovereign grace in Christ! It is in the preaching of the Gospel by the true ministers of Christ that He separates and distinguishes His elect, His sheep, His church from the world. We who preach the Gospel do not personally pass judgment on anyone, but we do proclaim HIS judgment upon the earth as we preach the Gospel of the righteousness of God (*Rom. 1:16-17; 10:1-4*).

Consider *Matthew 19:28* where Christ spoke to His disciples – *“And Jesus said unto them, 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, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”* The word *“regeneration”* is found only one other time in the Bible. It is in *Titus 3:5* where it speaks of the new birth wherein God the Holy Spirit imparts or communicates new spiritual life to God’s people who are by nature spiritually dead. In the new birth the Holy Spirit empowers the Gospel of judgment to the hearts of God’s elect. The word *“regeneration”* in *Matthew 19:28* means the inception of a new state of things in time – the establishment of the kingdom of God in the obedience unto death by the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the establishment in time of the New Covenant and the beginning of the thousand-year reign of Christ as He is sitting upon *“the throne of His glory”* (*cf. Acts 1:8; Heb. 9:10*). Christ has ascended to His rightful place in glory. He now rules over all things in His mediatorial kingdom. His apostles *“upon twelve thrones”* is described here in **verse 4**. The number *“twelve”* represents the perfection of God’s judgment through the preaching of Christ crucified and risen. The *“twelve tribes of Israel”* is symbolic of SPIRITUAL Israel completely separated from the world by the judgment of the Gospel (*Luke 24:45-48; Gal. 3:26-29; 6:14-16; Php. 3:3*).

John **“SAW THE SOULS OF THEM THAT WERE BEHEADED FOR THE WITNESS OF JESUS, AND FOR THE WORD OF GOD”** – This speaks of those who were martyred (or “smitten”) for their faith in Christ and their witness of the Gospel of God’s grace in Christ (*Matt. 5:10-12*). By the grace of God, they refused to worship **“THE BEAST, NEITHER HIS IMAGE, NEITHER HAD RECEIVED HIS MARK** (false doctrine and evil way) **UPON THEIR FOREHEADS** (minds), **OR IN THEIR HANDS** (works and wills).” They would not bow to the false gospel of salvation by the works and will of men. Those who died in the faith **“LIVED AND REIGNED WITH CHRIST A THOUSAND YEARS”** – The **“souls”** or spirits of these martyrs, during the thousand-year reign of Christ, are with Christ even now, living in and by Him, and reigning with Him in glory. They await the end of this age when the Lord will return with them, (*1 Thess. 4:13-19*), gather all the saints together unto glory, and put down all His enemies forever.

**(20:5)** – Some use this verse to support the idea of two physical resurrections with a literal earthly thousand-year reign in between. However, Scripture clearly teaches one future resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. Read *John 5:28-29* – “*Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.*” This describes the second resurrection, which is one resurrection for both the just and the unjust, also shown in *Revelation 20:12*. As the souls of those martyred for the cause of Christ “*lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years*” (20:4), **“THE REST OF THE DEAD,”** which describes the unsaved, **“LIVED NOT AGAIN UNTIL THE THOUSAND YEARS WERE FINISHED.”** The word **“until”** does not mean “till the finished period of time was done.” It means “while,” and states that while this period of time was going on, these remained in a spiritually dead, unregenerate state. They did not live spiritually in and by the Lord Jesus Christ. They are the remnant of mankind who remain in unbelief, without Christ, without hope.

**“THIS IS THE FIRST RESURRECTION”** – **“First”** means “foremost.” It could refer to order of time or order of value and preeminence. This **“first resurrection”** refers back to those who live and reign with Christ during the **“thousand years,”** and describes their resurrection with Christ in His finished work on the cross (*Rom. 6:3-9; Eph. 2:1-7*) and their resurrection unto spiritual life in the new birth (*John 3:3-7; Eph. 1:16-23*). Because of His resurrection, Christ is called **“the firstfruits of them that slept”** (*1 Cor. 15:20,23*). He told Martha, **“I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die”** (*John 11:25-26*). They shall never be separated from God (*Rom. 8:31-39*). The contrast here is this – Those who have died in the cause of Christ, who are considered by the world to be dead are the only ones who are really alive unto God. Those who are still living physically are really dead unto God and bring forth fruit unto death.

Another reason we know that this **“first resurrection”** is the believer’s resurrection in Christ and in the new birth is as we contrast it with the first death. When Adam sinned against God he brought death into the world. God told him, **“But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die”** (*Gen. 2:17*). When Adam disobeyed God, he did not immediately die physically even though the process of physical death began. He did immediately become condemned unto death, he immediately died spiritually. This is the first death. The **“first resurrection,”** therefore, as contrasted with the first death is the believer’s justification before God by the death of Christ as our Substitute and Surety, as signified by His resurrection from the dead and our resurrection in Him, and the fruit of His resurrection which is our resurrection unto spiritual life in the new birth.

**(20:6)** – **“BLESSED AND HOLY IS HE THAT HATH PART IN THE FIRST RESURRECTION”** – All who are born again by the Holy Spirit, born of God from above, all who have been regenerated and converted unto Christ, are truly **“blessed,”** saved, secure, and joyful in Christ, forgiven through His blood and justified in His righteousness imputed, **“and holy,”** set apart by God and separated from the unbelieving world in Christ (*2 Thess. 2:13-14*). All this blessedness and holiness comes to God’s elect in and by the Lord Jesus Christ and based on His righteousness imputed to them. They who have been **“blessed”** and separated by God unto Christ have **“part in the first resurrection.”** **“Part”** means an allotted portion or measure, and this is the gift of spiritual life from Christ by the Holy Spirit. It is the

same word Christ spoke to Peter when He was washing the disciples's feet – *“If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me” (John 13:8)*. It is a word of fellowship, of sharing, and it describes how we who are saved by the grace of God have an equal share and portion of all the benefits and blessings of eternal life because of our fellowship with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection.

**“ON SUCH THE SECOND DEATH HATH NO POWER”** – The *“second death”* is eternal death, damnation, and eternal separation from God which is the portion of the ungodly who are all who die in unbelief without Christ (20:8). In ourselves, we all deserve this *“second death,”* and we will all die physically. But because of the righteousness of Christ imputed to them and which they all receive by God-given faith, the *“second death”* has no authority, no right, nor *“power”* to condemn or overcome the people of God in Christ (Rom. 8:10). Based on their sins imputed to Him, Christ has suffered for them all the *“power”* of the *“second death”* under the just wrath of God for their sins (1 Cor. 15:55-58). By His one offering He bore the full penalty of their sins and bore their sins away.

**“BUT THEY SHALL BE PRIESTS OF GOD AND OF CHRIST”** – As stated back in Revelation 1:6 and 5:10, all who have been chosen of God, redeemed by Christ, and called into the kingdom by the Holy Spirit, are *“priests of God”* through the Lord Jesus Christ. This means they all have equal, free, and unhindered access unto God the Father through Christ our Mediator, our High Priest (Heb. 4:14-16; 10:19-22). We offer unto God the sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving in light of the fact that Christ has made the way into the holiest of all, the very presence of God, for us. We who are IN CHRIST 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” (1 Pet. 2:9)*, all based on the righteousness of God in Christ imputed to us.

**“AND SHALL REIGN WITH HIM A THOUSAND YEARS”** – During this period of time, they will be wholly devoted to and employed in the service of God and of Christ, and will be continually offering up the sacrifices of praise, or singing the song of the Lamb, adoring the grace and goodness of God and Christ unto them, shown them both in providence and in grace. They will serve Him with and under the authority of His Word as King of kings.



**(20:7-8)** – As stated back in *Revelation 20:3*, when this last age is brought to its end, **“SATAN SHALL BE LOOSED OUT OF HIS PRISON.”** Satan will no longer be bound because God in judgment against the unbelieving world will set him loose **“TO DECEIVE THE NATIONS WHICH ARE IN THE FOUR QUARTERS (corners) OF THE EARTH.”** While Satan is bound the Gospel has been widely preaching to the Gentile nations for the salvation of God’s elect among them. But at the end of **“THE THOUSAND YEARS,”** just prior to Christ’s return, Satan will be **“loosed”** to bring about a short time of global deception (*John 8:44; 2 Cor. 4:3-4*). This deception will be the overwhelming presence of false religion and false gospels of salvation by the works and wills of men as opposed to the sovereign grace of God in the Lord Jesus Christ. The true Gospel will become so rare that it will be virtually gone from the world.

The nature of this religious deception is revealed under the names **“GOG AND MAGOG”** first used by the prophet Ezekiel (*Ezekiel 38; 39*) when he was prophesying of final judgment. He used **“Gog and Magog”** to identify the ungodly Gentile nations that attacked Israel. This is clearly a symbol of Satan and his kingdom. During the time of the Old Covenant, it was common to use the Gentile nations as a collective symbol of the enemies of God and His people. On the whole these Gentile nations had no true knowledge of God and the Gospel of God’s grace, but, as revealed in the New Covenant, God has a people out of every nation. Spiritual Israel (the true people of God) includes God’s elect both Jew and Gentile (*Gal. 3:26-29; 6:14-16; Col. 3:8-11*), and God sends His Gospel truth in the Spirit of power to give them life and call them out of the world. But as Satan is set free to deceive the nations again, he will gather the ungodly world to do battle against the true church. The purpose of this religious deception is **“TO GATHER THEM TOGETHER TO BATTLE”** against Christ and His church on earth (*cf. Rev. 16:12-14*).

**“THE NUMBER OF WHOM IS AS THE SAND OF THE SEA”** – In prophecy this described the vast number of the descendants of Abraham, and it indicated the number of unbelievers in Israel. Only a small remnant would be saved (*Isa. 10:22; Rom. 9:27*). It described those who were nominally Israelites but who denied the God of Israel. It is used here to describe how Satan will attack the church from within using nominal (false) Christians in his attempts to deceive people. But we know he will not be successful because God has a remnant of grace (*cf. Matt. 24:22-24; Rom. 11:1-7; 2 Thess. 2:8-13*). Satan has been making war against the church for centuries, and it has not worked. But now he will make war within the church (infiltrate). The church will be overrun by people of a false gospel. This is the **“abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet”** (*Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14*). Satan’s attack on the church is represented here as a battle (**“Armageddon”** – *Rev. 16:12-16*). This is Satan’s attempt to silence the truth and establish His lies.

**(20:9)** – **“AND THEY WENT UP ON THE BREADTH OF THE EARTH, AND COMPASSED THE CAMP OF THE SAINTS ABOUT, AND THE BELOVED CITY”** – This army attacking **“the camp of the saints”** takes up **“the breadth of the earth”** (the whole span and range of the earth). This is not an army of soldiers gathered in one area to fight with airplanes, tanks, and guns. It is the army of spiritual darkness which includes almost the entire population of the earth in opposition against Christ and His church (spiritual Israel). It is an army that fights with a counterfeit gospel that leads people to destruction and death. It is a message of abomination that leaves sinners desolate because it leaves them ignorant of or not submitted to the righteousness of God in Christ (*Rom. 9:31–10:4*). It places salvation in the hands

of sinners rather than all in God's hand. They despise the sovereignty of God, especially in salvation, and refuse to submit to Christ and His righteousness as that which alone justifies sinners. They insist on salvation in full or in part conditioned on their works and their wills. It is an army directed by false preachers who lead people away from the Bible and to the "felt needs" and reasonings of men. Some will be easily recognized; others more deceptive (*2 Cor. 11:13-15*). Our weapon of defense is the Gospel and the Word of God (*2 Cor. 4:3-6*). Our battlefield is the mind and hearts of people (*2 Cor. 10:4-5*).

This battle is presently being fought all over the world, and it appears that the true church is being defeated (*Rev. 11:7-10; 19:19-21*). In the final tribulation period, just prior to the second coming of Christ, the churches that remain faithful to God's truth will be reduced to almost nothing because the counterfeit gospel is so popular and appealing to the natural man (*2 Tim. 3:1-6; 4:3-4*). We sorrow for the world, but we do not despair because we know that Christ has already sealed the destiny of Satan and his followers. The gates of hell cannot prevail and defeat or destroy the kingdom of God.

Consider how the phrase "***camp of the saints***" is a symbolic reference to Israel wandering in the wilderness. The church on earth is wandering in the wilderness of this fallen world, and Satan is gathering his army to attack. The "***beloved city***" is the new, heavenly Jerusalem which represents the kingdom of Christ (*Gal. 4:25-26; Heb. 12:22-24*). In God's revelation the kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of Christ are pictured as two cities. Satan's kingdom is the city of Babylon, the mother of harlots. Christ's kingdom is the heavenly Jerusalem, the mother of us all, meaning all believers (*Gal. 3:26-29; 4:26-31*). The kingdom of Christ has two elements – (1) the saints on earth, and (2) the saints in heaven. All the saints together form the bride of Christ, which is the church, the New Jerusalem.

The ungodly are now fully under the deception of their own self-righteousness, self-will, and self-love. This is God's judgment against their rebellion and unbelief (*2 Thess. 2:9-12*). **"AND FIRE CAME DOWN FROM GOD OUT OF HEAVEN, AND DEVoured THEM"** – This is the "***fire***" of God's wrath and power in the Lord Jesus Christ who comes "***down from God***" to utterly destroy Satan and his evil army (*Heb. 12:29; Rev. 14:19; 16:21; 18:21; 19:21*). All the wicked shall be slain and appear before the judgment seat of Christ to be judged in righteousness which they do not have. As we consider the awful state of the wicked and the just condemnation and wrath that will fully and finally fall upon them, let us never forget that the only reason we who know Christ are spared from this wrath is the sovereign, free grace of God in and by the Lord Jesus Christ (*2 Thess. 2:13-17*). We are just as deserving of the wrath of God as those who perish, but Christ took our wrath upon Himself as our Substitute and Surety as He was "***made sin***" for us that we "***might be made the righteousness of God IN HIM***" (*2 Cor. 5:21*).

**(20:10)** – This is Satan's sure defeat and his certain end. He will be **"CAST INTO THE LAKE OF FIRE AND BRIMSTONE"** (symbols of God's wrath). Satan, along with **"THE BEAST AND THE FALSE PROPHET"** (all political and religious opposition to Christ), **"SHALL BE TORMENTED DAY AND NIGHT FOR EVER AND EVER."** This describes the agony and sorrow of eternal separation from God. It will never end. Here we see once again how that the Lord God Almighty cannot be defeated by sin, Satan, or the world. His purpose cannot be frustrated. His truth cannot be denied. His chosen people cannot be lost or even deceived unto damnation. The gates of hell will not prevail against Christ and His church. All His enemies will be put down and "***at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father***" (*Php. 3:10-11*).

**(20:7-8)** – As stated back in *Revelation 20:3*, when this last age is brought to its end, **“SATAN SHALL BE LOOSED OUT OF HIS PRISON.”** Satan will no longer be bound because God in judgment against the unbelieving world will set him loose **“TO DECEIVE THE NATIONS WHICH ARE IN THE FOUR QUARTERS (corners) OF THE EARTH.”** While Satan is bound the Gospel has been widely preaching to the Gentile nations for the salvation of God’s elect among them. But at the end of **“THE THOUSAND YEARS,”** just prior to Christ’s return, Satan will be **“loosed”** to bring about a short time of global deception (*John 8:44; 2 Cor. 4:3-4*). This deception will be the overwhelming presence of false religion and false gospels of salvation by the works and wills of men as opposed to the sovereign grace of God in the Lord Jesus Christ. The true Gospel will become so rare that it will be virtually gone from the world.

The nature of this religious deception is revealed under the names **“GOG AND MAGOG”** first used by the prophet Ezekiel (*Ezekiel 38; 39*) when he was prophesying of final judgment. He used **“Gog and Magog”** to identify the ungodly Gentile nations that attacked Israel. This is clearly a symbol of Satan and his kingdom. During the time of the Old Covenant, it was common to use the Gentile nations as a collective symbol of the enemies of God and His people. On the whole these Gentile nations had no true knowledge of God and the Gospel of God’s grace, but, as revealed in the New Covenant, God has a people out of every nation. Spiritual Israel (the true people of God) includes God’s elect both Jew and Gentile (*Gal. 3:26-29; 6:14-16; Col. 3:8-11*), and God sends His Gospel truth in the Spirit of power to give them life and call them out of the world. But as Satan is set free to deceive the nations again, he will gather the ungodly world to do battle against the true church. The purpose of this religious deception is **“TO GATHER THEM TOGETHER TO BATTLE”** against Christ and His church on earth (*cf. Rev. 16:12-14*).

**“THE NUMBER OF WHOM IS AS THE SAND OF THE SEA”** – In prophecy this described the vast number of the descendants of Abraham, and it indicated the number of unbelievers in Israel. Only a small remnant would be saved (*Isa. 10:22; Rom. 9:27*). It described those who were nominally Israelites but who denied the God of Israel. It is used here to describe how Satan will attack the church from within using nominal (false) Christians in his attempts to deceive people. But we know he will not be successful because God has a remnant of grace (*cf. Matt. 24:22-24; Rom. 11:1-7; 2 Thess. 2:8-13*). Satan has been making war against the church for centuries, and it has not worked. But now he will make war within the church (infiltrate). The church will be overrun by people of a false gospel. This is the *“abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet”* (*Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14*). Satan’s attack on the church is represented here as a battle (*“Armageddon”* – *Rev. 16:12-16*). This is Satan’s attempt to silence the truth and establish His lies.

**(20:9)** – **“AND THEY WENT UP ON THE BREADTH OF THE EARTH, AND COMPASSED THE CAMP OF THE SAINTS ABOUT, AND THE BELOVED CITY”** – This army attacking **“the camp of the saints”** takes up **“the breadth of the earth”** (the whole span and range of the earth). This is not an army of soldiers gathered in one area to fight with airplanes, tanks, and guns. It is the army of spiritual darkness which includes almost the entire population of the earth in opposition against Christ and His church (spiritual Israel). It is an army that fights with a counterfeit gospel that leads people to destruction and death. It is a message of abomination that leaves sinners desolate because it leaves them ignorant of or not submitted to the righteousness of God in Christ (*Rom. 9:31–10:4*). It places salvation in the hands of sinners rather than all in God’s hand. They despise the sovereignty of God, especially in salvation, and

refuse to submit to Christ and His righteousness as that which alone justifies sinners. They insist on salvation in full or in part conditioned on their works and their wills. It is an army directed by false preachers who lead people away from the Bible and to the “felt needs” and reasonings of men. Some will be easily recognized; others more deceptive (*2 Cor. 11:13-15*). Our weapon of defense is the Gospel and the Word of God (*2 Cor. 4:3-6*). Our battlefield is the mind and hearts of people (*2 Cor. 10:4-5*).

This battle is presently being fought all over the world, and it appears that the true church is being defeated (*Rev. 11:7-10; 19:19-21*). In the final tribulation period, just prior to the second coming of Christ, the churches that remain faithful to God’s truth will be reduced to almost nothing because the counterfeit gospel is so popular and appealing to the natural man (*2 Tim. 3:1-6; 4:3-4*). We sorrow for the world, but we do not despair because we know that Christ has already sealed the destiny of Satan and his followers. The gates of hell cannot prevail and defeat or destroy the kingdom of God.

Consider how the phrase “*camp of the saints*” is a symbolic reference to Israel wandering in the wilderness. The church on earth is wandering in the wilderness of this fallen world, and Satan is gathering his army to attack. The “*beloved city*” is the new, heavenly Jerusalem which represents the kingdom of Christ (*Gal. 4:25-26; Heb. 12:22-24*). In God’s revelation the kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of Christ are pictured as two cities. Satan’s kingdom is the city of Babylon, the mother of harlots. Christ’s kingdom is the heavenly Jerusalem, the mother of us all, meaning all believers (*Gal. 3:26-29; 4:26-31*). The kingdom of Christ has two elements – (1) the saints on earth, and (2) the saints in heaven. All the saints together form the bride of Christ, which is the church, the New Jerusalem.

The ungodly are now fully under the deception of their own self-righteousness, self-will, and self-love. This is God’s judgment against their rebellion and unbelief (*2 Thess. 2:9-12*). “**AND FIRE CAME DOWN FROM GOD OUT OF HEAVEN, AND DEVoured THEM**” – This is the “*fire*” of God’s wrath and power in the Lord Jesus Christ who comes “*down from God*” to utterly destroy Satan and his evil army (*Heb. 12:29; Rev. 14:19; 16:21; 18:21; 19:21*). All the wicked shall be slain and appear before the judgment seat of Christ to be judged in righteousness which they do not have. As we consider the awful state of the wicked and the just condemnation and wrath that will fully and finally fall upon them, let us never forget that the only reason we who know Christ are spared from this wrath is the sovereign, free grace of God in and by the Lord Jesus Christ (*2 Thess. 2:13-17*). We are just as deserving of the wrath of God as those who perish, but Christ took our wrath upon Himself as our Substitute and Surety as He was “*made sin*” for us that we “*might be made the righteousness of God IN HIM*” (*2 Cor. 5:21*).

**(20:10)** – This is Satan’s sure defeat and his certain end. He will be “**CAST INTO THE LAKE OF FIRE AND BRIMSTONE**” (symbols of God’s wrath). Satan, along with “**THE BEAST AND THE FALSE PROPHET**” (all political and religious opposition to Christ), “**SHALL BE TORMENTED DAY AND NIGHT FOR EVER AND EVER.**” This describes the agony and sorrow of eternal separation from God. It will never end. Here we see once again how that the Lord God Almighty cannot be defeated by sin, Satan, or the world. His purpose cannot be frustrated. His truth cannot be denied. His chosen people cannot be lost or even deceived unto damnation. The gates of hell will not prevail against Christ and His church. All His enemies will be put down and “*at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*” (*Php. 3:10-11*).

**(20:11)** – This is final judgment in the great day of the Lord. It is administered from **“A GREAT WHITE THRONE,”** symbolizing the holiness, righteousness, and sovereignty of the One who sits on this throne. Nothing will proceed from this **“throne”** but justice and truth (*Rom. 2:2*). All who stand before God at this judgment will be judged in strict justice. This will be a day terror for the wicked wherein God will declare before the whole universe that they deserve His wrath for their sin. However, it will not be a day of terror to believers, sinners saved by the grace of God in Christ. For believers it will be a day of great confidence, joy, and peace because their sins have been put away by Christ (*1 John 4:17*). They stand before God washed in the blood of Christ and clothed in His righteousness imputed (charged) to them. On earth, God’s saints have been constantly misjudged and slandered by the world (*John 15:18–16:3; 1 John 3:1-2*), but on this great day, they will all be vindicated in the glory of the Lord (*1 Cor. 4:3-5*).

**“AND HIM THAT SAT ON IT”** – This is the Lord Jesus Christ unto whom God has committed all judgment (*Matt. 25:31-46; John 5:22-27; 2 Tim. 4:1; 1 Pet. 4:5; Rev. 6:12-17*). God *“hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead”* (*Acts 17:31*). This is part of the mediatorial lordship of Christ which He earned for Himself by the redemption of His people, God’s elect, through His death on the cross. Christ Himself will be the Judge of all, and His righteousness worked out and established on the cross will be the standard by which all are judged (*Rom. 2:16*).

**“FROM WHOSE FACE THE EARTH AND THE HEAVEN FLED AWAY; AND THERE WAS FOUND NO PLACE FOR THEM”** – The fallen, cursed **“earth”** and sky cannot remain when Christ comes again to judge the world. There is **“no place for them”** in the new creation, the new heavens and the new earth (*2 Pet. 3:9-13*). All things must be made new, and there can be nothing left of the former creation.

**(20:12)** – This is judgment of all men, saved and unsaved (*John 5:28-29*). **“AND I SAW THE DEAD, SMALL AND GREAT, STAND BEFORE GOD”** – Every individual must stand before God and give an account of their lives. **“Small and great”** – All people from all classes and groups will **“stand before God”** to give an account. **“AND THE BOOKS WERE OPENED: AND ANOTHER BOOK WAS OPENED, WHICH IS THE BOOK OF LIFE”** – Notice how the **“books”** of judgment is plural as this describes the record in heaven of all the sins of all who died in unbelief, without Christ. The **“book of life,”** however is one single book as it describes the one record in heaven of all who died in Christ as they stand before God washed clean from all their sins and clothed in His righteousness imputed.

**“AND THE DEAD WERE JUDGED OUT OF THOSE THINGS WHICH WERE WRITTEN IN THE BOOKS, ACCORDING TO THEIR WORKS”** – It is significant that even though the ones described here have been raised from the dead and stand before God at Judgment, they are still said to be **“dead.”** They are **“dead”** spiritually in trespasses and sins. These are the unsaved standing before God without a righteousness that answers the demands of God’s law and justice. They will be judged **“according to their works,”** and found to fall short of the glory of God. For as the Bible tells us that by deeds of law no flesh shall be justified in God’s sight, these will not be justified. They will be declared guilty and subject to the wrath of God for their sins. All who are saved by the grace of God in Christ, whose names are written in the **“book of life,”** which is elsewhere called **“the Lamb’s book of life”** (*Php.*

4:3; Rev. 21:27), have already been judged for their sins. Their sins were imputed (charged, accounted) to Christ when He went to the cross, being “*made sin*” for them (2 Cor. 5:21), and dying for them. Christ paid the full debt of the penalty of all their sins and brought in righteousness that is imputed to them (2 Cor. 5:21) wherein they stand before God IN HIM, “*not having [their] own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith*” (Php. 3:9). Their record in heaven is clean as it has been washed clean by the blood of Christ, and they stand righteous before God in Him. Christ satisfied God’s justice for them (Isa. 53:11), and they stand before God in Christ without sin. But does not the Bible tell us that even they will be judged according to their works (John 5:28-29; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 14:13)? Believers will not be judged BY their works as is the case with unbelievers. Their works will be judged only as they are a testimony and evidence of their standing in Christ, in Whose righteousness they stand, and as a testimony and evidence of the glory, power, grace, and goodness of God in their lives (Gal. 2:19-21).

In this “*book of life*” there is a record of divine election, the name of Christ our divine Surety, a record of perfect righteousness IN CHRIST (Jer. 23:6), a record of complete satisfaction, and the promise of eternal life and glory. The question is often raised, “Will God judge his elect for their sins and failures, committed after they were saved, and expose them in the day of judgment?” The only reason that question is ever raised is because many retain a remnant of the Roman doctrine of purgatory, by which they hope to hold over God’s saints the whip and terror of the law. There is absolutely no sense in which those who trust Christ shall ever be made to pay for their sins. Our sins were imputed to Christ and shall never be imputed to us (Rom. 4:8). Christ paid our debt to God’s law and justice, and God will never require us to pay. God Who has blotted out our transgressions will never write them again. He Who covered our sins will never uncover them (Heb. 10:16-17). The perfect righteousness of Christ has been imputed to us. On the day of judgment, God’s elect are never represented as having done any evil, but only good as we are found in Christ (Matt. 25:31-40). The day of judgment will be a day of glory and joy for Christ and His people, not a day of mourning and sorrow. It will be a marriage supper. Christ will glory in His Church. God will display the glory of His grace in us. And we will glory in our God.

**(20:13)** – This is stated to show that no way or manner of death will be an escape from the just wrath of God for those who die in their sins. “**DEATH AND HELL**” refers to any manner of death and the grave itself will not be able to hold them back from facing a holy and just God at the judgment. Again it is stated that they all will be “**JUDGED EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO THEIR WORKS.**”

**(20:14)** – There will be no more physical death or graves. They will be “**CAST INTO THE LAKE OF FIRE,**” which is described as “**THE SECOND DEATH.**” This is eternal death, hell, and separation from God.

**(20:15)** – This eternal death, hell, and separation from God is the just deserts of all without exception whose names are “**NOT FOUND WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF LIFE.**” In other words, all whose sins were not judged by God in Christ’s work on the cross, showing their name written in the “*book of life,*” will be judged by their works out of the books of their deeds. They will give an account for every idle word, so that there is not one who is not justly under God’s wrath. Anyone not washed clean in the blood of Christ and not found in Him having His righteousness imputed will suffer the full penalty for sin and be “*cast into the lake of fire,*” which is the “*second death.*”

**(21:1)** – After describing the final judgment in *Revelation 20:11-15*, in the final two chapters of this great book, John is given a glimpse of **“a new heaven and a new earth,”** along with the *“new Jerusalem.”* Isaiah prophesied of this as recorded in *Isaiah 65:17-25*. This had its beginnings in the establishment of the New Covenant by Christ, but has its complete and final fulfillment as recorded here as this describes the eternal state of all who have been saved by the grace of God in and by the Lord Jesus Christ. John is told that even as the final judgment follows immediately upon the destruction of the old heaven and earth (*20:11*), so the new creation follows immediately upon the heels of the final judgment when the new creation replaces the present sinful heaven and earth. In fact, it is the total destruction of the old fallen creation that prepares the way for the new creation – **“for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away.”** The **“new heaven”** and the **“new earth”** will never pass away because this new creation is indwelt with righteousness (*2 Pet. 3:10-13*). The old creation is beset with sin that demands death, but the new creation will be ruled and managed by Christ Who is the Lord our righteousness. It will be populated eternally by a people made righteous in and by Christ Who is life and gives life to all His people and creation (*Rom. 5:21; 8:10*). All who inhabit this new creation will be sinless and perfectly conformed to Christ in their resurrected, spiritual bodies (*1 Cor. 15:35-58; 1 John 3:1-2*). God’s people will spend eternity in resurrected, glorified bodies dwelling in the **“new heaven”** and **“new earth”** in the presence of God, fulfilling the end for which we were created – to glorify, worship, and serve Him.

**“And there was no more sea.”** Throughout the whole *Book of Revelation*, the **“sea”** has been described as the abode of the Dragon (Satan), the abode of the dead, the center of commerce which is used by the unbelieving nations and dominated by Babylon the Great who sits on many waters. The sea is the place of storm and tempest, cold, dark and frightening to all of John’s first century readers. But in the **“new heaven”** and **“earth”** there is no longer any **“sea.”** This is not because God hates the ocean and the creatures living in it. Rather in the new creation there will be no place for the dragon to hide, no abode for dead, no unbelieving nations engaging in ungodly business. There will no longer be storms sweeping the earth. The new creation will be a world of righteousness, holiness, peace, prosperity, and truth in the Lord.

**(21:2)** – **“And I John saw the holy city”** – **“Holy”** describes and identifies this city with the **“holy”** God and a city populated with people made **“holy”** in and by the Lord Jesus Christ. God *“sent redemption unto His people: He hath commanded His covenant for ever: holy and reverend is His name”* (*Psa. 111:9*). It is identified as the **“new Jerusalem”** which is the collective name of the people of God in Christ (*Psa. 48*). It is the city of peace as it is founded upon the Prince of peace and His redemptive work to establish peace forever and ever (*Psa. 122; Col. 1:19-20*). **“Coming down from God out of heaven”** – The church is always portrayed as being saved by God above, born from above by God, and coming from God above (*Gal. 4:26; Heb. 12:22-24*). **“Prepared as a bride adorned for her husband”** – She did not prepare herself, but she is **“prepared”** by the God of all grace Who chose her in sovereign grace before the foundation of the world, Who redeemed her by the blood of His Son, and Who called her unto Himself by the power of the Holy Spirit. Having been washed in the blood of the Lamb, she is **“adorned”** *“with the garments of salvation,”* and covered *“with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels”* (*Isa. 61:10*). Here is another view of the *“Lamb”* and *“His wife”* (the church) *“arrayed in fine linen, clean and white”* (*19:7-8*).

**(21:3) – “And I heard a great voice out of heaven”** – Whether or not this is the voice of an angelic messenger, or the voice of God Himself, we are not told specifically, but it is most certainly attended with the authority and power of Almighty God Himself. **“Saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them”** – The word **“tabernacle”** means “dwelling-place,” and the reference is obviously to the sacred tent erected in the wilderness and the temple afterwards which was also called the **“tabernacle.”** This was the place that God appointed where He would meet with and commune with His people on the basis of the blood of reconciliation. It was the resting place of God’s *shekinah* glory, which is the Divine majesty of His Person and nature, the highest manifestation of God’s glory to be found on earth. *Hebrews 9:1-14* describes the earthly tabernacle under the Old Covenant and shows how everything about it was a picture and type fulfilled completely in and by the Lord Jesus Christ Who is our *“Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, GOD WITH US”* (*Matt. 1:23*). In speaking of the incarnation of Christ, John wrote, *“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”* (*John 1:14*). Christ in the glory of His Person as God and man is Himself the dwelling-place of Almighty God (*Col. 1:19; 2:9*). Christ is God’s *shekinah* glory. Also, Christ in the power of His finished work to redeem His people by His blood is the greatest manifestation of the glory of God. It is upon the basis of His blood and righteousness that His people commune with God, and He dwells with His people, His church, in the power of His redemptive glory.

**“And they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God”** – Christ and His church will dwell together forever in the new heaven and earth. He will dwell with us as our King-Redeemer, and we will dwell with Him as His subjects and servants. He is our God now, and He will always be our God. In Christ, the Godman, **“God Himself shall be with”** us. We will attribute our whole eternal existence in glory unto Him as the revelation of the glory of all three Persons of the Godhead – God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Christ’s possession of His people is now made known in the new birth as He, by the power of His Spirit, brings us unto Himself, but in the new heaven and earth, this possession will be fully and perfectly known and realized.

**(21:4) – This verse describes the absence of all the effects and consequences of sin that characterized the old heaven and earth, the fallen, cursed, sinful universe. “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes”** – Tears of sorrow will be no more, for they are the results of sin in this world. Christ will wipe away all tears (*Isa. 25:8; Rev. 7:17*). **“And there shall be no more death”** – More than any other blessing of God’s grace in Christ, the absence of all death is the most glaring as death is the wages of sin. Christ has paid that wage for all His people in His own death as our Substitute, Surety, and Kinsman-Redeemer. There will be no more death in the new heaven and new earth. We have a foretaste of this blessed life in Christ in our new birth when we are given spiritual life to trust and follow Christ. **“Neither sorrow, nor crying”** – This emphasizes the fact that all mental anguish, all sadness and mourning will end. **“Neither shall there be any more pain”** – There will be no mental or physical pain because all violence and disease will gone. **“For the former things are passed away”** – Everything associated with and resulting from sin will be totally, finally, and eternally gone.



**(21:5) – “And He that sat upon the throne”** – This is none other than Christ the Lord, God in human flesh, and there is no question of His sovereign authority and power to do all that He does both in the salvation of His people and in the condemnation of all His enemies. He sits **“upon the throne”** of His mediatorial glory, as the one who earned the right to judge the world in righteousness, the one who has accomplished and secured the eternal salvation of all whom the Father gave Him before the foundation of the world (*John 6:37-45*). Christ is our Prophet, Priest, and King. **“Said, Behold, I make all things new”** – All the things that comprise the new creation wherein dwells righteousness are of HIS making, not man’s. The new creation, the heavenly city, is built upon the foundation of the glory of HIS Person and accomplishment of His work to redeem His people from their sins and make them righteous before God in His righteousness imputed. **“And He said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful”** – This is the third time in the *Book of Revelation* that Christ and His Word is described by the words **“true and faithful”** (*Rev. 3:14; 19:11; 22:6*). Christ Himself is *“faithful and true”* in that He by Himself fulfilled all the conditions, requirements, and stipulations of the everlasting covenant of grace for the salvation of His people (*Dan. 9:24*). Here His Word is described as **“true and faithful”** because He (as Mediator) cannot lie and cannot fail to keep His promises (*Heb. 6:17-20; 2 Cor. 1:20*). He is both **“true and faithful”** both to fulfill His promises and execute His threats.

**(21:6) – “And He said unto me, It is done”** – The end of all things is now come. The first heaven and earth are totally destroyed and finished forever. The new heaven and earth are completed, and the whole election of grace is brought into the kingdom of God’s dear Son. Every individual vessel of mercy is brought into the kingdom by grace. All the saints are gathered by Christ, their bodies raised and glorified. All the promises and prophecies relating to the glorious state of the church are now fulfilled. The kingdom of Christ is complete, and all other kingdoms are destroyed. What Christ finished on the cross in the redemption of His people (His church, His bride) is now fully and eternally applied to each member of His body.

**“I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end”** – As in *Revelation 1:8* and again in *22:13* Christ identifies Himself as **“Alpha and Omega,”** the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet – **“the beginning and the end.”** This speaks of the eternity and immutability of Christ in Himself. He is the eternal Son of God, the second Person of the Trinity, co-equal with the Father and the Holy Spirit in every attribute of His divine nature. This assures us of His ability to fulfill all the conditions of our complete and eternal salvation to the praise of the glory of God’s grace (*Matt. 1:21,23*). Christ is God in human flesh without sin (*John 1:1-3,14*). This also identifies Him as the embodiment of the Word of God. Christ is the full revelation and intelligent communication of God. He is the Word by which God speaks to His people and reveals Himself as sovereign LORD and Savior, as both just and Justifier. This also speaks of the preeminence of Christ as Godman/Mediator. He **“IS”** the glorified Godman/Mediator.

**“I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely”** – He assures that all who thirst after the salvation HE has accomplished and freely provides will receive from Him the fullness of that salvation **“freely,”** without cause with them or conditions met by them. This is the nature of salvation by God’s grace (*Eph. 2:-10*). It is **“freely”** and powerfully given to all who desire it. Man by nature does not desire salvation God’s way by grace because he is in the darkness of sin and self-righteousness. But God the Holy Spirit in His powerful work of conviction makes God’s elect thirsty and

hungry for righteousness that can only be found by grace in Christ (*Matt. 5:6*). He saves all who see and know their need of Him because He has convinced them of their need of Him.

**(21:7)** – Those who **“overcometh”** describes those who trust Christ for all salvation, righteousness, forgiveness, eternal life, and glory. Man cannot overcome sin, Satan, and the world by his own power and goodness, for he has none. Only Christ can and has overcome His and our enemies (*John 16:33*). We who trust Him and cling to Him are *“more than conquerors through Him that loved us”* (*Rom. 8:37*), and nothing can separate us from His love because of Who He is and what He has accomplished (*Rom. 8:35-39*). In and by Christ, we **“shall inherit all things,”** i.e., all things in salvation, all things in the new heaven and new earth, all things in glory. Having overcome all our enemies by the blood of the Lamb, every true child of God will receive the incorruptible inheritance *“that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for” us* (*1 Pet. 1:4*). **“And I will be his God, and he shall be My son”** – We who trust Christ are children of God by election, adoption, redemption, and regeneration, and we are *“heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ”* (*Rom. 8:17*). All that Christ Himself possesses as our Mediator we shall possess in Him forever (*Eph. 1:3*).

**(21:8)** – This describes all the ungodly, all sinners who are found in the end without Christ, without His blood to wash away their sins, without His righteousness imputed to justify them before God. These are all to whom the Lord imputes iniquity. They lived their lives in fear of men and legal fear of punishment that comes from unbelief of God and His Christ. They stand on their own without an advocate. This is why we who trust Christ must always thank God for the fact that He does not charge us with our sins but with the righteousness of His dear Son (*Psa. 32:1-2; Rom. 4:6-8*). These sins listed here do not describe only a certain class of the most wicked among unbelieving sinners. They describe ALL sinners who are without Christ, all who are guilty of such sins physically, spiritually, and/or both. They are described as **“unbelieving”** because unbelief is the mother of all sins (*John 16:9*). This would include anyone who does not trust and follow the true Christ of God’s Word. **“Abominable”** describes all who are offensive to God and would include those who lived in self-righteous, legalistic false religion, even those who professed to believe in Christ (*Matt. 7:21-23*), as well as those who lived in open immorality.

**“Murderers”** describe all who are guilty of this sin in deed or in thought. **“Whoremongers”** includes all whose lives were marked with spiritual whoredom, such as those who committed spiritual fornication with Babylon, the *“great whore”* (*Rev. 17:1-2; 19:2*), as well as those who lived lives of open immorality without repentance. **“Sorcerers”** describes all whose religious thoughts and lives were controlled and guided by the occult and mysticism rather than by the Word of God in Christ. **“Idolaters”** would include all who refused to worship the living and true God as He reveals Himself in Christ. **“Liars”** describes all who engage in false gospels (*John 8:44*), as well as those who spent their lives lying to gain advantage in some way.

They **“shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death”** – As stated in *Revelation 20:14*, all who are without Christ will experience eternal damnation, which is eternal separation from God. The punishment will fit the crime as the crime strikes at the very glory of Almighty God Himself.

**(21:9)** – Now John is given a vision by **“one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues.”** This messenger was one of those sent of God before to set forth the revelation of how God has completely sealed His people under Christ from deception and eternal destruction by Satan the great deceiver. He is one who before set forth the trumpet warnings through the preaching of the Gospel of God’s grace in Christ. He is also one of the messengers of God who pronounced the vial judgments, described here as **“the seven last plagues,”** upon the unbelieving world. This was judgment before final judgment such as was manifested in a famine of the Word of God in the land and God leaving men to themselves in their deception and darkness. Here the messenger reveals to John a most glorious sight. First, John writes, **“and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife.”** The messenger declares the glory of God’s salvation by grace through Christ in **“the bride, the Lamb’s wife.”** The Lamb is Christ Himself, Who is often called the Lamb in this book (*Rev. 5:6,7,9; 7:17; 13:8; 14:1; 19:7; 21:23*). He is the Son of God (God with us), the heir of all things, the Maker and Governor of the universe, King of kings and Lord of lords. He is the Head and Husband of His church, the one true Mediator between God and men. As the Lamb, He accomplished the redemption of His people by the sacrifice of Himself to put away all their sins. The blood of the Lamb is the righteousness of **“the Lamb’s wife,”** which is His church. She is adorned in the white robe of righteousness washed and made *“white in the blood of the Lamb”* (*Rev. 7:14; cf. 1:5*). This is the very righteousness of God in Christ imputed to His bride and which each one of His people, God’s elect, by the power of the Holy Spirit, has received by faith in Him.

**“The Lamb’s wife”** is all the elect of God, redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, and called by the Holy Spirit. They have been raised unto glory to live with Him forever and ever. They were first betrothed to Christ in eternity, then openly espoused by Him (one by one) at their conversion, and now being all gathered in by resurrection unto glory, the marriage is consummated in their eternal union with Him. They are now shown publicly as **“the Lamb’s wife.”** John now sees her in all the glory of her Husband, the Lord Jesus Christ.

**(21:10)** – **“And he carried me away in the spirit”** – John was in the rapture and bliss of his mind and spirit as this vision was revealed to him by God through His messenger. Some say that **“spirit”** here should be capitalized as it could be referring to the Holy Spirit Himself. We know that God the Holy Spirit is the great Revealer of God’s truth to His people, so this could be the case. John now begins to see the glory of the heavenly city, which stands in sharp contrast to the earlier vision in *Revelation 17-18* of Babylon the Great, whose beauty was utterly superficial. Babylon was a whore and an idolater, but the New Jerusalem is radiant and pure, possessing a true and eternal beauty which human eyes have not yet seen. **“To a great and high mountain”** – This is a symbol of Mount Zion, the church of the living God, built upon, redeemed and ruled by the Lord Jesus Christ (*Rev. 14:1; cf. Psalms 48:2; Ezekiel 40:2; Hebrews 12:22*). This **“high mountain”** describes their eternal security in Christ (*Psalms 125:1; Isaiah 57:15*). **“And shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God”** – Here is the new Jerusalem, the heaven city, in all its splendor and glory as it stands in the glory of the Lamb (*21:2*). Again, this is the collective name of the people of God in Christ (*Psalms 48*), the city of peace as it is founded upon the Prince of peace and His redemptive work to establish peace forever and ever (*Psalms 122; Colossians 1:19-20*), coming down from God above (*Galatians 4:26; Hebrews 12:22-24*). This is symbolic of the residence and citizenship of the church, the Lamb’s wife – the true Israel of God (*Galatians 3:26-29; 6:14-16*).

**(21:11) – “Having the glory of God”** – The church does not shine forth with her own glory but with the glory and majesty of Christ, the Lamb. Christ Himself is the embodiment of the greatness, fullness, majesty, and holiness of God (*Col. 1:19; 2:9*). The church, the redeemed of the Lord, shines forth in His glory as they are “*complete in Him*” (*Col. 2:10*). **“Her light,”** or her brilliance, is Christ Who is the “*Sun of righteousness*” (*Mal. 4:2*), for He is the light of His church and the one who enlightens her (*21:23; Isa. 60:19-22*). The **“light”** of His glory is compared to **“a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.”** This stone is both durable and bright so that its light shines forth clearly and distinctly. It is not like the light of nature which lightens all men but not fully and with such distinction as to bring men to a clear and eternal knowledge of the glory of God in Christ. This is the eternal light that is most clear as it sets forth the glory of God’s grace in salvation by Jesus Christ.

**(21:12) – “And had a wall great and high”** – The high wall is symbolic of the safety enjoyed by all those dwelling within the holy city, all dwelling in Christ. **“And had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel”** -- The reference to **“twelve gates,”** guarded by **“twelve angels”** with the name of the **“twelve tribes”** of Israel, recalls Ezekiel’s vision of the heavenly city in *Ezekiel 48:31-34*, and points to the fact that the heavenly city is the true Israel. Her splendor far exceeds that which the prophets had seen. The number **“twelve”** symbolizes the completed and fulfilled church of the living God under the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ and built upon Him and His finished work on Calvary.

**(21:13) – The “three gates”** at each of the four points of the compass symbolize the universal nature of the kingdom of God. It is not universal in that all without exception will eventually be saved and not in the sense (as some believe) that God is trying to save all without exception but either cannot or will not if men do not cooperate. It is universal only in the sense that God has a people (His elect) out of every tribe, kindred, and nation, both Jew and Gentile. It is “*a remnant according to the election of grace*” (*Rom. 11:5*), redeemed by the Lamb and called out in power by the Holy Spirit. These are the glorified saints that have been saved by the grace of God and brought to Christ from all parts of the world. They are all who have been washed in the blood of Christ, clothed in His righteousness imputed, born again by the Holy Spirit, and are now glorified with Christ.

## LESSON 79 – THE HOLY JERUSALEM (continued) Revelation 21:14-17

**(21:14)** – The vision of the holy city, the new spiritual Jerusalem, continues here with a description of **“the wall of the city.”** **“The wall”** speaks of protection and symbolizes here the security and safety of the people of God in Christ. Babylon could not keep her followers safe from the wrath of God, but the Lamb of God is the salvation and the security of His people. They are under His blood so that no sin can touch them or be charged to them. They are clothed in His righteousness imputed so that God justifies them and accepts them in Christ. This **“wall”** is said to have **“twelve foundations.”** The number **“twelve”** and multiples of **“twelve”** are symbolic of the completed work and government of God over His people in and by the Lord Jesus Christ. Recall that in 21:13 the twelve gates symbolize the complete number of God’s elect being brought into the kingdom from every direction, every part of the world, as they are called out by the Gospel (*Rev. 14:6; 2 Thess. 2:13-14*). The **“twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb”** symbolize the apostles (messengers) who bore witness to Christ, **“the Lamb,”** and to His saving work in building His church (*Eph. 2:19-22*). Christ is the ONE foundation, the chief cornerstone, of the church upon Whom all the people of God stand and cannot fall and in Whom we dwell safely. Here we have the completed work of Christ and our completeness in Him. We have in and by Him the complete promises of all the blessings of salvation.

**(21:15)** – This **“golden reed”** is a measuring rod, the same as is mentioned in *Revelation 11:1*, given **“to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof.”** This is the same described in *Ezekiel 40:1-5* and *Zechariah 2:1-5*. It is **“golden”** because its origin is of God and its standard is God’s standard of holiness and righteousness as revealed in the Gospel wherein **“the righteousness of God”** is revealed (*Rom. 1:16-17*). The holy **“city,”** the new, holy, spiritual Jerusalem, the eternal kingdom of Christ, is measured out as to its dimensions so that we know without doubt who measures up to this standard and qualifies as a full-fledged citizen of the holy city. What does this measuring rod tell? It tells us that all who are IN CHRIST, washed in His blood and clothed in His righteousness imputed, measure up and are qualified to enter and live eternally in this holy city. They measure up and are qualified not by their works and efforts but by the complete and perfect work of the Lord Jesus Christ who redeemed them with His precious blood. Those who seek to measure up by their works will not be allowed by God to enter and live in this city (*Matt. 7:21-23; Rom. 9:31–10:3*). All who are found IN CHRIST fully measure up as they are righteous in and by Him (*Php. 3:7-9*). They enter the city BY HIM, and they are eternally secure IN HIM. The walls of the earthly Jerusalem were constantly breeched by enemies, but the walls of this holy Jerusalem will never be breeched because of Christ, **“the Captain”** of our salvation (*Heb. 2:10*), the **“Author and Finisher of our faith”** (*Heb. 12:2*).

**(21:16)** – All these measurements describe the absolute and complete perfection of this holy Jerusalem - **“And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth.”** This is a perfect cube without any flaws reaching to the four corners of the world from where the inhabitants of the city come. **“And he measured the city with the reed”** – As Christ is presented in the Gospel of salvation by God’s grace, we see Him as the standard and measure of righteousness - God has **“appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in**

*righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead” (Acts 17:31).* The issue as to whether or not we are citizens of this holy city is this - HOW DO WE STAND WITH CHRIST?

**“Twelve thousand furlongs”** is about fifteen hundred miles. This number is symbolic and is meant to reveal some sense of the enormous size and vastness of the heavenly city. This is the city *“whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:10)*. Some commentators see this as the dwelling-place of the redeemed, but others see this city as a symbol the redeemed themselves, the bride of Christ. Just as the apostate church, the vast idolatrous ecclesiastical system so often spoken of in this book, was symbolized as the great city Babylon, so here the glorified Church is characterized as the bride, the Lamb’s wife, in contrast with the great harlot, and as the holy city descending out of heaven from God.

**“The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal”** – This speaks both of the perfection of the holy city and the equality of each member of the church in Christ. Christ’s church is now perfected in that all the members are present in glory with Him. Not one is missing, and there is no vacancy in this glorified state of the church. All whom God chose before the foundation of the world, all whom Christ redeemed on the cross, all whom the Holy Spirit has given life and called into the kingdom are safe and secure forever within the walls of the holy city. Also, as the bride of the Lamb has been made legally perfect and righteous in Christ by His work on the cross, she is now made perfect and righteous in herself as there is no remainder of the presence or contamination of sin. All of this is to be attributed to the power, grace, and goodness of God in Christ.

**(21:17) – “And he measured the wall thereof an hundred and forty and four cubits”** – Some say this is the measurement of the height of the walls, and others say it measures the thickness of the walls of the city. Either way, this number symbolizes the fact that the walls of this holy city are impenetrable, even invincible. This wall is Christ Who is the salvation of His church. **“One hundred and forty and four”** symbolizes the perfection of the salvation, government, and safety of His church. Christ and His bride are one. God has measured the salvation and security of His people **“according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel.”** The **“man”** referred to here is Christ, the GODMAN, Who is the standard by which all things in salvation, all things in the church, are measured. He is also identified here as **“the angel,”** which is not an angel by creation or nature, but *“the Messenger (Angel) of the covenant” (Mal. 3:1)*. As stated before, the issue in salvation has to do with how we stand with Christ. Do we measure up to Him? This cannot be by our works and efforts in any way or to any degree. The only way this can be true for sinners is to be found IN CHRIST as THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS (*Jer. 23:5-6; 33:16-17*).

## LESSON 80 – TWELVE STONES OF GLORY

## Revelation 21:18-20

**(21:18)** – As John continues to record this symbolic description of the holy city, he now records the materials with which the wall and the city itself were built. **“And the building of the wall of it was of jasper”** – **“Jasper”** was one of the stones on the breastplate of judgment of the high priest in Israel (*Exod. 28:15-21*). It was mentioned in *Ezekiel 28:13* as one of the precious stones referred to as the covering setting forth the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. It symbolizes the brightness, glory, and beauty of salvation by Christ. Recall that **“Jasper”** was mentioned in *Revelation 4:2-3* described as clear (*Rev. 21:11*), and symbolizes the glorious perfections of God revealed in Christ (*Col. 2:9-10*). It sets forth the powerful splendor of Christ and sets forth the radiance of Christ and the glory of His bride as covered in His righteousness imputed to her (*Jer. 23:5-6; 33:15-16*).

**“And the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass”** – The city was of the purest **“gold.”** This is a divine work of God’s grace in Christ. Its clarity and purity is derived from Christ as is the whole church and the new creation. Being **“like unto clear glass”** describes not its transparency but its purity. In *Revelation 3:18* the Lord spoke of *“gold tried in the fire,”* the trials of fire whereby all dross has been purged away. The church now stands without the presence, influence, or contamination of sin. She has always been righteous in Christ, based on His merits imputed, but now she is righteous within.

**(21:19-20)** – **“The foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones.”** There are twelve **“precious stones”** listed. The precise identification of these gemstones in modern terms is difficult, but the impression is of staggering beauty. The symbolism points to the glory and holiness of God as revealed in the eternal salvation of His people in Christ. If there is any Biblical reference point for these gemstones, it is probably the high priest’s breastplate (*Ex. 28:15-21*) where the stones marked the twelve tribes of Israel. The problem in identifying these precisely is that no one has seen the high priest’s breastplate since it was lost, and the names of the stones have changed in various translations of Scripture. It is likely that these are symbolic of spiritual Israel saved and secured by Christ. The following is taken from John Gill’s commentary as to the meaning of these **“precious stones”** with additional comments taken from the meaning of the names of the tribes of Israel.

**“The first foundation was jasper”** – As stated, Benjamin was written on this stone. Benjamin means *“son of my right hand”* (*Gen. 35:18*). This symbolizes the glory of Christ as the Son of GOD’S right hand, as all of salvation and eternal glory is founded upon the glorious person and finished work of Christ. Christ is *“the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high”* (*Heb. 1:3*). Our security is in Him – *“Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us”* (*Rom. 8:33-34*).

**“The second, sapphire”** – The name of Issachar was written on this stone. Issachar means *“reward”* and shows how the church is the reward Christ earned by His redeeming work on the cross. We are bought with the price of His precious blood, and we belong to Him.

**“The third, a chalcedony”** – This could be the same as the carbuncle in the breastplate on which was written the name of Levi. Levi means *“attached”* or *“joined”* and symbolizes how the Christ, the Bridegroom, and His church, the bride, are joined together as one in covenant marriage.

**“The fourth, an emerald”** – On this stone Judah’s name was written. Judah means “praise” or “praise the Lord.” This symbolizes the glory of God in Christ and the worship given Him by His people whom He has redeemed.

**“The fifth, sardonyx”** – This may be thought to answer to the onyx in the breastplate, on which was written the name of Joseph. Joseph means “addition” or “may God add” showing forth the success of Christ’s work in adding to His kingdom all that those whom the Father had given Him (*John 6:37-45*). It is the same idea as expressed in *Isaiah 9:7* – *Of the INCREASE of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.*”

**“The sixth, sardius”** – This is probably the same as “*the sardine stone*” mentioned in *Revelation 4:3*. This was the first stone in the breastplate of the high priest (*Exod. 28:17*) upon which Reuben’s name was written. Reuben was the first born of Jacob. Christ is the Son of God, the first-born from the dead (*Col. 1:17-20*). Reuben means “viewing” or “beholding the son.” It was blood red and also symbolized the holy justice of God as it was satisfied in the blood of Christ. In Christ, beholding the Son of God, we see the glory and majesty of God in His justice satisfied and righteousness established for us. God is both a just God AND a Savior (*Isa. 45:21-22*).

**“The seventh, chrysolite”** – Asher’s name was written on this stone. His name means “blessed” or “blessings,” and symbolizes the abundant and manifold blessings of salvation and glory which we have in and by the Lord Jesus Christ (*Eph. 1:3*).

**“The eighth, beryl”** – This stone may answer to the “*ligure*” (*Ex. 28:19*) in the breastplate, which had the name of Dan on it. Dan means “judging” or “judgment” and symbolizes the great truth that all who are in Christ have been judged in Him and judged by Him and found righteous in God’s sight. Also, all judgment is given unto Him and the Word of judgment by which sinners without Christ are found wanting.

**“The ninth, a topaz”** – Simeon, whose name means “one who hears and obeys,” was written on this stone. It symbolizes the obedience unto death of the Lord Jesus Christ by which He saved His people from their sins and brought in righteousness for them. It also symbolizes the character of His people who have been given spiritual life to hear and obey His word of truth.

**“The tenth, a chrysoprasus”** – This is the agate of the breastplate which had the name of Naphtali upon it. Naphtali means “wrestling” or “striving with” and symbolizes the struggle of Christ Who, having been made sin, suffered unto death for His people. It also sets forth the struggles of His people here on earth as we persevere in the faith by the power and grace of God against all opposition and persecution.

**“The eleventh, a jacinth”** – This may correspond to the “*diamond*” (*Ex. 28:19*) in the breastplate and had Zebulon’s name written on it. Zebulon means “home” or “dwelling-place,” and represents that Christ is our permanent dwelling-place. This heavenly city is our eternal home.

**“The twelfth, an amethyst”** – The name of Gad was written on this stone. Gad means “a company” and symbolizes the power of Christ in overcoming all our enemies and the complete population of God’s elect, redeemed by the blood of Christ, and brought into this kingdom as permanent citizens to the praise of the glory of His grace.



**(21:21)** – Here John describes “**the twelve gates**” of the holy city as “**twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl.**” These “**gates**” symbolize the way into the holy city and access to all the eternal blessings therein. “**Twelve**” represents the complete number of God’s elect, whose names were written in the Lamb’s book of life before the foundation of the world. They are the whole company of sinners justified before God through redemption by the Lord Jesus Christ. All these “**gates**” together set forth the glory of Christ as He is the ONE way of salvation for all “**twelve**” tribes of spiritual Israel who come into the holy city from different directions, but all the one and the same way – JESUS CHRIST AND HIM CRUCIFIED (*John 14:6*)! The way into the holy city is the way of perfect and pure righteousness, the righteousness of God in Christ, imputed to each one of God’s elect and which they all receive and submit to by faith in HIM. The way into the city is the way of the blood of Christ that washes us as clean and as pure as these “**pearls**” from all our sin. These “**pearls**” are priceless as is Christ Himself is priceless to His people (*1 Pet. 2:7*). His blood and righteousness are invaluable (*1 Pet. 1:18-21*).

“**And the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass**” – This describes the value of Christ signified by the purest “**gold.**” In His deity and His humanity He stands as our only way to God as we are justified, forgiven, and accepted with God in HIM. His glory shines forth in the purity and glory of His Person and in power of His finished work whereby God is just to justify and glorify all who by God’s grace in Christ dwell in this holy city. “**Transparent**” means “to behold through,” indicating this “**street**” is the “**glass**” through which we behold God in His glory – through the Lord Jesus Christ.

**(21:22)** – “**And I saw no temple therein**” – There was no physical “**temple**” in this holy city as there was in old Jerusalem. The “**temple**” means the sanctuary or dwelling-place of God. In this world, the church collectively and believers individually are the temple of God (*1 Cor. 3:16*), where God has set His throne. He dwells in His people, and we dwell in Him. Here in the perfection of the holy city we find the fullness of the blessing of dwelling in Him. “**For the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it**” – God in Christ will be immediately present with His people, and they will worship and serve Him in the most pure way. “**The Lamb**” being joined here with “**the Lord God Almighty**” shows His equality with His Father. Christ being described as “**the Lamb**” shows that the “**temple**” of His glorified body, that Tabernacle which God pitched, and not man, which is filled with the fullness of the divine perfections (*Col. 2:9*), will be the only channel of the Divine presence and the communication of God’s glory to men.

**(21:23)** – “**And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it**” – Physically the life and light of this earth and its inhabitants is “**the sun,**” and “**the moon**” reflects the light of “**the sun.**” In the new heaven and the earth, life and light will not be maintained by the physical “**sun.**” “**For the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof**” – The holy city will shine forth and gain life and light from “**the glory of God**” as viewed in the “**the Lamb,**” the Lord Jesus Christ. “**Light**” signifies knowledge or comfort. In the holy city there will be no need of any created bodies to help in attaining knowledge or comfort. God in Christ shall fill the souls of His saints with knowledge and joy.

**(21:24)** – “**And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it**” – In *Revelation 20:7-8* we were told that “*when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth.*” But here are God’s

elect which **“are saved”** out of all **“nations.”** This describes all the elect of God, both Jews and Gentiles, whom God has chosen, Christ has redeemed, and the Spirit has called out of all the nations of the earth. They are eternally and securely **“saved”** by the free and sovereign grace of God in the Lord Jesus Christ (*Matt. 1:21-23; Eph. 2:8-10*). They will all, fully and equally, **“walk in the light of it,”** the glory of God in Christ. God’s elect people walk in that light even now (*2 Cor. 4:6*), but here they will all walk in the perfection and fullness of that light without any hindrance of sin and corruption. This is the eternal destiny of all **“which are saved,”** redeemed and justified in Christ. These are those who have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit and now glorified in and by Christ.

**“And the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it”** – The psalmist wrote, **“Yea, all kings shall fall down before Him: all nations shall serve Him” (Psa. 72:11)**. Some believe this is a way of describing all of the redeemed of the Lord in the sense that all who are saved are made unto God *“kings and priests”* (*Rev. 1:6; 5:10*). Others believe it is the literal kings of this earth who have been saved from the deception of the great whore and brought to Christ. This would show that no king or kingdom on earth is exempt from Christ’s sovereign rule. He is truly King of kings and Lord of lords.

**(21:25) – “And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there”** – This speaks of the liberty and the safety of those who dwell in this holy city, this glorious kingdom. There will be no need for **“the gates”** to be closed because there will be no enemies and no cloak of darkness for enemies to do their evil business against the people of God. There is nothing but complete light and security in this kingdom of Christ.

**(21:26) – “And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it”** – What is their **“glory and honor”**? It is described in *Ephesians 1:18-23* as **“the glory and honor”** of Christ, His righteousness given and accounted to His people in everlasting mercy and grace to save them and bring them to this place of eternal glory and perfection.

**(21:27) – “And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth”** – There will be no sinners or sin there, for all who have entered into this holy city have been cleansed from all sin by the blood of Christ, justified by the righteousness of Christ imputed, and they have been given new, glorious, perfect, spiritual bodies, totally without the presence and contamination of sin, in which to live eternally with Christ. Nothing but righteousness dwells here, and all who dwell herein have been *“made the righteousness of God IN HIM”* (*2 Cor. 5:21*).

**“Neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie”** – There will be no one in this city who denies, dishonors, or misrepresents the God of all glory and grace in Christ.

**“But they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life”** – This is all who have been predestinated to eternal life, and though they are naturally, and in themselves, defiled and sinful creatures, yet they are justified by the righteousness of Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, and so are made meet and fit to enter this city and live forever therein.

## LESSON 82 – A RIVER AND A TREE OF LIFE

Revelation 22:1-5

**(22:1)** – This is a continuation of the vision given to John of the holy city, the New Jerusalem. **“And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal”** – This city is the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, built upon Him and His finished work of redemption, and populated with the people of God who have been justified in Christ, based on His righteousness imputed, and now glorified with Him. The psalmist wrote, *“There is a river; the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High” (Psalm 46:4)*. This **“river of water of life”** indicates all the perfect and eternal blessings of life and glory which feed the glorified saints forever and ever. It **“clear as crystal”** as it is pure grace reigning through righteousness free of all sin and hypocrisy. It includes the pure word of God in Christ and the full revelation of the glory of God given to His people equally. It indicates the continual thirst-quenching power of Christ from whom flows *“rivers of living water” (John 7:38; cf. 4:13-14)*. It is described here as **“proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.”** This **“river”** does not originate or flow from man or out of man’s obedience. It originates and flows from the God of all grace in and by the Lord Jesus Christ, **“the Lamb.”** Here is the redemptive rule of God in Christ over His people forever and ever. The fullness of the Godhead dwells in the Lamb Who was slain for the sins of His people, and the glory and life of the holy city is founded upon and comes out from God the Father through the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the power of the Holy Spirit.

**(22:2)** – **“In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life”** – Some translations say this means between the street of gold and the river. Obviously, this is a direct reference to *Genesis 2:8-9*. Adam was told by God that he could freely eat of every tree in the garden, including this **“tree of life” (Gen. 2:16)**. This **“tree of life”** represents the Lord Jesus Christ Himself who is our life. By disobeying God, Adam died spiritually and was cut off from access to this **“tree of life” (cf. Gen. 3:22-23)**. By obeying God unto death, even the death of the cross, Christ regained eternal access for His people unto this **“tree of life.”** *“That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 5:21)*.

This **“tree of life”** bore **“twelve manner of fruits”** which is all the fruit of grace, life, and glory in Christ sufficient for the twelve tribes of the *“Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16)*, which is SPIRITUAL Israel. This **“tree of life”** produced all this **“fruit every month.”** All that is needed to sustain eternal life and glory is produced year round, not in certain seasons. Christ is all to His people, and He supplies all for His people in every season without end. Our perfection and completion is in Him at all times.

There will be no sickness or death in this blessed eternal state, but **“the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations”** in the sense that the doctrines and truths of the Gospel of God’s grace will be an ever-present reminder of our healing in and by Christ, the great Physician, and a continual preservative of the people of God in their state of glory.

**(22:3)** – **“And there shall be no more curse”** – The curse that Adam brought in by disobedience will be totally removed by the death of Christ Who was made a curse for us (*Gal. 3:13*). All cursedness was removed by the blood and righteousness of Christ. **“But the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it”** – Where God is present in **“the Lamb”** there can be no curse. In Christ there is only blessedness. This establishes the safety and security of the people of God in Christ. All whom God chose, all for whom Christ died, shall be saved and eternally glorified. The glory of God as the Ruler of this universe and the Redeemer of His people insures this truth for all who flee to Christ for refuge and salvation. If

one for whom Christ died and arose again perished in hell, God's honor would be tarnished forever, and that cannot be. **“And His servants shall serve Him”** – On the basis of righteousness established by Christ which is imputed to them, and the curse being removed from them, the children of God will **“serve Him”** in love, grace, and gratitude. They are forever willing, loving bondslaves of Christ. All ungodly fear will be removed because in and by the Lord Jesus Christ, there will be no possibility of any curse falling upon us as we are eternally safe in Christ. This is eternal glorious freedom to **“serve Him”** freely and perfectly as we ought.

**(22:4) – “And they shall see His face”** – This means that all who are with Him in glory will see His glory – *“the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4:6)”* – and will be consumed in heart, mind, and soul with His glory. This is worship and praise to our heavenly Father through the Son. There will be no exalting of men here, and we will behold **“His face”** as we view Him with perfectly sinless eyes and minds (*1 John 3:1-2*). **“And His name shall be in their foreheads”** – Recall how the forehead symbolizes the mind, the conscience, even the heart. In the perfection of heavenly glory, our minds will be so consumed with His glory in Christ, and will be openly identified as His children, the redeemed of the Lord. We will confess that we belong to Him alone, and He will openly own us as His children.

**(22:5) – “And there shall be no night there; and the need no candle, neither light of the sun”** – There will be no darkness of any kind in heaven: no darkness of sin, sorrow, or ignorance. The reason is this – **“For the Lord God giveth them light.”** God will shine forth in His glory through the *“Sun of righteousness,” (Mal. 4:2)*, the Lord Jesus Christ. **“And they shall reign for ever and ever”** – Christ is the supreme ruler of all things, including His church. But as Adam, before the fall, was given the authority of a king over the earth and everything in the created universe was under him, all things in the new heaven and new earth will be subject unto Christ's church as they serve and worship Him.

**(22:6) – “And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true”** – The angel who talked with John and who was God’s instrument in setting forth these “sayings” reassures us here that not only the glorious truths of the New Jerusalem are “true,” but also all the things written in this book. God is “faithful” to His Word, and we can be assured that He will not fail or be unfaithful to any of the things revealed in this book concerning the last days. As the prophet wrote, *“This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. It is of the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: GREAT IS THY FAITHFULNESS”* (Lam. 3:21-23).

**“And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to shew unto His servants the things which must shortly be done”** – As written in *Revelation 1:1*, all these things “must shortly” come to pass or “be done.” It may seem like a long time to us as we are so bound to time, but not to God – *“But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”* (2 Pet. 3:8-9). All of God’s elect, redeemed by the blood of Christ, shall come to repentance in the power of the Holy Spirit.

**(22:7) – “Behold, I come quickly”** – Again, it may seem slow to us, but not to God. Christ will come at His appointed time to gather His people unto Himself and to destroy all His enemies. **“Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book”** – The summation of “the prophecy of this book” is to believe in, follow, worship, serve, and live in expectation of Christ and His glorious return. All who do this are “blessed” of God and recipients of His sovereign grace. Keeping “the sayings” is not an act of the so-called “free-will” of man that arises out of his own self-proclaimed goodness, but it, like faith, is the gift of God to His elect and comes from the redemptive work of Christ. Keeping also means to hold these truths and cherish them within our hearts as they are life to us. They are our very life as they lead us to Christ Who is our life.

**(22:8-9) – “And I John saw these things, and heard them”** – God the Holy Spirit showed the importance of proving that John was an eye-witness and ear-witness of these things. It is important that we know that all the truths concerning Jesus Christ, crucified, and risen again, and all the facts surrounding Him in the Old and New Testaments, including these revelations of the last days that set forth His second coming, are rooted in historical fact (*1 John 1:1-3*). Jesus Christ is no myth or phantom. He was and is a real Person, God in human flesh without sin, and He accomplished a real redemption for His people. He is really coming again to bring all things to their appointed end.

**“And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things”** – This is the second time John was so overcome and overwhelmed with the glory of the things he saw that he, without thinking, worshiped the messenger (*cf. Rev. 19:10*). The angel tells John, **“See thou do it not,”** and identifies himself – **“for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book.”** He is telling John that he is no more worthy of worship than any other “fellowservant.” Only God is to be worshiped – **“worship God.”** To worship anyone or anything else is idolatry.

**(22:10)** – The Word of God, including **“the sayings of the prophecy of this book,”** is not bound or secret. It must be revealed by God to be believed and followed, but it is to be open and in plain view of the public. Christianity is not a secret society or cult that tries to hide its message and practices. It is to be proclaimed loudly and openly throughout the world. The great truths of Christ’s second coming and our need to be found in Him, washed in His blood and clothed in His righteousness imputed, is a message with universal repercussions. God in His sovereign wisdom may hide its spiritual value from those who insist on salvation by their works and who continue in unbelief (*2 Thess. 2:7-12*), but we who are HIS witnesses are never to attempt to hide it from anyone. **“For the time is at hand”** – The time of the beginning of the fulfillment of all these things began in John’s day and continues throughout the last age until the second coming of Christ (*Rev. 1:1,3*). No one knows the exact time and hour of His return, but we need to prepare for it by embracing Christ and submitting to His righteousness imputed as the only ground of our salvation and final glory.

**(22:11)** – The second coming of Christ will not change the state and standing of any sinner. It will not bring about the justification of any sinner who is found to **“unjust,”** or unjustified, at that time. When Christ returns to earth, whatever state men and women are in at that time will be their state for eternity. **“Unjust”** is to be found without Christ. It is a sinner on his own standing before a holy and just God upon the basis of his own works. Without the blood and righteousness of Christ imputed, their persons and their works are **“filthy,”** morally and spiritually unclean. The **“righteous”** describes all who are saved by the grace of God in Christ. They are found IN HIM, washed clean from all their sins by HIS blood and justified in Him by HIS righteousness imputed. All their sins were imputed to Him, and He was judged and punished for them fully on the cross. When Christ comes again, they will all be changed in that there will be no remaining presence, influence, or contamination of sin within them. They are **“holy”** in that they have been set apart and made clean by the grace of God in Christ. This is why God’s Word tells us *“behold, NOW is the accepted time; behold, NOW is the day of salvation”* (*2 Cor. 6:2*). We must seek the Lord before it is too late.

**(22:12)** – **“And, behold, I come quickly”** – Christ is coming soon. It may not appear to us to be **“quickly,”** but it is according to God’s time scale. This also expresses the certainty of His second coming. **“And my reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be”** – This is taken from *Isaiah 40:10* and *62:11* and furnishes clear proof that Christ Himself is the true Jehovah, the eternal God. His **“reward”** for the wicked is the reward of punishment, which is the just wrath of God against their sin. His **“reward”** for the just is the reward of eternal life and glory, which is the reward of grace, the reward of the inheritance, freely given to them based on the obedience unto death of the Lord Jesus Christ. The wicked will receive what they have earned by their works, for their **“work”** is fruit unto death, the product of unbelief, self-righteousness, and pride. The just will receive what Christ has earned for them, for their **“work”** is fruit unto God, the fruit of faith, love, and gratitude.

## LESSON 84 – THE ROOT THAT SHINES LIKE A STAR

Revelation 22:13-16

**(22:13)** – This is the fourth time Christ identifies Himself as **“Alpha and Omega”** (*cf. Rev. 1:8,11; 21:6*). Recall that these are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet and identify Him as Jehovah (*Isa. 41:4; 44:6; 48:10-12*), the great **“I AM.”** This again assures us of His ability to fulfill all the conditions of our complete and eternal salvation to the praise of the glory of God’s grace (*Matt. 1:21,23*), and assures us of His ability to do all that He has revealed to us in this prophecy. Recall how this also identifies Him as the embodiment of the Word of God. Christ is the full revelation and intelligent communication of God. He is the Word by which God speaks to His people and reveals Himself as sovereign LORD and Savior, as both just and Justifier. This also speaks of the preeminence of Christ as Godman/Mediator. As **“Alpha”** He is first in preeminence and glory. As **“Omega”** He is the final Word and goal of all things. Christ is **“the beginning and the end, the first and the last.”** This speaks of Christ’s eternality and immutability. He is the eternal Son of God, the second Person of the Trinity, co-equal with the Father and the Holy Spirit in every attribute of His divine nature. All things are by Him, for Him, and to Him.

**(22:14)** – **“Blessed are they that do His commandments”** – Here is the obedience and character of those who **“have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.”** They are sinners saved by the grace of God in Christ. They are those whom God chose before the foundation of the world, whom Christ redeemed and made righteous by His death on the cross, and whom God the Holy Spirit have given spiritual life and heart to believe in and follow Christ. To **“DO His commandments”** is to trust and follow Christ by faith in the power of His grace. Many assume this means those who are saved are those who keep the law perfectly, but that is not so. None of us keep the law perfectly. If our having a **“right (privilege) to the tree of life”** and entering **“into the city”** was dependent upon our works or deeds, none of us would be saved. We who are IN CHRIST, we who by God’s grace believe in and follow Christ have the **“right”** and privilege to be identified as children of God, to partake of the **“tree of life, and may enter”** into the holy city. Our **“right”** and privilege is not based on our works, but based on the work of Christ in His obedience unto death for us. The GROUND of eternal life and glory is the imputed righteousness of Christ given us by the free and sovereign grace of God (*Eph. 2:8-10*). Our doing **“His commandments,”** which means to trust and follow Him, NOT to be saved but because we are already saved by His grace, is the FRUIT of our union with Christ and EVIDENCE of having His righteousness imputed and grace imparted to us. Remember that God has never commanded sinners to keep the law in order to be saved. God has told us the opposite – *“Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin”* (*Rom. 3:19-20*). God commands sinners to believe on the Son and follow Him.

**(22:15)** – Outside the gates of the city, outside of the glorious, redemptive presence of Almighty God **“are dogs** (morally and/or spiritually impure – *Php. 3:1-2*), **and sorcerers** (those who seek to produce supernatural effects, spiritual things, even life by their own abilities and goodness), **and whoremongers** (spiritual fornicators who give their allegiance and love to other gods), **and murderers** (bearers of deadly instruments, including false gospels of salvation by the works and will of men, that destroy the souls of men), **and idolaters** (those who worship other gods or neglect to worship the true and living God), **and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie** (those who embrace and believe a lie, any message contrary to the Gospel of God’s grace in Christ).” These terms describe disobedient, unbelieving, unregenerate, and

rebellious people who are either ignorant of or not submitted to the Lord Jesus Christ and His righteousness as the one and only way of salvation. They are without Christ and without hope of eternal life and glory.

**(22:16) – “I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches”** – Christ identifies Himself here by the name **“Jesus”** which means “GOD SAVES,” or “GOD OUR SAVIOR” (*Matt. 1:21,23*). These things were revealed to John, to **“the churches”** in Asia Minor, and to us by our sovereign Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. This means the revelation of these things was given to instruct, encourage, and comfort us in the Lord Jesus Christ. **“To testify”** means to bear witness to these things so that there is no doubt of their reality. This ratifies the contents of this book and gives it the authority and power it should have. **“Jesus”** alone possesses the authority to bear such witness, for He alone is that one of whom the prophets of Israel had foretold – **“I am the root and the offspring of David.”** This identifies Him as the Messiah of the Old Testament and speaks both of His deity and His sinless humanity (*Rom. 1:1-4*). He is **“the root”** of David in that He is the originator and source of all grace in salvation, righteousness, forgiveness, eternal life, and glory. He is the one to whom David’s royal kingship pointed as a type and picture. He Himself was before David as He is the great **“I AM”** Who was appointed and set up from everlasting to be the Savior of His people whom God chose and gave to Him. He is God in every attribute of His nature. He is **“the offspring of David”** according to the flesh as He assumed human nature, body and soul, without sin so that He could die for the sins of His people imputed to Him and establish righteousness which is imputed to them (*Heb. 2:14-18; 10:5-10*). Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh (*1 Tim. 3:16; cf. John 1:14*), and He died in order that His people would have eternal life.

He is also **“the bright and morning star”** – This is another Messianic title from the Old Testament (*Num. 24:17*) and the New Testament (*Rev. 2:28*). Christ is compared to the morning light of dawn as He Himself ushered in the day of grace by His first coming, and He will usher in the day of glory at His second coming. He is the light of His people, forever and ever the dawning of a new day. He shines in His glory and preeminence above every other light.



(22:17) – **“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come”** – The **“Spirit”** here is God the Holy Spirit. The **“bride”** is the bride of Christ, His church. Christ is the Bridegroom, and His church is His **“bride.”** The message here is, **“Come”** to Christ for all salvation, forgiveness of sin, righteousness, eternal life, and glory. This is the preaching of the Gospel of God’s free and sovereign grace in the Lord Jesus Christ to a lost world. The only hope of any sinner being saved and delivered from the wrath of God revealed in the plagues and judgments of this book is Jesus Christ crucified and risen again. Our only hope of being forgiven of all our sins, of being washed clean in the sight of God, of being justified before God, is the shed blood and imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Sinners **MUST “come”** to HIM for all salvation, else they will perish.

To **“come”** to Christ is to believe the record that God has given of His Son – Who HE is, what HE accomplished, why HE did it, and where HE is now – *“And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life” (1 John 5:11-12).* To **“come”** to Christ is to believe HIM and to believe on HIM, to rely and rest on Him for ALL salvation, our works and efforts totally excluded from the cause or the ground of this salvation. To **“come”** to Christ is to submit to HIM as the *“righteousness of God”* whereby sinners are justified and accepted before God eternally (*Rom. 1:16-17; 10:1-4*). To **“come”** to Christ is to repent of all sin and all other supposed ways of salvation (*Php. 3:7-9*).

By nature man is spiritually dead in trespasses and sins and will not, of his own will, **“come”** to Christ and submit to Him as the one and only way of salvation. Man by nature hates the light of the Gospel of God’s grace in Christ, and, if left to himself, will choose to perish in his sins thinking all the time that he is saved (*John 3:18-21,36; 6:44*). For sinners to **“come”** to Christ, they must be born again from above by the Holy Spirit (*John 1:11-13; 3:3-7*). Sinners must be given SPIRITUAL hearing – **“And let him that heareth say, Come.”** Stephen spoke of those who *“resist the Holy Ghost”* in the preaching of the Gospel, which is the general calling in preaching, and he described them as *“stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears” (Acts 7:51)*. This means they were unregenerate as evidenced by their resistance. Those who **“come”** to Christ, who receive Him, who do not *“resist the Holy Ghost,”* are those who have been born again. They have been given spiritual ears to hear out of their need of the only way of salvation by Christ (*Matt. 13:9-17; Rev. 2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22*). They are willing, not of their own so-called free will, but by having been convinced of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment by the Holy Spirit in the new birth (*John 16:1-11*).

**“And let him that is athirst come”** – Christ said, *“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled” (Matt. 5:6)*. Man by nature has no spiritual hunger or thirst after righteousness, but God gives His people that hunger and thirst when He impart spiritual life, a new heart, and a new spirit. The evidence of this spiritual life is a true heart hunger and thirst after righteousness that can only be filled and quenched in and by the Lord Jesus Christ as the LORD our righteousness. God the Holy Spirit gives all of God’s elect, all for whom Christ lived, died, was buried, and arose again, a thirst for Christ, for salvation by grace, for forgiveness and righteousness, all which can only be satisfied in and by Christ.

**“And whosoever will”** – Man by nature is not willing to come to Christ, but God makes His people willing in the day of His power. They have been drawn to Christ by the power of God (*John*

6:44). He gives them a **“will,”** a desire to believe in, rest in, cling to Christ, and no one else and nothing else will satisfy a sinner who is brought under conviction of sin by the Holy Spirit. This promise is to **“whosoever will.”** God has never turned away any sinner who is willing to come to Him through Christ. **“Whosoever will”** does not mean that man by nature has a free will in the sense that salvation is determined by or conditioned upon the exercise of his free will or his cooperation. It simply means that any who are willing to submit to God’s way of salvation by His grace in Christ can **“take the water of life freely.”** This **“water of life”** is the abundance of salvation and all blessings of salvation given in Christ **“freely,”** unconditionally, and without a cause in the sinner (*Isa. 55:1-3*).

The problem with man by nature is that he is unwilling to bow to God’s way of salvation by grace. He will not come to Christ for salvation because he loves himself too much and thinks too highly of himself and his deeds. He will not hear the truth because it does not fit with his self-righteous view of himself and his works. He is thirsty for religion and esteem but not for Christ and His righteousness alone. This is stated plainly in the following verses –

*As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.” (Romans 3:10-12)*

The only remedy is the sovereign power and grace of God to redeem us from sin and give us life in, by, and through Christ. This is stated plainly in the following verses –

*“And you hath He quickened, 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 spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)” (Ephesians 2:1-5)*

**(22:18)** – “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book” – What is said here certainly applies to the book of *Revelation*, but we can also apply this principle to the whole Bible, all of God’s Word. “**This book**” is the inspired, inerrant, revealed Word of God (*2 Tim. 3:16-17*). In the power of the Holy Spirit “**this book**” is “*able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus*” (*2 Tim. 3:15*). “**This book,**” both Old and New Testaments, with its history, poetry, law writings, epistles, and prophecies, is the book of Christ. It speaks of the glory of God in the salvation of sinners by Him and based upon His shed blood and righteousness imputed (*Luke 24:27,44-48; John 5:39-47*). “**This book**” shows us the reality of God’s true nature as holy, just, and true, as well as loving, gracious, and merciful. It tells the truth about us as fallen, sinful, depraved human beings who fell in Adam and who are born dead in trespasses and sins. It shows us that we cannot save ourselves from the condemnation and plague of sin, that we cannot make ourselves righteous before God.

“**This book**” shows us the one and only way of salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, eternal life, and glory by the free and sovereign grace of God in and by the Lord Jesus Christ. Its message is justification before God based on Christ’s righteousness imputed, redemption by His blood, and salvation by God’s grace in Christ. “**This book**” identifies and distinguishes Christ as God in human flesh without sin, the Godman, and the one Mediator between God and men. “**This book**” reveals the power and accomplishment of Christ’s obedience unto death as the Substitute and Surety of God’s elect, given Him before the foundation of the world. “**This book**” shows man’s need of spiritual life from Christ by the power of God the Holy Spirit in order to believe and follow Christ unto glory. “**This book**” shows us and guides us in the way of righteousness and godliness motivated by love, grace, and gratitude for what God freely gives His people in Christ.

“**If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book**” – This speaks of the completeness and perfection of “**this book,**” as there is nothing else to be added to the revelation of God to men. There are many things God has not revealed, but everything man needs to know about God, about sinful man, about Christ and salvation, about living unto God while on this earth and being brought to God in glory is revealed completely and perfectly. No additions are needed. Any attempts of “**ANY MAN**” to add his own opinions, ideas, or philosophies to “**this book**” will only bring upon him “**the plagues,**” the wrath of God and destruction, “**that are written in this book.**” Those who are called and gifted to preach the truths of “**this book**” have no authority to leave out any of its doctrines or to add to any of its revelations. To do so is to rebel against Almighty God and claim to be wiser than God. It can basically be summed up in man seeking to add his own works and will to the meritorious Person and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. “**This book**” is the book of God’s grace completed and perfected in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior.

**(22:19)** – Some try to preach the Bible by leaving certain truths out because they are offensive to unregenerate men and women. They avoid the teachings of God’s absolute sovereignty in all things, especially salvation. They jump over the great Gospel truths of the total depravity of all men by nature, God’s unconditional electing grace before the foundation of the world, the effectual atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ to save all of God’s elect from sin, the irresistible and invincible grace in giving all His people spiritual life by the Holy Spirit, and the perseverance and preservation of all who are saved by God’s grace. Many will leave out certain sections of “**this book,**” such as *Romans 8, 9, & 10; Ephesians 1*, because it does not exalt man’s works or man’s will in salvation.

**“God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book”** – Many use this to teach the heresy that saved sinners can lose salvation, that one can be saved one day and lost the next. It does not mean that God erases their name out of the book. If this were true there would be contradictions in **“this book,”** and that is impossible. Such heresy is contrary to the teachings of **“this book”** as it leads us to Christ for eternal salvation and final glory. **“This book”** tells us that all whose names are **“written”** in **“the book of life”** shall be saved and given *“an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for [them] and are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time”* (1 Pet. 1:4-5). **“The book of life”** is the book of God’s electing grace upon those whom He chose before the foundation of the world and who have been redeemed by Christ. No sin can be laid to their charge because Christ took all their sins upon Himself and died under the penalty of those sins, therefore, NOTHING can separate them from God’s love in Christ (Rom. 8:33-39). This is simply saying that any person who removes (or adds to) any of the words of God so as to hide and deny the Gospel message that leads sinners to Christ for salvation has no **“part”** (portion) of the blessings of salvation and eternal life. This would certainly include those who claim to be saved but who by their unbelief reveal that they never were saved at all (1 John 2:18-19). This means that these never possessed Christ and God’s salvation in him, and the Lord will reveal this in that day (Luke 8:16-18; Matt. 7:21-23).

**(22:20)** – As the book concludes, John, one last time, hears the voice of the Lord, our Savior, Jesus Christ, testifying of **“these things,”** and saying, **“Surely I come quickly.”** We are given the absolute assurance of the second coming of Christ to gather His church and judge the world, to make all things new. We who know, trust, love, and follow Him are to live in continual expectation of this glorious event. It is the complete fulfillment of the whole purpose of God for us in Christ. We are also assured of the fact that His second coming will be soon. In our limited view of things it may seem like a very long time, but in God’s view, it is but a short time. Christ could come at any moment, and He will come without warning. In light of this, we ought live our lives in light of eternity making it our highest desire to be found in Christ, to be found washed in His precious blood and clothed in His righteousness imputed, to possess Him and be possessed by Him (cf. 2 Pet. 3:9-15; Php. 3:7-14). John expresses both his agreement with these revelations and his desire for them – **“Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”**

**(22:21)** – John closes the book as he is inspired by the Holy Spirit to express his desire for God’s **“grace”** upon and with all HIS people in and by **“our Lord Jesus Christ.”** Remember, God’s free and sovereign grace reigns *“through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord”* (Rom. 5:21). This is the message of THIS BOOK.