

Judgment Seat Of Christ

“We Must All Appear...”

“Knowing Therefore the Terror of the Lord”

**A Study about the Future
Judgment of All Christians,
with a Particular Emphasis
on Revelation 1-4**

Arlen L. Chirwood

Issues of the judgment seat will involve the activities of two dispensations — the present dispensation and the coming dispensation.

The present dispensation is one filled with trials, testings, preparation. Issues of the judgment seat will be based entirely upon Christian involvement in these activities, with a view to the coming dispensation.

And in the coming dispensation — the Messianic Era — findings, decisions, and determinations previously made at the judgment seat will be brought to pass.

In the coming Messianic Era, *EVERY* Christian will find himself in one of two major positions. He will *EITHER* occupy a position of *honor and glory* *OR* he will occupy a position of *shame and disgrace*.

And there will be *NO equality* among Christians in either position, for the previous findings, decisions, and determinations at the judgment seat will have resulted in a *JUST recompense*.

One acting as a servant in the Lord's house, on the Lord's behalf during the present dispensation, will be recompensed for his services at a future date, during the coming dispensation.

There will be *EXACT payment for services rendered*; there will be *a reaping in EXACT accord with the sowing*.

Every Christian will "receive the things done in his body, according *to that he hath done*, whether it be good or bad" (II Cor. 5:10b).

This is the reason why some Christians will occupy higher positions in the kingdom than other Christians. And this is also the reason why, while some Christians will be given territorial authority, other Christians will be denied any authority at all (*cf.* Matt. 25:14-30; Luke 19:12-27).

"Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire..." (I Cor. 3:13a).

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“We Must All Appear...”

“Knowing Therefore the Terror of the Lord”

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men...” (II Cor. 5:10, 11a).

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by
Arlen L. Chitwood

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By the Same Author —

JUDE
RUTH
ESTHER
BY FAITH
RUN TO WIN
LET US GO ON
END OF THE DAYS
MOSES AND JOHN
IN THE LORD'S DAY
DISTANT HOOFBEATS
SO GREAT SALVATION
THE BRIDE IN GENESIS
GOD'S FIRSTBORN SONS
SEARCH FOR THE BRIDE
WE ARE ALMOST THERE
SIGNS IN JOHN'S GOSPEL
THE MOST HIGH RULETH
SALVATION OF THE SOUL
THE SPIRITUAL WARFARE
HAD YE BELIEVED MOSES
COMING IN HIS KINGDOM
FROM EGYPT TO CANAAN
MYSTERY OF THE WOMAN
THE STUDY OF SCRIPTURE
SEVEN, TEN GENERATIONS
REDEEMED FOR A PURPOSE
THE RAPTURE AND BEYOND
FROM ACTS TO THE EPISTLES
MYSTERIES OF THE KINGDOM
PROPHECY ON MOUNT OLIVET
NEVER AGAIN! OR YES, AGAIN!
THE TIME OF JACOB'S TROUBLE
BROUGHT FORTH FROM ABOVE
ISRAEL — FROM DEATH TO LIFE
O SLEEPER! ARISE, CALL...! (JONAH)
THE TIME OF THE END (REVELATION)
MIDDLE EAST PEACE — HOW? WHEN?
SALVATION BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH
MESSAGE IN THE GOSPELS, ACTS, EPISTLES
ISRAEL — WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?

CONTENTS

FOREWORD	vii
I. ETERNALLY SAVED, BUT JUDGMENT PAST, BUT JUDGMENT YET FUTURE	1
II. WE MUST ALL APPEAR	17
EVERYONE THROUGHOUT THE DISPENSATION	
III. THAT EVERYONE MAY RECEIVE	35
EXACT PAYMENT FOR SERVICES RENDERED	
IV. TO HIM THAT OVERCOMETH	53
OVERCOMING THE WORLD, THE FLESH, THE DEVIL	
V. THE TREE OF LIFE	69
WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE TO RULE AND REIGN	
VI. THE SECOND DEATH	89
HURT BY, NOT HURT BY	
VII. THE HIDDEN MANNA, WHITE STONE	105
CONTINUED PROVISION TO RULE AND REIGN	
VIII. POWER OVER THE NATIONS	119
REALIZING THE RIGHTS OF FIRSTBORN SONS	
IX. CLOTHED IN WHITE RAIMENT	133
THE RIGHTEOUS ACTS OF THE SAINTS	
X. A PILLAR, A CITY	147
I WILL KEEP... I WILL WRITE...	
XI. SEATED ON THE THRONE	161
CHRIST AND HIS CO-HEIRS TOGETHER	
XII. CROWNED RULERS	177
CROWNS, THRONES, REGALITY	
XIII. KINGS OF THE KINGDOM	193
RULING OVER THE EARTH	
XIV. A ROD OF IRON	209
MANNER OF CHRIST AND HIS CO-HEIR'S RULE	
XV. YOU CAN RULE AND REIGN	225
FROM HEAVENLY PLACES, OVER THE EARTH	
XVI. WHEN HE IS APPROVED	239
THROUGH A TESTING OF WORKS, BY FIRE	
APPENDIX	257
THE OUTER DARKNESS	
SCRIPTURE INDEX	275

FOREWORD

The judgment seat of Christ will be operable in *ONE realm alone* — *man's actions, following his salvation*. That which will come under review in that day will be “works” emanating out of either *faithfulness* or *unfaithfulness* — works comparable to “gold, silver, precious stones,” or works comparable to “wood, hay, stubble” (I Cor. 3:12, 13).

NOTHING pertaining to man's eternal salvation (based entirely upon that which Christ has done) can come into view at this judgment, for God has *already judged* sin in the person of His Son at Calvary. And *God is satisfied with His Son's finished work*.

In this respect, all judgment relative to eternal salvation is *PAST* and *can NEVER again* be brought up as an issue.

And this is what bothers some Christians about thoughts pertaining to the judgment seat of Christ.

Scriptures such as John 3:18 — “He that believeth on him [Christ] is not condemned [Gk., *krino*; *lit.*, ‘is not judged’]”... — clearly state that *NO Christian can ever be brought into judgment*.

YET, Scriptures such as II Cor. 5:10 — “For *we must all* appear before the judgment seat of Christ...” — also clearly state that *judgment awaits ALL Christians*.

This can become quite confusing unless one recognizes that *two entirely different matters are being dealt with*.

One has to do with God's judgment upon sin, based upon His Son's finished work at Calvary, *with eternal salvation in view*.

And the other has to do with God's subsequent judgment upon His household servants relative to their faithfulness or unfaithfulness as servants in the Lord's house, *with the Messianic Era in view*.

The former judgment — a past judgment upon sin, based on the Son's finished work at Calvary — in actuality, has to do *NOT ONLY with saved man BUT with unsaved man as well.*

Note the complete verse in John 3:18:

"He that believeth on him is not condemned ['is not judged']: but he that believeth not is condemned already ['has already been judged'] (a perfect tense in the Greek text, referring to a judgment which occurred in past time — a judgment no longer occurring during present time, for *the matter has been finished*), because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

Judgment for the sin question (sin brought into existence through Adam's fall in Genesis chapter three) *has already occurred*. It occurred in past time *for both the saved and the unsaved* — for the saved, *with respect to belief*; for the unsaved, *with respect to unbelief*.

For the former (the saved), they have been judged in past time, through a Substitute. *They have believed*, and a Substitute (Christ) has paid sin's penalty (death) on their behalf.

For the latter (the unsaved), they have been judged in past time as well, but apart from a Substitute.

They have NOT believed, and there, consequently, is no Substitute (though the Substitute is available, but, through unbelief, has not been availed) to pay sin's penalty (death) on their behalf.

Thus, they will have to pay the penalty themselves. Judgment itself has already occurred, but the payment for sin's penalty awaits.

And, at any future judgment — whether a judgment of the saved or a judgment of the unsaved (all are to be judged at times in the future, in separate judgments) — the issue of the sin question in relation to eternal salvation or eternal damnation *can NEVER resurface*.

Once an individual moves beyond this life — beyond the point where he can either believe or not believe, whether he is saved or unsaved — it is a finished matter; his eternal salvation is sealed; he has already been judged in this respect, for it is all inseparably connected with Christ's past finished work on the cross and God's past judgment relative to this finished work.

This is the reason that any future judgment of man, whether saved

or unsaved, is always seen to be on the basis of *the works of the individual being judged* — works emanating out of faithfulness (one class of the saved), out of unfaithfulness (another class of the saved), or out of no faith (the unsaved).

For a judgment of the saved with respect to *works*, refer to I Cor. 3:11-15; for a judgment of the unsaved with respect to *works*, refer to Rev. 20:11-15.

“Every man’s *work* shall be made manifest...” (I Cor. 3:13a).

“...and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their *works*” (Rev. 20:12b).

But, calling attention to things surrounding *the saved alone* throughout the remainder of this foreword, the difference between past and future judgments could be compared to the distance between the east and the west.

It is *ONLY* because of the former (God’s past judgment relative to the sin question, based entirely on Christ’s finished work) that the latter can occur (judgment on the basis of works emanating out of faithfulness or unfaithfulness); and the latter can have *NOTHING* to do with the former in the sense of nullifying, adding to, taking from, etc.

The two are completely separate in this respect.

Once a person has believed on the Lord Jesus Christ — has passed “from death unto life” — that individual comes into a relationship with God which heretofore *did NOT exist in his life*. He becomes a *new creation* “in Christ,” part of the family of God; and he then finds himself among household servants who are being dealt with accordingly.

Following an individual believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, God deals with that individual on an entirely different plane — *as a household servant, with a view to the Messianic Era lying out ahead*. That individual is *NEVER again* dealt with (during present or future time, or at a future judgment) on the basis of that which is past — Christ’s finished work, effecting his eternal salvation.

EVERYTHING having to do with God’s judgment in this respect is *past*. The person *has ALREADY been judged* (via God’s judgment upon a Substitute, upon His Son at Calvary, Who paid the penalty for sin on the person’s behalf).

And this fact alone should put to rest any thought that saved man could ever one day become unsaved, lost again.

How could he? Such would be impossible, for God *NEVER* deals with saved man on this basis (and this would be aside from the fact that man's salvation is not based on anything which he has done to begin with, but on that which *Christ ALONE has done*).

But that which numerous Christians fail to recognize is the fact that they are directly responsible, as household servants, to the One Who sent His Son to die in their stead. And, as household servants, they will one day stand before their Saviour (to Whom God has committed all judgment) to give an account relative to *faithfulness* or *unfaithfulness* in the Lord's house.

The judgment seat of Christ will be operable *in this realm ALONE*, and decisions and determinations emanating from findings at the judgment seat will result in two things:

- 1) *Reward on the one hand.*
- 2) *Loss on the other hand.*

And BOTH will have to do with the Messianic Era, NOT with eternal life.

And within BOTH there will be a JUST recompense (Heb. 2:2; 11:26) — receiving EXACTLY what an individual deserves, receiving wages EXACTLY commensurate with the person's faithfulness or unfaithfulness as a servant in the Lord's house (cf. Luke 12:42-46).

1

Eternally Saved, But ...

Judgment Past, BUT Judgment Yet Future

Eternal life is the *free* “gift of God,” obtained completely apart from works. *NOTHING* which man does — *NOT one single act, either before or after he becomes a recipient of this life* — can have anything at all to do with his salvation, for he has been saved *SOLELY* by *grace through faith*; and his salvation is based *ENTIRELY* on the work of *Another*.

Christ’s finished work at Calvary provides a means of salvation which fallen man can avail himself of *through ONE revealed means ALONE*: through receiving that which has already been accomplished on his behalf.

Works are involved in man’s presently possessed eternal salvation, *but NOT man’s works*. Rather, they are the works of *the One Who procured this salvation*.

Ruined man himself is *TOTALLY incapable* of works. He *CAN’T* operate in the spiritual realm, for he is “dead [spiritually] in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1).

Thus, since redeemed man *had NOTHING* to do with bringing to pass his presently possessed eternal salvation, he *can NEVER* be brought into any type judgment where the issue surrounds that which he acquired through Christ’s finished work at Calvary.

A judgment of this nature would *NOT ONLY* be judging that which man *had NOTHING* to do with, *BUT* it would *ALSO* be judging once again that which God has already judged. God judged sin at Calvary in the person of His Son, and God is satisfied.

Accordingly, the judgment seat of Christ *CANNOT* function in the realm of one’s eternal salvation. Decisions and determinations made at this judgment *MUST* be based *SOLELY* upon the actions of the *justified* — actions following their coming into possession of eternal salvation.

By Grace through Faith

“For by grace are ye saved [‘you have been saved’] through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph. 2:8, 9).

“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us...” (Titus 3:5a).

To properly understand issues surrounding the judgment seat of Christ one *MUST* begin with a due appreciation for the salvation which Christians presently possess — a salvation which is nonmerited and nonforfeitable.

Salvation for fallen man is both *free* and *apart from works*, but the procurement of this salvation by God’s Son was by no means *free* and *apart from works*. God’s Son provided this salvation through a vicarious sacrifice — the sacrifice of Himself; and fallen man *can do NO more than simply receive that which has already been provided*.

1) It Has Been Finished

Note the words “not of yourselves” and “which we have done” in Eph. 2:8 and Titus 3:5. Both refer to the necessity of *the TOTAL absence of works* on man’s part in relation to eternal salvation. The work has already been accomplished; the price has already been paid. When Christ cried out on the cross, “It is finished” (John 19:30), He announced *the completion of a redemptive work which He ALONE could bring to pass*.

The words, “It is finished,” in John 19:30 are the translation of one word in the Greek text (*Tetelestai*). This word is in the perfect tense and could be better translated, “It has been finished.”

That is, at this point, *EVERYTHING* relating to the work of redemption had been accomplished. *NOTHING* more remained to be done; and, consequently, there was no need for Christ to delay His death. Accordingly, immediately after Christ cried out, “*Tetelestai*,” “he bowed his head and gave up the ghost [Gk., *pneuma*, ‘spirit,’ ‘breath’; i.e., He breathed out, expired].”

The perfect tense in the Greek text calls attention to a work *completed* in past time, with *the results* of this work extending into the present and existing in a *finished* state.

This is the same verb tense used in Eph. 2:8 relative to the present state of redeemed man (“are ye saved”; *lit.*, “you have been saved”). Redeemed man is in possession of a salvation (present) wherein *EVERYTHING* has already been accomplished (past) on his behalf.

The Holy Spirit has performed a work (breathing life into the one having no life [*cf.* Gen. 2:7; Ezek. 37:1-10]) based on Christ’s finished work (at Calvary). Both are past works, and one can no more be nullified than the other.

Redeemed man is as totally helpless *to UNDO anything* which has been accomplished in bringing about his redemption as he was *to DO something* to accomplish his redemption in the first place.

Work completed in past time through Divine intervention *is NOT something* which man can change, add to, take from, etc. Consequently, contrary to that which is often taught in certain quarters, redeemed man *CANNOT* nullify the past work of the Holy Spirit in effecting his present redeemed state, wrought on the basis of Christ’s finished work.

Redeemed man *can NO more* nullify the Spirit’s work in salvation than he can nullify Christ’s finished work at Calvary. Both constitute past, completed works wrought through Divine intervention, and man is *COMPLETELY powerless* to act in these realms.

2) God's Established, Unchangeable Pattern

Almost 6,000 years ago, God created man. Then, resulting from Satanic intervention, man fell. Man became a ruined creation. And this was followed by God setting about to restore His ruined creation.

God’s work surrounding man’s creation and restoration was preceded by His work surrounding a restoration of the material creation upon which man was to reside. Satanic activity had brought about the ruin of the material creation, and then subsequently man’s ruin (Gen. 3:1ff; Isa. 14:12-17; Ezek. 28:14-19), and *Divine activity ALONE* could bring about the restoration of both (Gen. 1:2b ff).

Ruined man finds himself in *EXACTLY* the same condition as the ruined earth, seen in Gen. 1:2a. Satanic activity brought about man’s ruin, and Divine activity *ALONE* can bring about his restoration.

Man is *NO more* capable of bringing himself out of his ruined state than was the ruined earth. And, apart from Divine intervention — as occurred in the restoration of the ruined earth — man would have

remained in his ruined condition forever (as the ruined earth, apart from Divine intervention, would have remained in its ruined condition forever, as well).

The former restoration sets the pattern for the latter restoration. The former is *God's unchangeable pattern* concerning how He restores a ruined creation, *FOREVER established in the openings verses of Genesis*.

Man, a subsequent ruined creation of God, *MUST be restored in complete accordance with the established pattern*.

In the Genesis account, the Spirit of God moved, God spoke, and light came into existence.

And matters are *EXACTLY the same* relative to ruined man today — *i.e.*, relative to a subsequent ruined creation. *EXACTLY as in the Genesis account*, the first thing which *MUST* occur is the movement of the Spirit of God. And insofar as ruined man is concerned, *this initial act of the Spirit is that of breathing life into the one who is "dead in trespasses and sins."*

And the Spirit is able to do this work on the basis of *death and shed blood*, for, *apart from death and shed blood, there can be NO salvation* (cf. Gen. 3:21; 4:10 [Heb. 12:24]; 22:7-13; Ex. 12:3-13; Heb. 10:22).

In this respect, the Spirit today breathes life into the one having no life on the basis of the finished work of God's Son at Calvary.

The living Word has performed the work, and God has spoken concerning the matter (Ex. 12:6, 7, 12, 13).

The Spirit moves, God speaks, and light comes into existence (man is born from above). And God then divides between the light and the darkness (God divides between spirit and soul, between that associated with the man of spirit and that associated with the man of flesh).

Thus, the pattern concerning how God restores a ruined creation was set forth *at the very beginning* of His Word (Gen. 1:2b ff).

And this God-established pattern *can NEVER change*.

(Note also that a time element was involved in *God's complete restoration* of the material creation — six days, followed by a Sabbath, a seventh day of rest. This points to the six days [6,000 years] comprising Man's Day, to be followed by a Sabbath, a seventh day of rest [a seventh 1,000-year period], the Messianic Era [cf. Heb. 4:4, 9].

It will only be at the end of the six days [6,000 years] comprising Man's Day that man will be completely restored — body, soul, and

spirit — as the material creation was completely restored at the end of six days in the Genesis account.

ONLY THEN will the Sabbath within this complete sequence ensue; *ONLY THEN* will there be a day [a 1000-year period] of rest.

As in the established pattern in Genesis, so will it be in that which events in this pattern foreshadow [Ex. 31:13-17; II Peter 1:16-18; 3:3-8].)

Blood and Leaven

“For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the Lord.

And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where you are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.

And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance forever.

Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel” (Ex. 12:12-15).

There is a dual truth taught in Exodus chapters twelve and thirteen concerning *the application of blood* and *the expelling of leaven*. These chapters introduce the first two “feasts of the Lord” in the prophetic calendar of Israel — the “Passover” and the “Feast of Unleavened Bread” (*cf.* Lev. 23:1ff).

“Blood” from the paschal lambs was to be applied *FIRST*. *THEN*, those who had applied the blood were to put “leaven out of their houses.”

This is the unchangeable order established by God in the Book of Exodus.

In these two chapters, the sentence of death had fallen upon the firstborn throughout all the land of Egypt (Ex. 12:4, 5). The firstborn in every household, Israelite and Egyptian alike, *MUST die*.

However, provision was made for *ALL the firstborn in Israel* to experience death vicariously. Every household was to take a lamb from the flock, the lamb was to be slain, and blood from the lamb was to be applied “on the two side posts and on the upper door post” of

every house throughout the camp of Israel.

When the Lord passed through the land of Egypt to execute the sentence of death, *He looked for ONE thing* at each house. *He looked for the BLOOD upon the entrance way.*

The *presence of blood* showed that the firstborn in that household *had ALREADY died*. Death had occurred vicariously through a slain lamb from the flock. The Lord then *passed over* that house.

The *absence of blood*, on the other hand, showed that the firstborn *had NOT yet died*. Death then *occurred* at the hands of the Lord, for the firstborn in every household *MUST* die.

It *CANNOT* be overemphasized that *the ONLY thing* which the Lord looked for on this particular night was the *blood*. "...when I see the *blood*, I will pass over you" (Ex. 12:12, 13).

NOTHING else was in view; and once the death of the firstborn had been executed, *that was the end of the matter*. Those who died vicariously held the same position relative to death in the eyes of the Lord as those who died apart from a substitute.

The death of the firstborn had occurred in both instances, and God was satisfied. *NOTHING* could, at a later time, be reversed.

In the antitype of this aspect of Exodus chapters eleven and twelve, "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us ['was sacrificed on our behalf']" (I Cor. 5:7). His blood was shed; and those who have appropriated His blood, through faith, have died vicariously.

Death has occurred through the slain Lamb, as in Exodus chapter twelve. "Christ died for our sins *according to the scriptures*" (Ex. 12:1-13, 29, 30; John 1:29; 19:16-30; I Cor. 15:3).

And an individual availing himself of this provision *has already kept the appointment with death* referred to in Heb. 9:27. *The death of the firstborn is past, God is satisfied, and that is the end of the matter*. As in Exodus chapter twelve, *NOTHING* can, at a later time, be reversed.

Following the Passover in Egypt, God dealt with the Israelites on an entirely different plane. The Israelites, from this time forward, were dealt with *strictly on the basis of* that which had occurred in Egypt, *NEVER* relative to this matter.

And it is the same with Christians today. Christians are dealt with *strictly on the basis of* that which Christ has done on their behalf, *NEVER* relative to this matter.

Immediately following the Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread commenced. Beginning with this festival, God dealt with the Israelites *relative to "leaven" in their houses, NOT relative to that which had previously occurred (the death of the firstborn) and was now a past, finished matter.*

They were NOW to put leaven out of their houses, and they were to eat unleavened bread for seven days.

"Seven" is God's number, as "six" is man's number. "Six" shows incompleteness, and "seven" shows completeness, with "eight" indicating a new beginning. The Israelites were to put leaven out of their houses and eat unleavened bread for *seven days* — one complete period of time.

"Leaven" points to that which is *vile or corrupt*; it points to *sin* in the lives of individuals. And the spiritual significance of this festival surrounded the fact that the Israelites, as God's redeemed people, were to put that which was vile, corrupt, associated with sin, out of the camp *for one complete period of time*. And this period of time had to do with *the existence of the nation from that point forward*.

An individual Israelite refusing to expel the leaven was "cut off from Israel" (cf. Ex. 12:15; Ps. 37:9, 22, 28, 29, 34). He died on the *right side* of the blood. *He was cut off from Israel, NOT from God.*

The same held true for the entire accountable generation subsequently cut off following events at Kadesh-Barnea.

They too died on the *right side* of the blood. Their failure to enter into the land, resulting in their overthrow in the wilderness, *had NO bearing* upon their standing before God on the basis of that which had previously occurred the night of the Passover in Egypt.

The entire matter is the same in Christendom today. Christians are commanded to "keep the feast," which is to be done in a new way, "with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (I Cor. 5:8). Christians are to put that which is vile, corrupt, associated with sin, out of their lives *for one complete period of time — the entire duration of the Christian life.*

Christians refusing to expel the leaven will, as the Israelites who refused to expel the leaven, be "cut off."

The Israelites under Moses were called out of Egypt to go into another land and realize an inheritance awaiting the nation. Those cut off in Israel forfeited the realization of their calling. They fell on the *right side* of the blood but *outside* the land to which they had been called.

And so it is with Christians. Those refusing to expel the leaven will forfeit the realization of their calling. They will fall on the *right side* of the blood but *outside* the land to which they have been called. And such a failure, as in the type, will have *NO* bearing upon that which previously occurred in their lives through the work of the Son and the Holy Spirit in effecting their standing before God.

Many Christians, because of the sins of the flesh, have their lives cut short during the present time. However, this is not the primary meaning of being “cut off.”

Those “cut off” in Israel were separated from *a realization of their calling*. They were called out of Egypt for *a purpose*; and most were overthrown, failing to realize *the goal of their calling*.

Such an overthrow for Christians in the antitype awaits the issues of the judgment seat of Christ, for it is there that decisions and determinations which directly affect Christians relative to their calling will be made.

God will not countenance sin in the lives of His people; and before the judgment seat, the harbored sins of Christians will be brought out into the open and dealt with.

Those refusing to judge their sins prior to that time, availing themselves of the high priestly ministry of Christ, will then be judged. Their sins in that day though will be dealt with in an entirely different manner; for, at that time, Christ will be their *Judge* rather than their *High Priest* (cf. I Cor. 11:31; I John 1:9-2:2).

Basis for Judgment

“For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Now if any man *build* upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;

Every man’s *work* shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by [‘in’] fire; and the fire shall try every man’s *work* of what sort it is.

If any man’s *work* abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

If any man’s *work* shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by [‘through’] fire” (I Cor. 3:11-15).

Something little understood today is the fact that the “basis” for God’s judgments is always *works*.

God judged sin at Calvary, *based on His Son’s finished work*; and when God views redeemed man today, He views this past completed work of His Son and past judgment upon sin.

Redeemed man, through the Spirit having breathed into him, possesses spiritual life; and Christ’s righteous, justifying act — His finished work at Calvary — has been reckoned as merit to him (Rom. 5:16-18; Phile. 18).

However, redeemed man in this standing before God is directly responsible to his Creator; and he, in his justified state, will himself be judged on the basis of *works* — *his own works*, performed following salvation (Matt. 16:27; I Cor. 3:12-15).

And *works* are the basis for all God’s subsequent judgments upon man — Israel, the living Gentiles coming out of the Great Tribulation, and those appearing before the Great White Throne.

Man’s appearance or nonappearance at a particular judgment, or place in this judgment (e.g., man’s appearance at the judgment seat of Christ, or at the great white throne judgment 1,000 years later), is dependent on his *acceptance* or *rejection* of the *past work of Another*; but judgment of the individual will be on the basis of *his own works*, which will be performed either as a redeemed or as an unredeemed individual (Ezek. 20:34-38; II Cor. 5:9-11; Rev. 20:11-15).

Before the judgment seat of Christ, “Every man’s work shall be made manifest...it shall be revealed by [‘in] fire.” There will be works comparable to “gold, silver, precious stones”; and there will be works comparable to “wood, hay, stubble.”

One set of material reveals works of intrinsic value, which will endure the fire; but the other set of material reveals valueless works, which will be burned in the fire.

Works performed by Christians during the present time can vary a great deal in worth. Such works can be performed under the leadership of the Holy Spirit and redound to the praise, honor, and glory of the Lord; or such works can be performed under the leadership of man and redound to the praise, honor, and glory of man.

At the judgment seat, all will be revealed; for “the fire shall try *every man’s work* of what sort it is.”

1) "Works...Revealed by Fire"

Works emanate out of faithfulness to one's calling and bring faith to its proper goal, which will result in the salvation of one's soul (cf. James 2:14-26; I Peter 1:5-11).

At the judgment seat, the worth of every man's work in this realm will be revealed; and decisions and determinations emanating out of this judgment will determine every man's position in the coming kingdom (cf. Matt. 16:24-27; 24:45-51; 25:14-30; Luke 19:12-27).

"Judgment" on the basis of *works* is alien to the thinking of many Christians, for they have been exposed time and again to a proclamation of salvation by grace through faith apart from works, *unbalanced* by the proclamation of the coming judgment of Christians on the basis of works. The emphasis has been placed almost entirely upon the finished work of Christ at Calvary, with little regard given to Christian living, the coming judgment seat, and the coming kingdom.

Teachings of this nature have centered almost solely around the salvation which we presently possess; and things having to do with the inheritance awaiting Christians, the salvation of the soul, etc., *have been removed from their respective contexts and applied to our present salvation*.

Ministries centering around this type teaching in the Churches have produced both confusion and complacency in Christendom.

Then, there is another type widespread teaching in the Churches which recognizes works *but has every Christian performing good works*.

The reasoning of those who teach along these lines usually centers around the thought that if a person is really saved he will produce good works; if, on the other hand he doesn't produce good works, this simply shows that he was never really saved in the first place.

Aside from being completely contrary to any Scriptural teaching on the subject, such a teaching produces both an erroneous view of salvation by grace through faith and an erroneous view of issues surrounding the judgment seat of Christ.

If every Christian produces good works to show that he has been saved, then works enter into an area where works cannot exist.

"And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work" (Rom. 11:6).

The presence or absence of works on the part of Christians can have no connection whatsoever with their prior reception of the finished work of Christ. Christ's finished work *allows* an individual to be placed in the position where *he can produce good works*. There is nothing in Scripture which teaches that he, of necessity, *will produce good works*. Such would be completely contrary to the teaching of salvation by grace through faith apart from works.

Man's works simply *CANNOT* enter into salvation by grace at any time, either preceding or following salvation.

Relative to eternal salvation, *man simply CANNOT do anything to:*

- 1) *Be saved.*
- 2) *Stay saved.*
- 3) *Show that he has been saved.*

If man could do any one of the three, salvation would cease to be by grace through faith, for man's works would have entered into an area where works of this nature cannot exist.

If it be maintained that every Christian *MUST* produce good works to show that he has been saved, then it *MUST* follow that every Christian would appear at the judgment seat of Christ with works which would "abide" the fire. Possessing works of this nature, every Christian would "receive a reward."

But such a thought is at once seen to be erroneous by reference to the text in I Corinthians chapter three.

There will be Christians appearing at the judgment seat who will "suffer loss" and "be saved; yet so as by ['through'] fire" (v. 15). *ALL of their works will be burned, but they themselves will "be saved," i.e., they themselves will be delivered. And this deliverance will occur "through fire."*

This *deliverance* at the judgment seat can have *NOTHING* to do with eternal salvation, for all issues surrounding one's eternal salvation, whether during the present time or at the future judgment seat, are *past issues* (e.g., Christ's finished work at Calvary, the Spirit's finished work of breathing life into the one having no life, allowing him to pass "from death unto life"). God judged sin in the person of His Son at Calvary, God is satisfied, and the Spirit can breathe life into the one having no life on the basis of this finished work of God's Son.

And this work of the triune Godhead is a *past, finished deliverance* which could *NEVER* be referred to in *the future sense* seen in I Cor. 3:15.

The *deliverance* seen in I Cor. 3:15 is, contextually, *a deliverance out of the fire at the judgment seat*. Though all of the person's works will be burned and he will appear naked in Christ's presence (Rev. 3:17, 18; cf. Matt. 22:10-14; Rev. 19:7, 8), he himself will not be burned. Rather, he will be delivered — *delivered from being burned with his works*.

But, though he himself will be delivered in this respect, "so as by ['through'] fire," he will be unable to escape the dire consequences which will result from his works being consumed by the fire and his consequent naked appearance.

And there can be no deliverance from these consequences, for there will have to be a "just recompense" — exact payment for services rendered in the house during the time of the Lord's absence.

If the preceding did not occur, God would not be perfectly just and righteous in His dealings with His household servants.

One-sided views of the judgment seat which maintain that every Christian will appear with good works are little different than the teaching which ignores works. Confusion and complacency, once again, can only be the ultimate result.

Much of the preceding, erroneous teaching is fostered by a misunderstanding of I Cor. 4:5.

This verse in the King James Version reads:

"Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God."

The problem emanates from both a mistranslation in the text and a noncontextual understanding of the words, "then shall every man have praise of God."

The words "every man" could be better translated "each man"; and the reference is back to the *faithful stewards* in verse two. Faithful stewards will, individually, receive praise from God; but there is *NOTHING* in Scripture which teaches that "every man," which, apart from the context would also include unfaithful stewards, will receive such praise.

To the contrary. Scripture quite clearly reveals that *both faithful and unfaithful stewards* will appear at the judgment seat, that the judgment seat will be operable in *two realms*, and that *faithful stewards ALONE* will receive praise of God.

2) "If Any Man's Work Abide"

"Rewards" are being reserved for *the faithful alone*. This is one side of the judgment seat. Christians have been "created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10).

Works of this nature, performed by a Christian exhibiting faithfulness to his calling, will "abide" at the judgment seat. They will be manifested as works comparable to "gold, silver, precious stones" and will endure the fire. Such works will result in the Christian receiving a reward and a position with Christ in the kingdom.

Works which endure the fire will be the type works necessary to bring faith to its proper goal, resulting in the salvation of the Christian's soul. And following the testing of such works, the Christian will receive *praise* from his Lord.

He will hear his Lord say:

"Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things..." (Matt. 25:21a, 23a).

And he will subsequently be positioned, in a regal capacity, among those destined to rule as joint-heirs with Christ (Matt. 24:45-47; 25:19-23; Luke 19:15-19).

3) "If Any Man's Work Shall Be Burned"

"Suffering loss" is in store for the unfaithful. This is the other side of the judgment seat.

It is possible for a Christian to appear before the judgment seat of Christ *without one single good work to his credit*. He will possess works, but *NOT* works done under the direction of the Holy Spirit, for the praise, honor, and glory of the Lord. Such works, comparable to "wood, hay, stubble" will be burned. They will not endure the fire. But the Christian himself "shall be saved ['delivered']; yet so as by ['through'] fire."

The presence of works, the absence of works, or the type works *can have NO bearing on his eternal salvation, wrought completely apart from his own works*. He will come out of this judgment, as Lot from Sodom, with *NOTHING* to show but escape from the condemnation befalling the unregenerate.

Works consumed by fire will be the type works unable to bring faith to its proper goal, resulting in the loss of the Christian's soul. Following the testing of such works, the Christian will be *rebuked* by his Lord.

He will hear his Lord say:

"Thou wicked and slothful servant..." (Matt. 25:26a).

Then, that which had been entrusted to him during the time of his Lord's absence will be taken from him. He will be denied a position with Christ in the kingdom, a position which could have been his had he previously exercised faithfulness in his calling; and he will then be appointed "his portion with the hypocrites." (Matt. 24:48-51; 25:19, 24-30; Luke 19:15, 20-26).

He will then find himself cast "without," into the place which Scripture calls, "the outer darkness" (ASV).

In this place there will be "the weeping and the gnashing of teeth [an Eastern expression denoting deep grief]" (ASV) on the part of Christians who realize too late that they could have occupied one of the proffered positions with Christ in His kingdom. Their rights as firstborn sons — the rights of primogeniture — will have been forfeited; and they, as Esau, will *lift up their voices and weep*.

(For a detailed discussion of "the outer darkness," refer to the Appendix in this book.)

Concluding Thoughts:

Receiving rewards or *suffering loss* at the judgment seat of Christ are grave issues about which most Christians seem to know very little, or, for that matter, appear to even be concerned. But such will have no bearing upon the fact that there is a day coming in the not too-distant future when every Christian *MUST* render an account to his Lord for the "things done in his body" (II Cor. 5:10).

Events of that day will come to pass at the end of the present dispensation, immediately preceding the Messianic Era.

Issues of that day will surround a review of the works performed by Christians in view of their receiving rewards or suffering loss.

The purpose of that day, aside from providing a “just recompense,” will be to make decisions and determinations concerning Christians occupying positions with Christ in His 1,000-year rule from the heavens over the earth.

Everything is moving toward that 1,000-year Messianic Era when God’s Son will reign supreme.

Man’s Day, in conjunction with *his rule* over the earth, is about to end; and the Lord’s Day, in conjunction with *His rule* over the earth, is about to commence.

A kingdom, such as the coming kingdom of Christ, *requires a King with numerous vice-regents*. And Christians are presently being tested, tried, refined, with a view to that coming day.

Events of the entire present dispensation revolve around the thought that God is today calling out the vice-regents who will reign with His Son during the coming dispensation; and the presence of the Church upon the earth will extend, in one sense of the word, to that point in time when God will have acquired the necessary rulers to occupy the proffered positions in the kingdom under Christ. It will extend to that point in time when the Spirit successfully completes His search for a bride for God’s Son.

The removal of the Church and the appearance of Christians before the judgment seat will involve the issues of two dispensations:

The basis for this judgment will have to do with *works, emanating out of faithfulness or unfaithfulness of the Lord’s servants during a past dispensation* (the activity of Christians during the *present* dispensation, which will be *past* in that coming day).

The purpose for this judgment will have to do with *Christians participating in the reign of God’s Son during the coming dispensation* (co-heirs ascending the throne with God’s Son in the kingdom of Christ).

(For information relative to “dispensations” and “ages,” refer to the author’s book, *The Study of Scripture*, Chapter V.)

PREPARATION occurs today.

PLACEMENT, based upon preparation, will emanate out of issues and determinations made at the judgment seat, immediately preceding the time when the Father delivers the kingdom to His Son (*cf.* Dan. 4:17, 25, 32; 7:13, 14; Matt. 20:20-23).

And *POSITIONS* in the kingdom will be realized during the reign of Christ which follows (*cf.* Matt. 25:19ff; Luke 19:15ff; Rev. 2:26, 27).

2

We Must All Appear

Everyone Throughout the Dispensation

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (II Cor. 5:10).

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

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

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

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

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

The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches” (Rev. 1:12-16, 20).

Events of the judgment seat of Christ will occur at the end of the present dispensation, following the removal of the Church but preceding the beginning of the Tribulation. This is the revealed order of events as they are set forth in the first six chapters of the Book of Revelation.

This, as well, is in complete keeping with the manner in which God deals with both Israel and the Church during Man’s Day — with one, then the other, though not both at the same time.

Christ is *NOT* judging today. Rather, He is ministering as “High Priest” in the heavenly sanctuary on behalf of Christians. And He *will NOT* act in the capacity of “Judge” *UNTIL* He completes His present high priestly ministry, *which will last throughout the present dispensation.*

Thus, Christians will NOT be judged UNTIL the present dispensation has run its course and Christ returns for His Church.

Once these things occur, the judgment of Christians will ensue; and this judgment *MUST* be completed prior to the time God turns back to and continues His dealings with Israel, completing the full number of years (490 years) determined upon the Jewish people and their city (Jerusalem) in Daniel’s Seventy-Week prophecy (Dan. 9:24-27).

Christ as Judge

In Rev. 1:13, Christ is seen dressed in the type garments worn by both *a priest* and *a judge*; but the position of the girdle about the breasts rather than around the waist indicates that Christ, in this passage, is exercising *a judicial* rather than a priestly role.

A priest would be girded about the waist, signifying *service*; but the girdle placed about the shoulders or breasts indicates *a magisterial function* (cf. John 13:2-5; Rev. 15:6).

Aside from the preceding, the entire scene is *judicial*, not priestly. *Brass, fire, and a sword* are mentioned in connection with Christ’s appearance, which speak of *judicial activity*.

And Christ’s countenance is described by the expression, “as the sun shineth in his strength,” *which would have to do with His glory, to be manifested during that coming day of His power* (cf. Ps. 2:1-9; Rev. 2:26, 27).

Then, more information is given, which will help to ascertain exactly what is being depicted by the scene at hand.

The Apostle John was transported into “*the Lord’s day [the Day of the Lord]*” (v. 10), and the vision of Christ which he saw depicts Christ as He will appear *following* the completion of His high priestly work, *anticipating* His long-awaited regal work.

The entire scene in Rev. 1:13-18 is *prophetic*, depicting Christ as *Judge in the midst of the seven Churches at the conclusion of the present dispensation, anticipating that coming day when He will exercise governmental power and authority over the earth.*

The chronological arrangement of events opening the Book of Revelation sets forth the fact that God will deal with the Church in judgment *BEFORE* He deals with Israel and the nations after this fashion (cf. I Peter 4:17-19). The Church will be removed from the earth and placed in the heavens; and the Church will be dealt with during a period of time *BEFORE* the Tribulation begins on earth.

A review of the first five chapters of the Book of Revelation reveals that there will have to be an interval of time between the removal of the Church and the beginning of the Tribulation. That is, the present dispensation will run its course, the Church will be removed, and certain events will then transpire in heaven (while the Church is in heaven) before the Tribulation begins on earth (which, when it begins, will fulfill seven uncompleted years of the previous dispensation).

These events — occurring while the Church is in heaven, preceding the beginning of the Tribulation on earth — concern *the Church coming under judgment* (as revealed in chapters one through three).

And these events also concern *the relinquishment of crowns* which Christians will wear during the Messianic Era (ch. 4), along with *preparations to redeem the domain* over which Christians will rule at this time (ch. 5), as well as bringing about *the marriage of God's Son to His bride* (a bride previously revealed at the judgment seat in chs. 1-3 [ref. Ruth 3, 4]).

(The event marking the beginning of the Tribulation on earth is *NOT* the removal of the Church, as often taught, *BUT* the ratifying of a seven-year covenant between the man of sin and Israel.

The Tribulation, following the ratifying of this covenant, will last *EXACTLY seven years* [360-day years], completing the full four hundred ninety years of Daniel's prophecy concerning *Seventy Sevens* "determined" upon the Jewish people and their "holy city" [cf. Dan. 9:24-27].

Also, for information pertaining to the marriage of God's Son to His bride, refer to the author's books, *Search for the Bride*, *The Bride in Genesis*, and *Ruth*.)

Material in the Book of Revelation has been arranged in a three-fold manner, and this arrangement is given at the beginning of the book, in the first chapter:

"Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter" (v. 19).

The “things which thou has seen” refer to the things concerning Christ in the verses immediately preceding verse nineteen, in chapter one (*cf.* v. 12).

The “things which are” refer to things concerning the seven Churches in chapters two and three, introduced in chapter one, which depict the Church in a two-fold respect:

1) The Church during the present dispensation, showing a history of the Church throughout the dispensation.

2) More specifically these chapters reveal the Church at the end of the dispensation (in the Lord’s Day [1:10]), showing the Church coming under judgment, continuing from chapter one .

Note that John was relating “the things which are” from the perspective of a future time, in the Lord’s Day, not from the perspective of his own time and day, during Man’s Day, though it is evident that these two chapters drop back and have to do with the Church throughout the whole of the dispensation as well.

And the “things which shall be hereafter” refer to things not only beyond the present dispensation but beyond that time when the Church is judged (chs. 1-3). And this section of the book, though having its own divisions, continues from the beginning of chapter four throughout the remainder of the book.

The word translated “hereafter” in 1:19 and the words translated “after this” and “hereafter” in 4:1 are from the same two words in the Greek text (*meta tauta*). In all three instances the translation should read, “after these things.” The thought, as shown at the beginning of chapter four, is after the things revealed in chapters two and three.

In one respect (time-wise), this would be a reference to events following the present dispensation (one way in which chs. 2, 3 are to be viewed); but, more specifically, the reference would be to events following findings and determinations emanating out of activity at the judgment seat (the primary thrust of chs. 2, 3, introduced in ch. 1).

The seven Churches in the presence of Christ in Revelation chapter one depict *the Church as a whole coming under judgment at the conclusion of the present dispensation; and the fact that this judgment will occur in heaven and has to do with issues surrounding the judgment seat of Christ*

becomes evident as one studies the opening chapters of this book.

“Seven” in Scripture is *God’s number*. It is a number showing *completion*. It is used more specifically to show *the completion of that which is in view*; and in this case, the Church is in view, with “seven Churches” showing *the complete Church (ALL Christians, faithful and unfaithful alike)*.

The seven Churches named in the opening chapters of the Book of Revelation, though referring to seven existing Churches in the Gentile world during the first century (in Asia [1:4]), depict *completion in relation to the Church*. These seven Churches represent Christianity *as a whole* — both on earth during the present dispensation (chs. 2, 3) and in heaven at the conclusion of the dispensation (chs. 1-4, as a whole).

Chapter one introduces the matter at hand, (*judgment awaiting ALL Christians*); chapters two through four then form a commentary on chapter one; and chapter five leads into that section of the book covering the Tribulation, which begins in chapter six.

(Note: When studying the Book of Revelation, look for the book’s own built-in interpretation, as in chapters one through four.

A unit of truth will be given; then, following Scriptures provide commentary upon this unit of truth, allowing the Holy Spirit Himself to interpret that which He gave through John (e.g., cf. 12:1-6 and 12:7-17; cf. 12:1-17 and chs. 13, 14; cf. 12:3; 13:1-18; 17:1-7 and 17:8-18.)

The trumpet beckoning to John in Rev. 4:1 can only be synonymous with the trumpet in Rev. 1:10. In this respect — because of the revealed events which follow in each instance — the trumpet in these two sections is evidently the trumpet which will be heard when the Church is removed from the earth at the end of this dispensation, subsequently appearing in the presence of Christ to be judged, as revealed in chapters one through three (cf. I Cor. 15:52; I Thess. 4:16-5:9).

Then, a sequence of events, revealed throughout the remainder of the book, begins to unfold.

John, transported into the Lord’s Day, at a future time, in chapter one, was instructed to record that which he saw and send the record to seven existing Churches in Asia. These Churches, along with a brief description of each, are seen on earth in chapters two and three; but the scene back in chapter one, as well, has them in the presence of Christ in heaven, at the end of the dispensation, about to come under judgment.

An overcomer's promise is listed for each Church in chapters two and three, and in chapter one the Churches are seen as they are about to be judged relative to these overcomer's promises.

Chapters two and three *NOT ONLY* furnish the background material to show *why* and *on what basis* the judgment set forth in chapter one will occur, *BUT*, these chapters actually *have to do with that judgment*.

Note the structure of each of the seven epistles to the seven Churches.

ALL seven are structured *EXACTLY* the same way:

- 1) I know thy works.
- 2) Judgment is then seen to be on the basis of these works.
- 3) And this judgment is with a view to showing whether the Christian has overcome or has been overcome (there is an overcomer's promise concluding each epistle, and these overcomer's promises are millennial in their scope of fulfillment).

Christians will be judged on the basis of works, with a view to showing whether they have overcome or have been overcome; and this will be with a view to their realizing or being denied regal promises and blessing in the Messianic Era which follows.

As previously seen, John's experience of being transported into the Lord's Day in chapter one is synonymous with his being removed from the earth at the beginning of chapter four.

Thus, events about to be revealed in chapter four begin at *EXACTLY the same place events in the previous three chapters began* — with the removal of the Church to be judged. But this judgment is not repeated in chapter four. Rather, events surrounding the judgment seat shift to related events which will immediately follow this judgment.

The scene in heaven throughout chapter four provides additional details concerning the seven Churches in the presence of Christ in chapter one. *ALL Christians*, comprising the complete Church in the presence of Christ in that future day, will *NOT ONLY* see that which John saw in chapter one, experience that depicted in chapters two and three, *BUT* also see that which John saw in chapter four (along with, it would appear, the things which John saw in the remaining chapters of the book as well).

(For additional details pertaining to the first four chapters of the Book of Revelation, refer to the author's book, *The Time of the End*, Chs. I-VI.)

By way of summation, to grasp exactly what is being taught in these opening chapters of the Book of Revelation, keep several things in mind:

1) *The main tenor of thought throughout these chapters is JUDGMENT, first upon the Church and then upon Israel and the nations.*

The book begins with events occurring in that future day, when the Church will come under judgment after being removed from the earth.

And the book then leads into the judgments of the Tribulation, which are to come upon the earth-dwellers.

These things (affecting the Church, Israel, and the nations) will come to pass at the conclusion of the present dispensation, preceding the Messianic Era.

2) *ALL seven Churches* are seen in Christ's presence during this time, even the lukewarm, naked Church of Laodicea which had shut Christ on the outside (1:12, 13, 20; cf. 3:14-21).

The seven Churches, denoting *completeness* both upon the earth (chs. 2, 3) and in heaven (chs. 1-3), reveal that *EVERY Christian will be removed from the earth at the termination of the present dispensation to appear before Christ in judgment.*

This is completely in line with any Scriptural teaching on the subject. The widespread teaching that either all or part of the Church will remain on earth during the Tribulation *has NO basis whatsoever in Scripture.*

The Scriptures teach, unequivocally, that *the complete Church — ALL of the saved from the entire 2,000-year dispensation — will be removed before the Tribulation begins; and that the COMPLETE Church will, at this time, appear before the judgment seat of Christ in heaven — a judgment which, as previously seen, will be completed before the Tribulation even begins on earth.*

Removal of the Church to Be Judged

Aside from the opening chapters of the Book of Revelation, Scrip-

tural warrant for both the removal of the Church before the Tribulation and the fact that *ALL Christians — faithful and unfaithful alike —* will be removed at this time is *NOT* difficult to find at all.

Teachings of this nature can be found beginning with the Old Testament types. And the Old Testament types *MUST* not only agree with one another but they *MUST* also agree with the New Testament antitype. All *MUST* parallel one another and be in perfect agreement.

(For additional material on the rapture, refer to the author's book, *The Rapture and Beyond*.)

1) The Old Testament Types

Three main Old Testament types dealing with the removal of Christians from the earth at the end of the dispensation, commonly referred to as *the rapture*, can be found in the opening book of Scripture, the Book of Genesis.

The first is seen in the experiences of *Enoch*, the second in the experiences of *Lot and his family*, and the third in the experiences of *Rebekah*.

And each of these three types present *different facets of the SAME picture, together forming an Old Testament composite word picture of the rapture*.

A) Enoch

Enoch, the seventh from Adam, is seen being removed from the earth between two points in time — *following a blood sacrifice, prior to the Flood* — at the end of the seventh generation, at the end of a complete period of time (“seven,” *a number showing completeness*).

This points to those whom Enoch typifies (Christians) being removed from the earth at a time following that which Abel's death typifies (Christ's death) but preceding that which the Flood typifies (the coming Tribulation), which occurs during Noah's day, the tenth from Adam (events in connection with *a subsequent complete period of time* [“ten” is *a number showing completion as well*]).

Thus, both the participants and the timing of the rapture are introduced in the foundational type. According to this type, *the rapture can ONLY have to do with those of the present dispensation* (with Christians). It *CANNOT* pertain to any other than the ones who have appropriated the blood of the One dying in the antitype of Abel's death. And

it has to occur *preceding that time typified by the Flood during Noah's day.*

In the first type in Scripture dealing with the removal of Christians from the earth, this is seen to occur *BEFORE the Tribulation*). Then, subsequent types reveal other things about this event (*e.g., the inclusion or noninclusion of ALL Christians, etc.*).

(Some individuals move beyond that which is revealed in Gen. 4-8 or Heb. 11:4-7 and attempt to teach a selective removal of Christians through using this overall, foundational type.

A teaching of this nature is derived through viewing Enoch's removal from the earth as being conditioned upon his faithfulness. Using the type after this fashion forms a beginning point which individuals often use to teach that only faithful Christians will be removed at the time of the rapture [the faithful among the dead in Christ raised and removed with the faithful who are alive at that time].

This though is an improper way to view that part of the type under discussion — *the dispensational aspect of the overall type*. There is a *dispensational scheme* of things seen through that set forth in both Gen. 4-8 and Heb. 11:4-7, but the central teaching surrounding "faith" is *really not part of this dispensational scheme per se*. Rather, the central teaching surrounding "faith," contextually, has to do with *the salvation of the soul* [Heb. 10:35ff]. And to bring "faith" from this central teaching over into this dispensational structure and attempt to teach a selective removal of Christians on this basis is clearly incorrect.

First, note what viewing matters after this fashion would do to the next type in the light of the antitype — Noah and his family going through the Flood, typifying Israel going through the coming Tribulation. This would necessitate Israel, in the antitype, exercising faith prior to the Tribulation and being delivered by acting in accordance with that faith [as Noah exercised faith prior to the Flood and was delivered by acting in accordance with his faith]. But exercising faith after this fashion *will NOT* be true of Israel during the Tribulation at all. Israel *will NOT* exercise faith *UNTIL the end of the Tribulation*, following the Jewish people looking upon the One Whom they pierced.

Then, viewing the matter from another perspective, subsequent types clearly reveal that *ALL* Christians [faithful and unfaithful alike] will be removed at the time of the rapture.

IF the foundational type shows a selective rapture of faithful Christians alone, so *MUST* any subsequent type which deals with this

aspect of the rapture. And the antitype, dealing with this same aspect of the rapture, *MUST* show a selective rapture as well.

But, when one turns to Scripture alone, the preceding is *NOT* seen to be the case at all. Something other than a selective rapture of the faithful is clearly seen in subsequent types.

And the antitype must deal with the matter after the same fashion as it is dealt with in the type, which it does.)

The foundational type in Genesis chapter four deals centrally with *the participants and the timing of the rapture (Christians, and a pretribulational event)*. It has *NOTHING* to do with selective or nonselective rapture.

Different types contain different facets of information, and subsequent types deal with the all-inclusive nature of the rapture, along with the antitype.

B) Lot and His Family

Lot, his wife, and his two virgin daughters were removed from Sodom prior to the destruction of the cities of the plain. And the manner in which the New Testament handles this event leaves no room to question that which is in view from a typical standpoint.

The destruction of the cities of the plain *can ONLY* point to the coming destruction of this present world system, and the removal of Lot and part of his family *can ONLY* point to a removal of certain individuals from this world (from the earth) prior to this destruction (a destruction occurring during and immediately following the Tribulation).

This account forms a subsequent type of that previously seen in Gen. 4-8, and *the account is dealt with in the New Testament in a parallel manner.*

The destruction of the cities of the plain during Lot's day is dealt with in the New Testament alongside the destruction produced by the Flood during Noah's day, *introducing a parallel type. BOTH destructions in the two types point to the SAME destruction in the antitype.*

"And as it was in the days of Noah...

Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot...

Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed"

(Luke 17:26a, 28a, 30).

Then Christ — relating the accounts of these two destructions occurring in history, which point to the same destruction in prophecy

— sounded two main warnings. And the warnings were directed to two groups of people — *to Israel*, and *to the Church* (about to be brought into existence).

The account surrounding Noah and the Flood was given first (v. 26). And, accordingly, Christ sounded the warning *to Israel* in connection with this type first (v. 31).

Noah and the Flood, not Enoch and his removal from the earth, are in view; and the matter has to do with those typified by Noah going through the Flood — Israel going through the Tribulation.

The same statement, comprising the warning, is later seen within a more lengthy warning which Christ provided in the Olivet Discourse. Christ, in this discourse, warned the Jewish people to flee for their lives when they saw a particular man (Antichrist) do certain things during this coming time of destruction (Matt. 24:15ff).

Immediately following the warning which had to do with the days of Noah, Christ sounded a warning which had to do with the days of Lot (v. 28). Rather than dealing with individuals going through a time of destruction, the days of Lot had to do with *individuals removed prior to this destruction*. And the warning which Christ sounded was in connection with Lot's wife and the salvation or loss of one's soul.

"Remember Lot's wife.

Whosoever shall seek to save his life ['soul'] shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life ['soul'] shall preserve it" (vv. 32, 33).

Lot's wife, along with her husband and two virgin daughters, was delivered from Sodom. And, though delivered from Sodom, she lost her soul.

She looked back toward Sodom rather than out ahead toward the mountain to which Lot had been told to flee (Gen. 19:17, 26; Luke 9:62).

And Lot is seen in a similar fashion as well.

Lot is contrasted with Abraham; and though Lot later found himself *on the mountain* to which he had been told to flee, his portion on the mount was diametrically opposed to that of Abraham. ("A mountain" in Scripture symbolizes *a kingdom* [cf. Isa. 2:2-4; Dan. 2:35, 44, 45; Matt. 16:28-17:5].)

Lot found himself dwelling *on the mountain*, but in a cave on the

mountain, in a place *separated from the Lord* (Gen. 19:30; cf. Matt. 22:10-14). Abraham, on the other hand, found himself also dwelling in the high country, but *standing before the Lord* — a place where, unlike Lot, he had been both dwelling and standing for quite some time (Gen. 19:27; cf. Gen. 18:22).

The account of Lot and certain members of his family being delivered from Sodom adds additional information to the type surrounding Enoch in Genesis chapter five.

This second type makes it quite clear that faithfulness or unfaithfulness of Christians and the consequent salvation or loss of the soul have *NOTHING* to do with the rapture itself.

These are issues which will come into view *following* the rapture, as seen in God's dealings with both Lot's wife and Lot *following* their deliverance from Sodom. These are issues which have to do with the judgment seat *following* the rapture, *NOT* issues which have to do with the rapture.

C) Rebekah

Then there is a subsequent type which deals with the matter from a different perspective yet, building upon that revealed in the previous types and providing additional information. And that type is found in Genesis chapter twenty-four.

This chapter in Genesis relates the story of Abraham sending his eldest servant into Mesopotamia to procure a bride for his son, Isaac.

This chapter is the fourth of five consecutive chapters in Genesis (chs. 21-25) which form one overall type consisting of numerous individual types. And within the complete typology seen in these chapters, God has set forth *EXACTLY* the same thing seen in previous chapters (chs. 4-8) — a dispensational framework of events surrounding Christ, Israel, and the Church.

Throughout these chapters, "Abraham" is seen as a type of *God the Father*, "Isaac" a type of *God the Son*, and "Sarah" (Abraham's wife) a type of *Israel* (the wife of Jehovah). "Abraham's servant" sent into Mesopotamia in chapter twenty-four is seen as a type of *the Holy Spirit* sent into the world; and "Keturah" in chapter twenty-five (who Abraham married following events in ch. 24) is also, as Sarah (in ch. 23), seen as a type of *Israel*, though within another frame of reference than Sarah.

Typology after the preceding fashion becomes evident as one works his way through these chapters.

Isaac's birth in chapter twenty-one was via supernatural means, typifying Christ's subsequent birth through the same supernatural means.

The offering of Isaac by his father in a designated place in the land of Moriah in chapter twenty-two typifies the subsequent offering of Christ by His Father in a designated place in the same land.

Abraham's wife, Sarah, dying in chapter twenty-three (following the offering of the son) typifies God's wife, Israel, subsequently being set aside (following the offering of the Son). And Israel, as Sarah, is looked upon during this time as being in the place of death (Jonah 1:17ff; John 11:6ff).

Next in the dispensational structure and overall type are events in chapter twenty-four, where the search for and procurement of the bride is seen prior to Abraham's remarriage in the following chapter. Chapter twenty-four details the work of the Spirit in the world today, searching for the bride, following Israel being set aside (ch. 23).

And this search will occur and be completed before the time God resumes His dealings with and restores Israel (ch. 25).

In the past, Israel, as Sarah, was barren (Gen. 16:1, 2). And because of Sarah's barrenness, Isaac's birth required God's supernatural intervention.

But when Israel is one day restored, typified by Abraham marrying Keturah in chapter twenty-five, conditions will be reversed. Keturah bore Abraham six sons (Gen. 25:1, 2). Keturah was very fruitful, as Israel will be during that coming day after the nation has been restored.

It is between these two dispensational points (Israel being set aside [ch. 23] and Israel subsequently being restored [ch. 25]) that God procures a bride in the antitype for His Son, Jesus.

And as Abraham sent his eldest servant into Mesopotamia to search for and procure a bride for his son, God has sent the Holy Spirit into the world to search for and procure a bride for His Son.

Thus, within the dispensational structure of the things seen throughout Genesis chapters twenty-one through twenty-five, there can be no question concerning that which is involved in the typology of chapter twenty-four. This chapter *can ONLY* have to do with the mission of the Spirit in the world throughout the present dispensation — searching

for and procuring a bride for God's Son.

The servant arrived in Mesopotamia with "ten camels" laden with his master's goods. "Ten" is the number of *ordinal completion*, showing *ALL of the master's goods* (Gen. 24:10), and the master had given all these goods to his son (Gen. 24:36; 25:5).

The servant was to show the prospective bride, from Abraham's family, *ALL the glories which the father had given to his son*. *THEN, the invitation to become the wife of Abraham's son was to be extended* (Gen. 24:3, 4, 53, 57, 58).

This points to that which is occurring during the present dispensation. The Spirit is in the world showing those from God's family (Christians) *ALL the glories which the Father has given to His Son*. And He is doing this through opening the Word to their understanding, revealing these things to them. *THEN, as in the type, the invitation is extended to Christians to become the wife of God's Son*.

Rebekah, in the type, said that she would go (Gen. 24:57, 58).

And once the purpose for the servant's mission had been accomplished, he removed Rebekah from Mesopotamia (Gen. 24:59ff). In the antitype, *EXACTLY* the same thing will occur.

Once the purpose for the Spirit's mission has been accomplished, He will remove the bride from the world. And the manner in which Isaac's bride was removed, along with that which followed, forms the pattern for the manner in which Christ's bride will be removed, along with that which will follow.

Abraham's servant removed the bride on camels, and the bride was accompanied by damsels. *ALL of them together rode on the camels, and they ALL went forth together to meet Isaac*.

Though the number of the camels at the time of the departure is not stated, the inference would clearly point to *ten camels*. The servant entered the land with "ten camels" to search for the bride, and the reference to camels upon his departure with the bride would clearly point to *the SAME ten camels*.

Rebekah and her damsels leaving on the camels shows *ordinal completion* once again. *ALL went forth to meet Isaac*, but *ONLY Rebekah* was later presented to Isaac as his bride for whom the servant had searched. Rebekah was the one seen putting on *her veil* when she and the damsels accompanying her came into the son's presence, undoubt-

edly typifying *the wedding garment* to be worn by Christ's bride when Christians find themselves in the Son's presence.

As *they ALL went forth* to meet Isaac in the type, so will *they ALL go forth* to meet Christ in the antitype. And, as a *distinction* was made between Rebekah and the damsels accompanying her in the type, so will it be in the antitype.

Rebekah was the one who had responded *positively* to the servant's mission in Mesopotamia; and she was the one who, following her removal from Mesopotamia, was *separated* from the other damsels and presented to Isaac as his bride.

In like manner, those Christians forming Christ's bride will be the ones who respond *positively* to the Spirit's mission in the world; and they will be the ones who, following their removal from the earth, will be *separated* from other Christians and presented to Christ as His bride.

2) *The New Testament Antitype*

There are not really that many verses in Scripture (O.T. or N.T.) which pertain to the rapture per se. Scripture, dealing with Christians, centers around two main areas:

- 1) With issues surrounding faithfulness or unfaithfulness during the present time, preceding the rapture.
- 2) With issues surrounding the results of one's faithfulness or unfaithfulness, following the rapture.

Scripture provides a great deal of information in both realms; but, from a comparative standpoint, Scripture does not present that much information concerning the rapture itself.

The rapture though, as has been demonstrated, is dealt with in several of the types. And the existence of the types demands the existence of an antitype.

An individual could really go to only two places in the New Testament to view the rapture in connection with the events set forth in the three Old testament types under consideration — I Thess. 4:13-5:10 and Rev. 1:10-4:11 (though the rapture is presented in I Cor. 15:51-57, details surrounding the events seen in the types are not presented here).

Each of these two sections provides information peculiar to the

passage, but only one provides the complete sequence seen through comparing the types—Rev. 1:10-4:11. I Thessalonians 4:13-5:10 provides everything except a reference to the Tribulation. And since this is provided in the context of Rev. 1:10-4:11 (chs. 5ff), this section of Scripture will be used to show the antitype, with reference back to I Thess. 4:13-5:10.

It is sometimes stated that there is *NO place in Scripture* which shows the sequence of events having to do with all Christians being removed preceding the tribulation. *BUT, that's NOT true at all.* This is seen in the Old Testament types, and this is also seen in the New Testament antitype as well.

Again, the *ONLY possible way* to properly deal with the rapture from the standpoint of Scripture is to call attention to the matter *after the fashion in which God has set it forth.*

One simply calls attention to the types and the antitype, leaving the matter to rest upon the foundation of Scripture itself.

A) Christians in the Lord's Day

John, in the Book of Revelation, was taken to the Isle of Patmos and then transported not only into the Lord's Day (or the Day of the Lord) but at a future time as well (1:10; 4:1, 2). And, in this future time, in the Lord's Day, John was told to record that which he was being allowed to see (1:19), which dealt first with events surrounding the Church in Christ's presence in heaven (1:10-4:11), then with events surrounding Israel and the nations on earth (5:1-19:21).

The Lord's Day follows Man's Day in relation to man on the earth, whether for the Church or for Israel and the nations. Once Man's Day has been allowed to run its course, or once man has been removed from the earth during Man's Day (as John being removed from the Isle of Patmos, or the removal of Christians from the earth at the end of the dispensation), the Lord's Day begins for man at that time.

That is, the Lord's Day *will begin on earth* at the end of Man's Day; and the Lord's Day *can begin for a segment of mankind* prior to that time through man being removed from the earth, removed from Man's Day on the earth.

Thus, the Lord's Day will begin at least seven years earlier for the Church (removed from the earth) than it will for Israel and the nations (remaining on the earth).

(Matters surrounding Man's Day and the Lord's Day in relation to the preceding are dealt with more fully in Chapters IV, V of the author's book, *The Time of the End*.)

Christians removed from the earth preceding the seven-year Tribulation *will NO longer be living in Man's Day*.

"Man's Day" has to do with *man upon the earth during an allotted 6,000 years of time* (with the foundation upon which the whole of the matter rests seen in the six and seven days of Gen. 1:1-2:3). Christians, at the time of the rapture, will be removed from Man's Day and transported into the Lord's Day (a day presently existing in heaven [cf. Mark 12:27; John 8:53]).

That, as previously shown, is what is seen through John being transported into the Lord's Day in Rev. 1:10 and seeing seven Churches in Christ's presence, in heaven, in that future day.

This is also what is seen in I Thess. 5:2ff, following the removal of the Church into the heavens (4:13-18). A removal of the Church into the Lord's day will overtake many Christians "as a thief," though this will not be true for other Christians (5:2-4; cf. II Peter 3:10, 11).

Christians in the Lord's Day, in connection with either *faithfulness* or *unfaithfulness*, resulting in either *salvation* or *wrath*, is the subject at hand in I Thess. 5:1-9. And this is the same subject set forth in the opening chapter of the Book of Revelation (in conjunction with that revealed in chs. 2, 3), though seen from a different perspective.

(As previously seen, the rapture of the Church in the Book of Revelation is set forth in *John's experience* [removed from earth into heaven, into the Lord's Day in 1:10, with the same event repeated in 4:1, 2].

If, as taught by some Christians, the rapture of the Church is not seen in John's experience in these opening chapters of the book, then the rapture itself is not dealt with in this book. But, even if the preceding were correct, which it isn't, the rapture would still have to occur at the time of or preceding John's experience, for John, immediately following, *saw the complete Church in Christ's presence, in heaven, in the Lord's Day*.

Thus, relative to *the timing of the rapture*, whether or not the rapture is to be seen in John's experience would be immaterial. *Contextually, it would still be pretribulational*. As well, the rapture is plainly shown in a companion passage [I Thess. 4:13-17] to *precede the SAME mention of Christians in the Lord's Day as seen in Rev. 1:10-20* [cf. I Thess. 5:2-4].)

B) *Christians in Christ's Presence*

Thus, as clearly stated in the opening chapter of the Book of Revelation, this book begins with Christians in Christ's presence in the Lord's Day, at a future time. And two things are seen in this chapter relative to Christians in that future day:

1) *ALL Christians will be present, together, at the SAME time and place.*

2) *ALL Christians will appear before Christ at this time to be judged.*

The complete Church is seen in Christ's presence at this time, shown by the number "seven" — shown by *ALL* seven Churches from chapters two and three appearing in Christ's presence at the same time (1:12, 13, 20).

Not only is the Church in Ephesus seen in Christ's presence (the Church which left its first love), but the Church in Laodicea is seen there as well (comprised of "lukewarm" Christians, of whom Christ said, "I will spue thee out of my mouth" [3:16]).

ALL Christians — shown by seven Churches, seen together in Christ's presence — will be there, *awaiting judgment*.

A separation of Christians on the basis of faithfulness occurs in Christ's presence alone, at the judgment seat. *Scripture knows NOTHING about a separation of this nature occurring at the time of the rapture.*

And *ALL Christians* will appear in Christ's presence to be judged in this manner *PRECEDING* the search for One worthy to break the seals of the seven-sealed scroll (ch. 5; cf. Ruth 3, 4). *ONLY when these seals begin to be broken will the judgments of the Tribulation begin* (ch. 6).

Thus, the antitype, in complete accord with the types, presents the rapture as both *all-inclusive* and *pretribulation*. *ALL Christians will be removed together, at the same time; and this will occur preceding the Tribulation.*

This is simply what Scripture has to say about the matter, viewing the types and then going to the antitype.

What man may have to say is of *NO moment whatsoever*.

Scripture ALONE contains the correct, necessary information to properly address the issue at hand. And that is where the matter MUST be left.

3

That Every One May Receive

Exact Payment for Services Rendered

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men...” (II Cor. 5:10, 11a).

Decisions and determinations emanating from findings at the judgment seat will fall into two categories, with there being NO middle ground (*cf.* Matt. 12:30; 25:19-30; Luke 19:15-26; I Cor. 3:11-15; II Cor. 5:9-11):

“Well done, thou good and faithful servant...”

“Thou wicked and slothful servant...”

The fact that “a just recompense” — *exact payment for services rendered* — will be meted out to every individual is set forth in Scripture a number of different places through a number of different means (types, parables, metaphors, direct statements).

Beginning with the writings of Moses in the Book of Genesis and terminating with the writings of John in the Book of Revelation, Scripture is *replete with information concerning EXACTLY what the future holds for ALL Christians; and there can be NO excuse for any Christian with an open Bible set before him to be other than knowledgeable concerning these things.*

Each Christian, individually, will appear before the judgment seat of Christ to “receive the things done in his body, according to that *he hath done*, whether it be good or bad.”

The specific statement is made that Christians will be judged SOLELY on the basis of that which *they themselves have done*, which will be a judgment SOLELY on the basis of works.

"Every man's *work* shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by ['in'] fire; and the fire shall try every man's *work* of what sort it is" (I Cor. 3:13).

The *WORKS* of *Christians* which will be tried "by ['in'] fire" in that coming day will, according to Scripture, fall into two categories: "gold, silver, precious stones," and "wood, hay, stubble" (I Cor. 3:12).

And *EVERY Christian* will receive "a just recompense," *completely commensurate with that revealed by his works*.

Reason for Judgment

There are two major events in Scripture, common to all Christians, with which *EVERY Christian should be intimately familiar*.

One event is *that past moment when the individual became a Christian through believing on the Lord Jesus Christ*.

The other event is *that future moment when the same individual will be removed from the earth to appear before the Lord in judgment*.

A Christian's presently possessed salvation in no way prepares him for that which will occur at the judgment seat. Becoming a Christian only places the individual in a position where *he can appear at this judgment*. Otherwise, he would appear at the great white throne judgment, with the unsaved dead from throughout Man's Day (Rev. 20:11-15).

Issues of the judgment seat of Christ will occur *before the Millennium*, and issues of the great white throne judgment will occur *after the Millennium*.

Issues of the judgment seat of Christ *MUST* occur before the Millennium for the simple reason that *these issues will involve the Millennium itself*.

Such though *will NOT* be the case with judgment to be executed at the great white throne. *Issues of this judgment will involve ONLY the eternal ages beyond the Millennium*.

Thus, the former judgment finds its place in Scripture *preceding the Millennium* and the latter *following the Millennium*.

The Church was brought into existence to be the recipient of that part of the kingdom which Israel rejected, *the kingdom of the heavens*; and the Church *MUST* appear in judgment, with *the kingdom of the*

heavens in view, preceding the time Christ takes the kingdom.

The primary purpose for the judgment seat of Christ is to reveal, through a testing “by [‘in’] fire,” *each Christian’s qualifications for occupying one of the numerous proffered positions as a co-heir with Christ in the kingdom.* And emanating out of this revelation through testing will be a *JUST recompense — each individual receiving EXACTLY what he deserves, either receiving rewards commensurate with his service or suffering loss commensurate with his failure to serve.*

Christians, at the judgment seat, will be shown to be either *qualified or disqualified* to occupy positions of power and authority with Christ in the kingdom. And every Christian will either *enter into and occupy one of these positions or be denied one of these positions.*

Issues surrounding the judgment seat will involve the activities of two dispensations — the present dispensation, and the coming dispensation.

The present dispensation is one filled with trials, testings, and preparation; and issues of the judgment seat will be based *entirely upon Christian involvement in these activities, with a view to the coming dispensation.*

Then, in the coming dispensation, the Messianic Era, *findings and determinations previously made at the judgment seat will be brought to pass.*

In the coming dispensation, every Christian will find himself in one of two positions. He will either occupy a position of *honor and glory*, or he will occupy a position of *shame and disgrace*. And there will be no equality among Christians in either position, for there will have previously been a *just recompense* at the judgment seat.

There will be a reaping in accord with the sowing. Every Christian will “receive the things done in his body, *according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.*”

This is the reason why some Christians will occupy higher positions in the kingdom than other Christians. And this is also the reason why, while some Christians will be given territorial authority, other Christians will be denied any authority at all (*cf.* Matt. 25:14-30; Luke 19:12-27).

The Bema

The words “judgment seat” are a translation of the Greek word *bema*. This word refers to an elevated platform upon which the chair

of a magistrate rested. This was the recognized place of magisterial authority; and the person occupying this chair issued decrees, judgments, etc. relative to the matter at hand.

Some expositors have sought to understand the word *bema* in the sense that it was used in connection with the ancient Grecian athletic games in Athens. At these games, the *bema* was a raised platform upon which the president or the umpire sat; and *the victorious participants would appear before the bema, at the conclusion of the contests, to be rewarded.*

At these games, there was *NO* thought of judicial activity in connection with the *bema*, *ONLY* rewards; and this use of the word has led many Christians to view the *bema* of Christ within the same framework — a rewarding stand, apart from judicial activity.

However, the word *bema* is used a number of times in the New Testament in quite a different sense; and Scripture *MUST, first and foremost*, be understood in the light of itself, of other Scripture.

The use of words in contemporary sources outside the Scriptures can, at times, provide added light on definitions, meanings, etc.

And this could extend into the way in which the word *bema* was used in connection with the athletic games in Athens. *BUT*, the use of this word in connection with these games shows *ONLY one facet* of the way in which the word is to be understood. New Testament references show another facet, which is quite different.

In many instances, rewards will emanate from findings at the judgment seat. Every man's *work* will be tried "by ['in'] fire." The race will have been successfully run (the present *race of the faith*), judgment will follow, and rewards will then come into the picture.

As previously seen, the Grecian athletic games *had ONLY* the victorious runners and rewards in view, with *NO* thought of judicial activity in connection with loss following the various contests. *BUT*, victorious and nonvictorious runners alike will appear before the judgment seat of Christ:

"For we must *ALL* appear..."

ALL Christians — victorious and nonvictorious, overcomers and nonovercomers — will appear before Christ's *bema*, judgment will be executed, and, as previously seen, a just recompense will result through every Christian receiving "the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (II Cor. 5:10b).

Despite the previous differences, in I Cor. 9:24-27 Paul likened himself to a contestant in the games of that day, though one with an entirely different purpose and goal in view.

A contestant in the games conditioned himself *physically*, with his ultimate goal being the reception of *a corruptible crown*.

But Paul, as a contestant in the race of the faith, conditioned himself *spiritually*, with his ultimate goal being the reception of *an incorruptible crown*.

The thought in both contests is straining every muscle of one's being as the contestant moves toward the goal.

(The word translated "striveth" [v. 25] is from *agonizomai* in the Greek text. This is the word from which the English word "agonize" is derived.

Note Luke 13:24 where the same word is translated "strive"; note also the intensified form of this same word [*epagonizomai*], translated "earnestly contend," in Jude 3.)

Paul knew that he would appear before Christ's *bema* at the termination of the contest, as a runner either *approved* for an incorruptible crown or *disapproved* for this crown ("castaway" in v. 27, KJV [Gk., *adokimos*], should be translated "disapproved").

At that time, *approval* would result in the person subsequently being crowned (after Christ receives the kingdom and returns [cf. Dan. 7:13, 14; Rev. 19:11ff]), and *disapproval* would result in the crown subsequently being denied. And the contestant who fails in the race of the faith would also "suffer loss" at this time (cf. I Cor. 3:15).

The word *bema* is only used twice in the New Testament relative to the judgment seat of Christ (Rom. 14:10; II Cor. 5:10). The reference in Rom. 14:10, according to some Greek manuscripts, should be translated "judgment seat of God." This is the rendering preferred by most commentators, but the rendering is open to question.

In the final analysis though, the question resolves itself as really being immaterial: "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son" (John 5:22).

And since the judgment seat in Rom. 14:10 is the one before which all Christians must stand, this can only be synonymous with the judgment seat of Christ referred to in II Cor. 5:10.

Other uses of the word *bema* in the New Testament are found in the gospel accounts (Matthew and John) and in the Book of Acts. In these accounts, the word *bema* appears in connection with magisterial functions of Pilate, Herod, Gallio, Festus, and Caesar.

Note the different usages of the word *bema* in these three books:

1) *Matt. 27:19; John 19:13*: The word *bema* is used in these two passages referring to the place where Pilate sat when he issued the decrees that Barabbas be released and Jesus be crucified.

Pilate sat in judgment upon God's Son, but the day is coming when these roles will be reversed. God's Son will one day sit in judgment upon Pilate; and the past judgment rendered by Pilate, among other things, will be accounted for (Rev. 20:12).

2) *Acts 12:21*: Herod, arrayed in "royal apparel," sat upon "his throne [*bema*]" and made an oration." The people listening associated his voice with that of "God" rather than "man"; and Herod, not giving God the glory, was executed by the angel of the Lord.

3) *Acts 18:12, 16, 17*: Gallio, deputy of Achaia, refused to judge Paul when the Jews "brought him to the judgment seat [*bema*]" (vv. 12-16). Then in verse seventeen, "the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat [*bema*]."

4) *Acts 25:6, 10, 17*: Paul was brought before Festus' "judgment seat [*bema*]," which he called "Caesar's judgment seat [*bema*]"; and upon Paul's appeal to Caesar, Festus rendered the decision to send him to Rome.

The use of the word *bema* in the preceding passages is not at all in accord with the thought of a rewarding stand.

In each instance the judicial activities of a magistrate are in view, which is *EXACTLY* the Scriptural view of the judgment seat of Christ.

When the various Scriptures bearing upon the subject are viewed together, it is clearly revealed that this judgment will result *NOT ONLY* in *praise* and *rewards* *BUT* also in *rebuke* and *suffering loss*. The latter will be just as much of a reality as the former, or vice versa; for, again, every person will "receive the things done in his body, *according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.*"

Justification by Faith, Works

At the judgment seat of Christ there will be *an execution of perfect justice and righteousness*. If rewards are merited, then rewards will be forthcoming; if, on the other hand, punishment is merited, then punishment will be forthcoming. *EVERY* Christian will be judged “according to his works,” and there will be *EXACT* payment for services rendered. The former will be *EXACTLY commensurate* with the latter.

In Scripture there is a *justification by faith* and there is also a *justification by works*. And, correspondingly, there is a *salvation* associated with each. Verses such as Eph. 2:8, 9 deal with justification by faith, with Eph. 2:10 leading into the thought of justification by works. Then, a passage of Scripture such as James 2:14-26 deals more in detail with justification by works.

This is where individuals often commit mayhem when studying Scripture. They see only justification by faith throughout Scripture, and they attempt to make passages such as James 2:14-26 fit into the framework of teachings surrounding justification by faith. And, as a result, confusion reigns supreme.

Justification by faith is based entirely upon the finished work of Christ at Calvary and has to do with the salvation which Christians presently possess — the salvation of the *spirit* (“...that which is born of the *Spirit* is *spirit*” [John 3:6b]).

Works performed by the one being justified by faith CANNOT enter in any form or fashion — either preceding or following salvation.

That is, unredeemed man *CANNOT* do any works to be saved, and redeemed man *CANNOT* do any works to either stay saved or show that he has been saved. It is a justification “by grace through faith” *completely apart from the works of fallen man* — whether preceding or following salvation. Works enter into this justification *ONLY to the extent that Christ performed the works on man’s behalf, and man can be justified ONLY by receiving that which Christ has already done.*

Justification by works, on the other hand, is based entirely upon the actions of those who have already been justified by faith, those who have been justified on the basis of Christ’s finished work.

“Faith” itself is *NOT* part of justification by works per se. There is *NO* such thing in Scripture as a *justification by faith and works*. There

is a *justification by faith*, and there is a *justification by works*; but there is NO such thing as a *justification resulting from a combination of the two*.

It is true that works emanate out of faith. And it would be equally true that a different type of works, on the other hand, would emanate out of unfaithfulness (James 2:14-26). ALL Christians will be judged on the basis of that emanating out of one or the other. They will be judged either on the basis of that which emanated out of their faithfulness or on the basis of that which emanated out of their unfaithfulness.

That is, they will be judged *on the basis of their prior reaction to faith* (cf. Rom. 1:17), which will have to do with either *their prior faithfulness* or *their prior unfaithfulness*. And, emanating out of the former or out of the latter will be a revelation of works at the judgment seat comparable to either “gold, silver, precious stones” or “wood, hay, stubble.”

In justification by faith, it is the work of Another which makes possible *justification on the basis of faith*.

In justification by works, it is faithfulness on the part of those who have already been justified by faith which not only results in works but makes possible *justification on the basis of works*.

In this respect, the type works resulting in justification by works emanate from one's faithfulness to his calling; and works of this nature, in turn, bring faith to its proper goal. And the goal of faith, brought to this point as a result of works, is *the salvation of one's soul* — the salvation associated with justification by works (cf. James 2:22; I Peter 1:9).

Thus, *justification by faith* is based ENTIRELY upon Christ's righteous, justifying act — His finished work at Calvary (Rom. 5:16, 18).

And *justification by works* is based ENTIRELY upon the “righteous acts of the saints” — the works of those having previously been justified by faith, through the work of Another (Rev. 19:8, ASV).

The word translated “righteous acts” (“righteousness,” KJV) is plural in the Greek text (*dikaïomata*) and CANNOT refer to the imputed righteousness of Christ possessed by every Christian (which is a singular righteousness).

Dikaïomata in this verse can ONLY have to do with the works of saved individuals (the same word, appearing in the singular, is translated “justification” and “righteousness” in Rom. 5:16, 18 [referring to *justification by faith*, made possible through Christ's finished work at Calvary]; and a cognate verb [from *dikaïoo*] is translated “justified” in

James 2:24, referring to works emanating out of faithfulness).

The “righteous acts of the saints” — *justifying acts* of the saints — emanate out of faith (faithfulness to one’s calling). And these acts *ALONE* will result in justification by works.

The type works possessed by every Christian will be revealed “by [‘in’] fire” at the judgment seat.

Works emanating out of faith will be revealed as works comparable to “gold, silver, precious stones.”

And works of this nature will bring about three things:

- 1) Justification by works (*i.e.*, a justification on the basis of works which will have emanated out of faithfulness [James 2:14-26]).
- 2) Provide the Christian with a wedding garment (made up of the righteous acts of the saints [Rev. 19:7, 8; *cf.* Ruth 3:3; Matt. 22:8-14]).
- 3) Bring faith to its proper goal (which will result in the salvation of the soul [I Peter 1:4-9]).

An individual having been justified by works will appear in Christ’s presence *properly clothed*. He will possess *a wedding garment*; and, consequently, he will be in a position to participate in the activities attendant the bride.

Having *denied himself, taken up his cross, and followed Christ*, he will realize the salvation of his soul (Matt. 16:24-27). And he will be among those who will occupy positions as joint-heirs with Christ in the kingdom.

An individual having failed to be justified by works will appear in Christ’s presence *improperly clothed*. He *will NOT* possess a wedding garment; and, consequently, he *will NOT* only be naked but also ashamed (*cf.* Rev. 3:15, 17, 18; note “*works*” [v. 15], “*naked*” [v. 17], and “*shame*” [v. 18]).

Lacking a wedding garment, he will be in *NO* position to participate in the activities attendant the bride.

Having saved his life (soul) — living for self, rather than having lost his life (soul) for Christ’s sake during the present day of trials and testings (Matt. 16:25) — he *will NOT* realize the salvation of his life (soul) in that coming day. Faith *will NOT* have been brought to its proper goal; and, as a result, he *will NOT* be among those who will occupy positions as co-heirs with Christ in the kingdom.

(*Saving one's life, living for self*, has to do with allowing the self-life [the soulical man] with all its fleshly desires, appetites, etc. to control oneself [in opposition to Matt. 16:24].

(*Losing one's life for Christ's sake*, on the other hand, has to do with bringing the self-life [the soulical man] with all its fleshly desires, appetites, etc. under subjection to the spiritual man [cf. Gen. 16:9; Gal. 4:21-31], taking up one's cross, and following Christ [in accord with Matt. 16:24].)

Terror of the Lord

Faithfulness to one's calling, the righteous acts of the saints (the wedding garment, the covering associated with works emanating out of faithfulness, providing a justification by works), and the salvation of the soul are all inseparably related and have to do with issues surrounding the judgment seat.

Scripture deals with this overall subject on a far broader scale than many realize. Romans 14:10; I Cor. 3:11-15; and II Cor. 5:10, 11 are only three of many passages dealing, either directly or indirectly, with the judgment seat in the New Testament. From the parables in the Gospel of Matthew (e.g., 22:1-14; 24:40-25:30) to the opening chapters of the Book of Revelation, the New Testament is replete with information concerning things related to the judgment seat.

According to II Cor. 5:11, the judgment seat is the place where "the terror of the Lord" will be manifested. The word "terror" in this verse is a translation of the Greek word *phobos*, referring to that which causes "fear" or "apprehension." This is the same word translated "fearful" in Heb. 10:31 ("It is a *fearful* thing to fall into the hands of the living God"), another reference to events at the judgment seat.

Actually, Heb. 10:30, 31 forms a parallel reference to II Cor. 5:10, 11, and the preceding verses (vv. 26-29) provide additional information concerning that facet of the judgment seat associated with "the terror of the Lord."

Note how this entire section in Hebrews begins:

"For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge [Gk., *epignosis*, 'mature knowledge'] of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.

But a certain fearful [Gk., *phoberos*, a cognate form of *phobos* (ref. previous page)] looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries" (vv. 26, 27).

That Christians, rather than the unredeemed, are in view is evident. The verses introducing this passage (vv. 19-25) deal with Christians alone ("Having therefore, *brethren*, boldness..." [v. 19]); and, beginning with verse twenty-six, there is no change in the identity of those addressed.

The word "we," appearing twice in this verse, shows that the writer is talking about himself and other Christians, continuing without a break in the overall continuity of thought from the preceding verses.

Further, the word "knowledge" in this verse is a translation of the Greek word *epignosis*, showing that these individuals had acquired a *mature knowledge* of the truth ("after that we have received the knowledge ['mature knowledge'] of the truth").

Gnosis is the regular Greek word for "knowledge," and *epignosis* is an intensified form of this word (through a preposition being prefixed to the word), referring to "a mature knowledge." Only redeemed individuals possess saved spirits into which the Word of God can be received; and only redeemed individuals possess the indwelling Holy Spirit Who can take the Word of God, after it has been received into their saved human spirits, and lead them into "all truth" (resulting first in *gnosis*, but leading into *epignosis*). None of this is possible for the unredeemed, for they possess no means to either receive or rightly divide the Word of God.

The "things of the Spirit of God," revealed through the Word of God (John 16:13-15), are "foolishness" to the unredeemed; they *CANNOT* "know [*gnosis*]" these things, for these things "are spiritually discerned" (I Cor. 2:14). The unredeemed man, the soulical man, *CANNOT* even come into a rudimentary understanding (*gnosis*) of the things revealed through the Spirit of God, much less a mature understanding, referred to by the word *epignosis* (note also the word "illuminated" in v. 32; this is from the same Greek word translated "enlightened" in Heb. 6:4, which, drawing from the type in chs. 3, 4, can refer *ONLY* to the saved).

Thus, there can be *NO* room for controversy concerning *EXACTLY* who is in view in Heb. 10:26ff. Drawing from both the text and the context, the passage can be understood *ONLY one way* — a passage of Scripture dealing with *the saved ALONE*.

(*Epignosis* in v. 26, as it is used throughout the epistles, is often seen having a peculiar relationship to knowledge as it pertains to the Word of the Kingdom.

And, contextually [from vv. 23-25], that is the relationship seen in this verse through the use of *epignosis*. Then, also contextually, it is *ONLY* those who have come into this mature knowledge of the Word of the Kingdom who are able to commit the particular sin in view.)

Sinning Wilfully

Christ provided Himself as the Sacrifice for sin, His blood is today on the mercy seat in heaven, and He is presently occupying the office of High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary on behalf of sinning Christians. Christ is presently performing a cleansing from defilement for Christians who sin, and all a Christian needs to do in order to avail himself of this provided cleansing is to confess his sin.

When he does this, cleansing will occur (I John 1:9).

The wilful sin of Heb. 10:26 results in defilement, as any sin. But, a different situation exists with this sin. This verse states that *NO sacrifice* exists for those who sin after the manner dealt with by the verse, which separates it from Christ's present ministry.

How does this sin differ from any other sin which Christians can commit? Is it possible that this sin could somehow be brought under Christ's present ministry and confessed, with forgiveness resulting from the person's confession?

If SO, HOW? If NOT, Why NOT?

1) Christ's Present Ministry

To properly understand *the wilful sin*, for several reasons (one reason being contextual), it should be viewed, first of all, in the light of Christ's present high priestly ministry in the heavenly sanctuary.

Note the context of Heb. 10:26 (vv. 19-22) and also I John 1:6-2:2.

The "blood" of Christ is presently on the mercy seat in the "holiest [Holy of Holies]" of the heavenly sanctuary; and a "new and living way" of access has been provided through the One Who shed this blood, our "high priest over the house of God."

The *blood of Christ*, presently on the mercy seat of the heavenly sanctuary, "cleanseth ['keeps on cleansing']" Christians who have

become defiled (through sin) as they “walk [‘keep on walking’] in the light” (I John 1:7; cf. Heb. 10:22).

It is impossible for the ones walking in the light to occupy a position other than being cleansed from sin; but, viewing the other side of the picture, it is entirely possible for Christians to not walk in the light, in which case there will be *NO* cleansing.

To understand exactly what is meant by *walking in the light*, one must draw from the typology of the tabernacle.

The light was provided by a seven-leaved golden candlestick inside the Holy Place where the priests carried on part of their ministry, and *the ONLY way* that these priests were permitted to enter the holy place and walk in this light was through a previous cleansing at the brazen laver in the courtyard.

This laver lay between the brazen altar and the Holy Place and had upper and lower basins for washing the hands and feet.

The entire bodies of these priests had been washed upon their entrance into the priesthood (Ex. 29:4; 40:12-15) — an act *NEVER* to be repeated — but in their subsequent ministry, it was necessary to avail themselves of partial washings (washings of parts of the body) at the laver. Their hands and feet became soiled in their ministry, and these parts of the body had to be cleansed prior to entering the Holy Place (Ex. 30:18-21; 40:30-32).

EXACTLY the same thing holds true for Christians, New Testament priests, in the antitype today. Christians have received a complete washing (received at the point of the birth from above, upon their entrance into the priesthood) — an act *NEVER* to be repeated.

But, as the Old Testament priests, they *MUST* now avail themselves of partial washings in their ministry. And this is seen in the type through the actions of Old Testament priests washing at the laver.

This is what Jesus alluded to in John 13:8, 10:

“If I wash [Gk., *nipto*, referring to a part of the body (the Septuagint uses this word in Ex. 30:19, 21)] thee not, thou hast no part *with me* [note: not ‘in me,’ but ‘with me’]”; and “He that is washed [Gk., *louo*, referring to the entire body (the Septuagint uses this word in Ex. 29:4; 40:12)] needeth not save to wash [Gk., *nipto*] his feet...”

This is also what is alluded to in Heb. 10:22 and I John 1:7.

Old Testament priests whose hands and feet had become soiled

through activity in the courtyard *could NOT* bypass the laver and proceed on to the Holy Place. *NOR can* New Testament priests.

New Testament priests must *first*, as the Old Testament priests, avail themselves of cleansing. Defilement in the Christians' case comes through contact with sin; and cleansing, according to the context of I John 1:7, is accomplished through confession of sin:

“If we confess our sins, he [God] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (v. 9).

And this cleansing is accomplished *SOLELY* on the basis of Christ's shed blood on the mercy seat in the heavenly sanctuary:

“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate [Gk., *Parakletos*, one called alongside to help in time of need] with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

And he is the propitiation [Gk., *hilasmos*, (God appeased, through Christ's work on the basis of His shed blood on the mercy seat)] for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world [contextually, a reference to *all of the saved in the world*, *NOT* the unsaved (a cleansing for *Christians ALONE* is in view; the unsaved and eternal salvation *are NOT* in view at all in these verses)]” (I John 2:1, 2).

Thus, the ones walking in the light in I John 1:7 are Christians who have availed themselves of the provision in I John 1:9. As they continue walking in the light (continue availing themselves of this provision, allowing continued access to the Holy Place), the blood of Christ continues cleansing them from “*all sin*.”

And a Christian refusing to avail himself of provided cleansing today is seen walking in darkness. He *has NOT* come to the laver and, consequently, can *ONLY* remain in the darkened courtyard outside the light in the Holy Place.

He has refused confession of sin; he has refused the cleansing provided by Christ. And for such an individual, in reality, “there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.” That is, there is *NO* sacrifice for those refusing the sacrifice which God has provided in the person of His Son.

Thus, contextually (Heb. 10:19-22), one might think that the wil-

ful sin in verse twenty-six (for which there is no sacrifice) would be a Christian's refusal to avail himself of Christ's present high priestly ministry. In this respect, *there would be NO sacrifice for his unconfessed sins* (refusing to confess sins would be refusing the provided sacrifice).

2) But...

But Christians harboring sins of the flesh and refusing to confess these sins *CANNOT possibly* be that which they are warned against in Heb. 10:26. This verse continues the thought from the immediately preceding verses (vv. 23-25), and this thought has *NOTHING* whatsoever to do with Christians confessing (or not confessing) their sins.

NOR can the wilful sin in this verse be thought of in the broad sense of sins committed by Christians in a wilful, or a deliberate, or a knowing manner. If the truth were known, it could probably easily be shown that most sins committed by Christians would fall into a singular category — things which Christians knew were sins before they committed them, knew were sins during the time in which they were committing them, and knew were sins after they had committed them.

The *ONLY* possible way to properly understand the wilful sin in Heb. 10:26, for which there is *NO* sacrifice, is to view this sin, *contextually, within the Book of Hebrews where it is found*. If this is *NOT* done, a person will invariably go wrong at this point in Scripture.

Note first that all of the warnings in Hebrews are closely related, drawing heavily from the Old Testament types.

The second warning (chs. 3, 4) draws from the account of the Israelites under Moses, and the same thought is continued in the third warning (6:4ff), relating the matter to Christians.

The sin referenced in Heb. 10:26 (which is the fourth warning) is present in both previous warnings — the type (chs. 3, 4 [second warning]) and the antitype (ch. 6 [third warning]).

The Israelites under Moses committed a sin for which there was *NO* sacrifice (second warning), and Christians today can commit *exactly the SAME sin, with the SAME result following* (third warning).

Then the fourth warning continues with thoughts pertaining to this sin; and the matter has to do with “so great salvation” (ch. 2 [first warning]), resulting in “blessings” associated with the “birthright” (ch. 12 [fifth warning]).

That is the broad contextual scope of the matter. The Israelites, in the type, through their actions at Kadesh-Barnea — refusing to go in and take the land to which they had been called — committed a sin for which there was *NO sacrifice*. And, with there being *NO sacrifice* for this sin, God *DIDN'T*, He *COULDN'T*, change His mind concerning that which He had decreed pertaining to the matter.

And Christians, in the antitype, can commit *EXACTLY the same sin relative to the heavenly land to which they have been called*. And, as in the type, *NO sacrifice* exists for such a sin. As in the type, God *WON'T*, He *CAN'T* change His mind concerning that which He has decreed pertaining to this sin, if committed by His people today.

This is plain from that which is stated in Heb. 6:2-4, again drawing from the type in chapters three and four:

“For it is impossible...if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance...”

(For additional information on the preceding, refer to the author’s book, *Let Us Go On*, Chapters IV, V, “Leaving the Principles” and “If They Shall Fall Away.”)

Then note that the reference to this sin is the continuation of a text having to do with a central purpose for Christians assembling together during the present dispensation — whether on Sunday at a regular meeting place, or at any other time or place during the week (vv. 23-25).

The particular purpose given in the text is *singular*.

This purpose has to do with Christians meeting together in order to exhort and encourage one another concerning *the hope set before each one of them* (“profession of our faith” [v. 23, KJV] should be translated, “confession of our hope”). And this hope set before every Christian is *the hope that they might one day realize the very thing to which they have been called — win a crown in the present race of the faith and, as a result, occupy a regal position with Christ during that coming day of His power*.

In short, Christians are *exhorted to assemble together for a particular purpose*, and then they are warned concerning *the danger of failing to assemble together on a regular basis for this purpose*. They can either find mutual strength in the race of the faith through assembling together, or they can fail to assemble for this mutual strength and find themselves in danger of

falling away and becoming involved in that which Scripture refers to as wilful sin.

The wilful sin, simply put, has to do with apostasy, after one has come into a mature knowledge of the things surrounding the hope set before him, before Christians — something seen in the type in the second warning and in the antitype in the third warning.

And sinning after this fashion will result in a Christian failing to come into possession of *so great salvation* (first warning), synonymous with failing to realize *the rights of the firstborn* (fifth warning).

Numbers 15:30, 31, immediately following the account of the Israelites refusal to enter into the land at Kadesh-Barnea (chs. 13, 14), deals with God's statement concerning a sin for which there was *NO sacrifice*. And an example of such a sin — a man violating the Sabbath — immediately follows God's instructions concerning the matter.

God's statement concerning a sin for which there was *NO sacrifice* in this passage had to do with a person acting in open rebellion, followed by his being cut off from the people of Israel (which was exactly what occurred at and following the events at Kadesh-Barnea).

And the contextual example not only had to do with the experiences of the Israelites, beginning at Kadesh-Barnea (chs. 13, 14), but it also had to do with a man violating the Sabbath (Num. 15:32-36).

As with the Israelites at Kadesh-Barnea, so with the man violating the Sabbath. *There was NO sacrifice for the sin committed by either.* Rather, in both instances, *the Lord commanded that a sentence of death was to be carried out.*

And, resultingly, an entire accountable generation died on the one hand, and a man was taken outside the camp and stoned on the other.

The land set before Christians is associated with a rest, *a Sabbath rest*, drawing from Gen. 2:1-3 (Heb. 4:4-9). And a Christian turning his back on this land (after coming into a mature knowledge of the things surrounding the land) would be doing *EXACTLY* the same thing which the Israelites under Moses did at Kadesh-Barnea (after hearing the report concerning the land by the twelve spies).

Then, in another respect, such a Christian would be doing violence to that which God had to say about *the Sabbath rest set before the people of God*, in a similar respect to the man violating the Sabbath in Num. 15:32-36.

The Sabbath was *a sign* pointing to a day of rest following God's present six days of work (Ex. 31:13-17). As God rested on the seventh day after working six days to restore a past ruined creation (the mate-

rial creation) — establishing an unchangeable, foundational pattern — He is going to rest on a seventh day (a 1,000-year day) after working six days (six 6,000-year days) to restore two present ruined creations (both man and the material creation once again).

Thus, drawing from both Num. 13-15 and Heb. 3, 4, 6, it can be easily shown how Christians, in Heb. 10:26ff, can sin wilfully today. They can do so through *ONLY one means: coming into a mature knowledge of the truth surrounding their calling, and then apostatizing (turning away from this truth).*

Any Christian committing such an act, according to Heb. 10:29, will have done three things:

- 1) *Trodden "under foot the Son of God."*
- 2) *Considered the blood of Christ "an unholy ['a common'] thing."*
- 3) *Insulted "the Spirit of grace."*

God places the wilful sin in a category of this nature simply because of the high place in which He holds that which He has stated concerning the coming reign of His Son. And, according to Scripture, any Christian coming into a mature knowledge of that which God has stated in this realm, and then *turning away — apostatizing — has ONLY one thing awaiting him:*

"...a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries" (v. 27).

Then note how verses thirty and thirty-one parallel II Cor. 5:10, 11:

"For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people.

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

Events of the judgment seat will be one of *the most terrible times* many Christians will ever experience, for Christians who have refused to follow the Spirit's leadership during the present day and time will, at the judgment seat, *"fall into the hands of the living God."*

Such Christians will find it to be a "fearful," "terrible" experience, for there the *"terror of the Lord"* will be manifested, and a *completely just recompense* will be meted out.

4

To Him That Overcometh

Overcoming the World, the Flesh, the Devil

“Unto the angel of the church in Ephesus... Smyrna... Pergamos... Thyatira... Sardis... Philadelphia... Laodicea write...

I know thy works...

To him that overcometh..." (Rev. 2, 3).

Revelation chapters two and three contain seven messages to seven Churches located in Asia during the first century; and these messages were directed to these Churches through seven different angels — angels who had been placed over these seven Churches.

This introduces a facet of angelic ministry within Christendom which is often overlooked.

According to Heb. 1:14, angels are “ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation [*lit.*, ‘to minister for the sake of the ones about to inherit salvation’].”

Then, according to Revelation chapters two and three, each Church possesses an appointed, ministering angel; and the context clearly infers that these angels have been placed in their respective positions, centrally, for the same reason as set forth in Heb. 1:14.

Angelic ministry in Christendom centers around the coming inheritance of the saints, the salvation of the soul, etc. Hebrews 1:14 refers to *the individual nature* of angelic ministry (*cf.* Acts 12:15), and Revelation chapters two and three refer to *the corporate nature* of angelic ministry.

Many expositors over the years have sought to teach that the word “angel” in Revelation chapters two and three (see also Rev. 1:16, 20) is a reference to individual pastors (or possibly other high officials) in each of the seven Churches. The Greek word translated “angel” (*aggelos*) refers to *a messenger of God*, and these seven messengers are looked upon by these individuals as seven human messengers from the seven Churches.

This view, however, for several reasons, is *NOT at all tenable*:

Revelation chapter one provides a distinction between the seven angels and individuals comprising the seven Churches. In this chapter, rather than being integrally identified, the seven angels and the seven Churches are seen as separate, distinct entities.

The seven Churches are represented by the “seven golden candlesticks” in Christ’s midst, but the seven angels are represented by the “seven stars” in Christ’s right hand (vv. 13, 16, 20).

Interpreting the word *aggelos* as a reference to individual pastors (seven pastors of seven Churches) is *NOT* in keeping with that which is taught concerning pastors elsewhere in the New Testament. Churches throughout the New Testament are *NEVER* spoken of as having *ONLY one pastor*. The thought is *ALWAYS* “pastors” (or “elders”) of a Church (*cf.* Acts 14:23; 15:6, 23; 20:17; Phil. 1:1; Titus 1:5; James 5:14; I Peter 5:1).

(The New Testament refers to *Churches in a region* [*e.g.*, “the churches of Macedonia” or “the churches of Galatia” (II Cor. 8:1; Gal. 1:2)], but reference is made to *ONLY one Church in a city or village* [*e.g.*, “the church of the Thessalonians” or “the church of (‘in’) Ephesus” (II Thess. 1:1; Rev. 2:1)].

ALL Christians in one city comprised one Church which met in various homes throughout the city, requiring the ministries of pastors within that one Church. And the simplicity and oneness of the Church in a city was characterized by the fact that *ALL* Christians in that city were automatically looked upon as being members of that Church [Rom. 14:1; 15:7; 16:2; I Cor. 16:10, 11; III John 5-8].

This is the apparent fashion after which each of the seven Churches in Revelation chapters two and three was structured; and since there *were NO* individual pastors of these Churches, the use of the word *aggelos* in each epistle *could NOT* possibly be thought of as a reference to the pastor of the Church being addressed.)

Then, the manner in which the Greek word *aggelos* is used throughout the New Testament should be considered, particularly the way in which the word is used in the Book of Revelation.

This word appears over one hundred eighty times in the New

Testament, and seventy-six of these occurrences are in the Book of Revelation alone.

There are only eight instances in the entire New Testament where the word *aggelos* is either clearly or seemingly used of men as messengers of God (Matt. 11:10; Mark 1:2; Luke 7:24, 27; 9:52; 24:4; Acts 10:3, 7, 22 [cf. v. 30]; James 2:25). In all other occurrences there is nothing to indicate that the word should be understood as referring to anyone other than heavenly messengers.

To understand *aggelos* in Revelation chapters two and three (also 1:20) as referring to earthly messengers, while understanding the same word throughout the remainder of the book as referring to heavenly messengers, is forced and unnatural. Consistency of interpretation would require one to acknowledge that angels are seen as being very instrumental in God's dealings with mankind throughout this book, beginning in chapters one through three.

The Overcomers

The seven messages to the seven Churches in Revelation chapters two and three are all identical in their basic structure. The opening verse of each message contains descriptive terminology, taken either word-for-word from the description of Christ given in chapter one or from material directly related to this description, which has to do with *judgment*.

Following this, each message begins with the statement, "I know thy works..." Then, certain things are stated concerning each Church relative to past works, and each message concludes with an overcomer's promise.

Contextually, the "descriptive" aspects of Christ in chapters two and three *can ONLY* continue the thought of *judgment* from chapter one. The seven epistles to the seven Churches in chapters two and three provide additional information, forming commentary, with *judgment* continuing as the central issue at hand.

"Works" are then brought into the picture in each epistle, for it is *works* which will be reviewed when Christians are judged.

"Overcoming" and promised "blessings" then terminate each epistle, clearly revealing that only the overcomers — those possessing works comparable to "gold, silver, precious stones" — will be allowed

to enter into the promised blessings.

There are seven different overcomer's promises in chapters two and three, and each promise is *millennial* in its scope of fulfillment.

That is, these promises will be realized during the 1,000-year reign of Christ after Christians have had their works tried "by ['in'] fire" at the judgment seat.

Christ is seen as Judge in the midst of the seven Churches in chapter one, and chapters two and three provide information concerning why and on what basis these seven Churches — representing Christianity as a whole — are to come under judgment.

The word "overcome" is a translation of the Greek word *nikao*, which means "to conquer" or "to gain a victory over." The thought inherent in the word *nikao* (or *nike*, the noun form of the word) always means *to be victorious in a contest or conflict*.

The "overcomers" are the *conquerors*, the *victors*; they are the ones who will have successfully run the race of the faith; they are the ones who will have conquered the numerous encountered obstacles along the way.

Christians have been saved with a view to their being overcomers and bringing forth fruit. And this matter comprises the very heart of the message which is to be proclaimed to Christians throughout the dispensation.

Israel has been set aside during this time, and God is calling another people — a separate and distinct people — "for his name," taken mainly from among the Gentiles (Acts 15:14).

Those presently being called comprise an entirely *new creation*, which is neither Jew nor Gentile, forming *one new man* "in Christ." And God is extending to individual members of this *one new man* the privilege of overcoming and bringing forth fruit, with a view to their occupying positions as joint-heirs with Christ in the heavenly sphere of the coming kingdom.

The present dispensation is the time which God has set aside to accord redeemed man the privilege of overcoming and bringing forth fruit, and judgment at the end of this dispensation will reveal man's response to this privilege. Some Christians will be shown to have overcome, possessing works comparable to "gold, silver, precious stones"; but other Christians will be shown to have been overcome, possessing works comparable to "wood, hay, stubble."

The overcomers will, at that time, inherit the promised blessings of Revelation chapters two and three; but those shown to have been overcome will be denied these blessings.

THIS is the central subject matter dealt with in the opening three chapters of the Book of Revelation.

Three Enemies

There are three great enemies in the Christian life which *MUST* be overcome.

These three enemies are:

- 1) *The world.*
- 2) *The flesh.*
- 3) *The Devil.*

ALL temptations come to Christians in these three realms, *ANY ONE* of them can produce shipwreck in the lives of Christians, and *EACH* is overcome after a different fashion.

1) The World

According to I John 5:1-5, the “world” is overcome by *our faith*:

“Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.

By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.

For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

For whosoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God.”

The text deals with the saved, *NOT* with the unsaved. It deals with the saved faithfully keeping the commandments of God *through a bringing forth from above, and, in this manner, overcoming the world.*

The thought advanced by many Christians that “overcome” in this passage has to do with the simple salvation message, placing

every Christian in the position of being an overcomer on the basis of his presently possessed eternal salvation, is completely foreign to that which is taught here or elsewhere in the New Testament.

In fact, such a teaching is *completely contrary to and does away with that which is dealt with in this passage.*

Overcoming *does NOT* even enter into the picture *UNTIL* after one has been saved. There is *NO* such thing as unsaved individuals overcoming the world (or, for that matter, *the flesh*, or *the Devil*). Overcoming has to do with spiritual verities, and *ONLY* those who have “passed from death unto life” — *ONLY* those who have been made alive spiritually, through the Spirit breathing life into the ones previously having no life — can function in the spiritual realm. In this respect, *Christians ALONE are in a position to overcome in the manner seen in these verses.*

Overcoming the world is the subject matter in I John 5:1-5, and there are four references in these five verses to being *brought forth from above* (three in v. 1 and one in v. 4). And, as well, there are six other references in I John to the same thing, a major subject of I John in relation to Christians and overcoming (2:29; 3:9 [twice]; 4:7; 5:18 [twice].)

The expression, *brought forth from above* (born from above), is *NOT used* in I John or elsewhere in Scripture relative to the unsaved (John 1:13; 3:3-7; James 1:18; I Peter 1:3, 23). The expression is *ALWAYS used relative to the saved.* Overcoming is in view, and the power to overcome is derived from above, *NOT from below, from within the individual.*

(This is *NOT* to say that the Divine work surrounding an unsaved individual believing on the Lord Jesus Christ and being saved is to be viewed in any manner other than a *bringing forth from above*, for there is *NO* other way that he could be saved. Rather, it is to say that Scripture *does NOT* use the expression in this manner. Scripture uses the expression *ONLY one way* — *relative to a work of the Spirit among the saved.*

For additional information on this subject, refer to the author’s book, *Brought Forth from Above.*)

Overcoming in verses four and five *MUST* be understood contextually. Note the connecting word, “For,” beginning verse four. The first three verses of this chapter place the one who has been brought forth from above in the position of keeping God’s commandments (the only way he can keep them — living in the sphere of the spiritual, not the fleshly).

Then, the person in verse four is one who, through faith (through believing God, inseparably associated with being brought forth from above), keeps these commandments; and, *in this manner — through keeping God's commandments — he is presently overcoming the world.*

The “world,” referring to the present *world system* under the dominion and sway of the god of this age, Satan, is a major subject of I John.

Christians are commanded, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.” The things in the world, under the control of Satan, are “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.”

The world *does NOT know* the one True and Living God; *NOR* does the world know Christians. The entire world “lieth in wickedness [under the control of the wicked one]” (I John 2:15-18; 3:1; 5:19).

This is the status of the way things exist during Man’s Day, but a change is in the offing. The entire world system as we know it today is about to pass out of existence. A change in the entire administration is about to occur. And *UNTIL* that time arrives, Christians are to regulate their activities in accord with I John 5:1-5.

2) The Flesh

According to Rom. 8:13 and Col. 3:5, the flesh is overcome by *mortifying* “the deeds of the body,” which emanate from the ever-present sin nature, and all things emanating from the sin nature are to be kept in a constant state of mortification:

“For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Rom. 8:13).

“Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry” (Col. 3:5).

The revealed way to mortify “the deeds of the body” is set forth in Rom. 8:13, 14: “...if ye through the Spirit...as many as are led by the Spirit of God...” This, as well, is what is involved in Gal. 5:16ff: “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh...”

There is a constant warfare in the life of every believer brought about by the presence of both the man of flesh and the man of Spirit

residing in the same body, with either man capable of gaining the ascendancy and proving victorious in the conflict.

Walking in the Spirit, being brought forth from above, will assure victory over the man of flesh; and in this manner the Christian will be mortifying “the deeds of the body,” overcoming the flesh.

On the other hand, *giving way to the flesh will quench the Spirit, assuring defeat in one’s life.* In this manner the Christian will be allowing “the deeds of the body” to live, resulting in his being overcome by the flesh.

The man of flesh with his deeds are seen in Scripture *ONLY one way* — a ruined creation, under the sentence of death (cf. Gen. 1:2-4; II Cor. 4:6; Rom. 7:24). And if man doesn’t put the things associated with the man of flesh to death during the present time, they will rise up and testify against him at a future time, with the Lord Himself being forced to take care of matters.

The sentence of death MUST and WILL be carried out — whether by man during the present time, or by the Lord during a time yet future.

The original and unchangeable pattern for restoration associated with a ruined creation has forever been established in the opening verses of Genesis. *The darkness* “upon the face of the deep” in Gen. 1:2a had to do with darkness over a material creation which had come into a state of ruin; and this darkness continued to exist even following the restoration of the ruined creation (vv. 3-5). God simply brought light into existence and left the darkness alone. He placed light alongside the darkness and divided between the two (cf. Isa. 45:7).

However, the day is coming when God will make “all things *new*.” And, at that time, the present darkness seen in the opening chapter of Genesis will *NO* longer exist (Rev. 21:5, 25).

Fallen man forms a subsequent ruined creation of God, and the restoration of this ruined creation *MUST be effected after the identical order set forth in the original pattern (SET perfect in the beginning).*

The parallel restoration for man, wherein *the light shines* “out of darkness,” occurs at the point of his salvation, the point of his believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. The man of flesh, associated with the ruined creation (as the darkness in the Genesis account was associated with the ruin of the material creation), continues in existence.

As the darkness was retained in the restoration of the material creation, so the old nature is retained in the restoration of man; but

as God brought light into existence and made a division between the light and the darkness in Genesis, He brings a new nature into existence and makes a division between the new and the old today.

Then, the day is coming when God will make “all things new”; and as the darkness in the first chapter of Genesis will *NO* longer exist, the old nature presently possessed by redeemed man will, likewise, *NO* longer exist (cf. Rom. 7:24; 8:23; I John 3:2).

“Darkness” in Scripture is associated with *the works of the flesh* (John 3:19; Rom. 13:12; I Cor. 4:5), and the roots of this association, as previously noted, are found in the opening verses of Genesis. Darkness appears in connection with the ruined creation in the type, and the old nature appears in connection with the ruined creation in the antitype.

NOTHING good is ever said about darkness in Scripture. *ONLY of the light* does God use the word “good” (Gen. 1:4).

And the same *MUST* hold true concerning the old and new natures possessed by man (cf. I John 1:6, 8).

Both darkness and the old nature are, so to speak, *under the sentence of death*; and this sentence *MUST* be carried out — *by man during the present time, OR by the Lord yet future*.

Thus, awaiting the coming day, when the Lord will complete matters relative to the carrying out of *this sentence of death*, redeemed man in his present state is *to reprove* “the unfruitful works of darkness” (Eph. 5:11); he is *to mortify* — *put to death* — “the deeds of the body” (Rom. 8:13).

And in this manner ALONE redeemed man is to overcome the flesh.

3) The Devil

According to James 4:7 and I Peter 5:9, the Devil is overcome by *resisting*:

“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7).

“Be sober, be vigilant: because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world” (I Peter 5:8, 9).

Christians are to set themselves against, withstand, the Devil as

they stand firm in the faith. “The faith” is an expression in the New Testament peculiarly related to *the Word of the Kingdom* (e.g., Acts 6:7; 13:8; Rom. 1:5; I Cor. 16:13; Gal. 1:23; Col. 1:23; II Tim. 3:8; Jude 3).

Christians are in a contest/ race “of the faith” (I Cor. 9:24-27; I Tim. 6:12; II Tim. 4:7). And it is while *standing firm in the faith, in this race*, that Christians are to withstand, resist, Satan.

Christians are to be “sober...vigilant”; and the reason given is “because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”

The word “sober” is the translation of the Greek word, *nepho*, which means “to exercise self-control” or “to be well-balanced”; and the word “vigilant” is a translation of the Greek word, *gregoreo*, meaning “to watch,” or “to be awake,” as seen in I Thess. 5:6, 10 (*ref.* Ch. II in this book).

Christians are to always be watchful and exercise a well-balanced judgment in the race of the faith, *for Satan stands ever ready to bring about defeat in their lives through his “wiles [crafty, deceitful ways]”* (Eph. 6:11).

Why is Satan so intensely interested in bringing about defeat in the lives of Christians today? Why has Satan expended so much time and energy throughout almost two millenniums in efforts to bring Christianity into the apostate condition in which it presently finds itself? What is so special about Christianity, attracting Satan’s attention after this fashion?

The answer is very simple, but it is one which goes almost completely unrecognized within the confines of the lukewarm, apostate Laodicean Church of today.

To properly understand the present warfare between Satan and Christians, one must go back to the creation of man and understand certain things concerning the reason for man’s creation.

Adam was brought into existence to rule the earth, and Eve was removed from Adam’s body, through the process revealed in Gen. 2:21-23, to reign as consort queen with him (Gen. 1:26-28). And the dominion to be exercised by Adam was the one which Satan held at that time (and continues to hold today).

Satan had previously been brought into existence to rule the earth. He was the “anointed cherub [messianic angel].” He held the chief position among a great host of angels who, along with him, ruled the earth under the one True and Living God, in a complete structural

breakdown of powers and authorities (cf. Ezek. 28:14-16; Luke 4:5, 6; Eph. 6:12; Rev. 12:7-9).

But the day came when Satan rebelled against the Lord and succeeded in leading one-third of the angels ruling with him at that time in this rebellion. Satan sought to *elevate his throne* (increase his delegated power and authority) and “be like the most High” (Isa. 14:13, 14). Satan sought to become the ruler over all the provinces throughout the universe — the position held by God Himself — rather than continue ruling only the province over which he had originally been placed.

As a result, Satan’s kingdom was reduced to a ruined state, but he himself retained his position as ruler of the kingdom. And *he would be allowed to retain this position UNTIL that day when his God-appointed successor appeared on the scene, ready to take the sceptre* (Gen. 1:2a, 26, 28; Ps. 110:1, 2).

This is *the reason* Satan was so intensely interested in bringing about the fall of Adam. Adam had been created to occupy the position which he held. The wrecked domain (the earth) had been restored, and the one created to rule in Satan’s stead had been created from the very soil of the restored domain. Satan’s replacement was present, on a restored domain, though he had yet to take the sceptre.

Thus, following Adam’s creation, the only hope which Satan possessed was to bring about Adam’s disqualification through sin, as he himself had previously been disqualified through sin. Otherwise, Adam would ultimately take the sceptre, and Satan’s reign would end.

However, such was not to occur. Satan, through tempting Eve, brought about the first man, the first Adam’s fall and disqualification.

This allowed Satan to continue his reign, necessitating the appearance of the second Man, the last Adam at a later date (cf. I Cor. 15:45).

The second Man, the last Adam *NOT ONLY* had to be brought on the scene, *BUT* He had to meet Satan face-to-face in order to show that He was fully qualified to act in the realm for which man had originally been created. *THEN*, the last Adam provided redemption for fallen man, with a view to man ultimately occupying the position for which he had originally been created.

Christ’s virgin birth (He *MUST* be God as well as Man, for the triune God *ALONE* can act in the realm of redemption [Gen. 1-4]), His face-to-face encounter with Satan in the wilderness, and His vicarious death at Calvary, have *ALL* come to pass.

HOWEVER, He has YET to wrest the governmental reins of the earth from Satan's hands. He has YET to take the sceptre and rule the earth in Satan's stead.

An interval of time exists prior to His taking the kingdom in order that He, through the Holy Spirit, might call out a bride to reign as consort queen with Him. This is the reason for the present dispensation, a fact little recognized and understood in Christendom today.

As the first Adam possessed a bride removed from his body to reign with him (preceding the time he was to take the sceptre), so will the last Adam. This bride is presently being called out from among the redeemed, and for the past two millenniums, Satan has been doing all within his power to thwart God's purpose for the present dispensation.

His attack today is directed specifically and intently against Christians *for ONE simple, revealed reason. Christians are the ones destined to be placed as consort queen with Christ in His reign.*

Christ is presently seated at the right hand of God, and Satan cannot touch Him; but Christians are presently upon the earth, and Satan walks "to and fro in the earth...up and down in it" (Job. 1:7; 2:2; cf. I Peter 5:8), venting his wrath against them, seeking at every turn to bring about their defeat and consequent disqualification to occupy a position with Christ during the coming day of His power.

Satan, at every turn, seeks to overcome Christians, rather than allowing Christians to overcome him.

In the coming kingdom, Christ will rule in Satan's stead, and Christians occupying positions with Christ will rule in the stead of the angels ruling with Satan (angels ruling during both past and present times).

The ENTIRE matter surrounding the present warfare between Satan and Christians has the coming kingdom in view.

Overcoming Christians will occupy the numerous proffered positions of power and authority with Christ in the kingdom, but the Christians who are overcome will be denied these positions.

Thus, future positions with Christ in the kingdom, presently being offered to Christians, are for the overcomers ALONE.

"There exists a government of the universe conducted by great angels and their subordinates. Many of these have fallen from their original allegiance to God and prostitute their offices and powers to

corrupt His realms. It is therefore inevitable that a rearrangement shall come in that heavenly government. This will be effected by Christ and His glorified followers being invested with the whole of that heavenly authority. For it is written that 'not unto the angels hath God subjected the inhabited world to come'" (Heb. 2:5).

— G. H. Lang
World Chaos, 1948

The Whole Armor of God

Eph. 6:10-18 is the passage in the Word of God which instructs Christians concerning how to be properly clothed in order to withstand the onslaughts of Satan and his demons today.

There is a battle presently being waged. This battle is specifically said to not be "against flesh and blood [not against fallen man residing on the earth]," but, instead, "against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world ['age'], against spiritual wickedness in high places ['against the spirit forces of wickedness in the heavenlies']" (v. 12). And the issue at hand concerns *a future governmental control over the earth from a heavenly realm as joint-heirs with the "King of kings, and Lord of lords."*

A battle of this nature requires *extensive preparation*, and *ONLY* those properly prepared can be victorious in the battle. This is the reason given in Eph. 4:11ff for the placement of pastor-teachers in the Churches, and this is the reason given in Eph. 6:10ff for the battle-dress in which Christians are to be arrayed.

Christians entering into this conflict are to take unto themselves "the whole armor of God." *NOTHING* short of this will suffice, for Christians are able to withstand Satan's attacks (are able to stand against the wiles of the Devil) *ONLY* in this manner.

Six items are listed for Christians to take in order to be properly clothed in the present conflict:

1) "Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth..." (v. 14a).

There is no definite article before "truth." This is not "the truth," which is *the Word of God*. That appears later (v. 17).

The girdle is placed about the loins first, and the other pieces of armor are affixed to the girdle. Placing the girdle about the loins is with a view to the other pieces of armor also being taken and put on; and for a Christian to put on the girdle of truth can only be synonymous with a Christian entering the conflict in a truthful or sincere and earnest manner, looking ahead to continuing the process of putting on the armor, ultimately resulting in his being clothed with the whole armor of God.

Arraying one's self with the girdle has to do with a Caleb- and Joshua-type attitude toward the goal in view:

"Let us go up at once and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it" (Num. 13:30).

2) "...and having on the breastplate of righteousness" (v. 14b).

Note that this is something which the Christian himself is to put on. This has nothing to do with the righteousness of Christ imputed to the Christian at the time of the birth from above. Rather, the "breastplate of righteousness" has to do with *right living*. It has to do with the "righteous acts of the saints" (Rev. 19:8, ASV), which make up the wedding garment.

3) "And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace" (v. 15).

Note the emphasis in verses eleven, thirteen, and fourteen relative to *standing* as one goes forth to battle: "to stand" (v. 11), "withstand [*lit.*, 'stand against'], " "to stand" (v. 13), and "Stand" (v. 14). One must have solid footing to stand upon. Both feet *MUST* be firmly planted, "shod with the preparation ['readiness'] of the gospel of peace."

There are two aspects to the gospel in Scripture. One appears in connection with "peace *with* God," and the other appears in connection with "the peace of God."

"Peace *with* God" comes about through justification by grace through faith, as seen in Eph. 2:8, 9: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace *with* God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1).

This peace results from one being placed upon the foundation, with the most sure, steadfast footing possible, *apart from which there can be NO conflict*.

However, distinctions between “peace *with* God” and “the peace *of* God” are NOT what is in view in Eph. 6:15, for availing oneself of the proper footwear (for both feet) is something which, contextually, occurs following salvation.

In a parallel passage to that which is in view, the latter part of Rom. 10:15 states:

“How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things.”

The feet are seen as the vehicle of transportation for the messenger, as he goes about proclaiming good news concerning *peace*. Within the overall scope of the good news, as previously stated, there is a facet of the message having to do with “peace with God” (for the unsaved [Rom. 5:1]) and there is a facet of the message having to do with the “peace of God” (for the saved [Phil. 4:5-7]). The contextual emphasis in Rom. 10:15 though has to do with *the saved*, NOT *with the unsaved*.

Exactly the same thought is in view regarding the armor in Eph. 6:15. Having one’s feet properly shod has to do with proper preparation relative to the good news concerning *peace*, as it pertains to the saved, exactly as seen in Rom. 10:15; and this would be based on the person already having “peace with God,” as seen in Rom. 5:1.

The messenger’s feet being properly shod shows a proper preparation of the messenger as he goes about proclaiming this message concerning *peace*. And this message of *peace* would have two facets — *the peace of God* now (having to do with the present aspect of salvation, the outworking of the saving of the soul), culminating in a future *peace* when *the Prince of Peace* is Himself present (having to do with the future aspect of salvation, when the salvation of the soul will be realized).

4) “Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked [wicked one]” (v. 16).

“Faith” is simply *believing that which God has to say about a matter*. The weakness of the average Christian is lack of faith, which results from the neglect of prayerful study and meditation on the Word of God.

Hebrews chapter eleven, the great chapter on *faith*, provides the capstone to the first ten chapters of the Book of Hebrews; and the opening two verses of chapter twelve provide the capstone to all that

is stated in chapter eleven.

In these verses, Christians are exhorted to “lay aside every weight [every hindrance in the spiritual warfare], and the sin which doth so easily beset us [lack of faith, the besetting sin common to every Christian (*ref. ch. 11*)].” And in *this manner ALONE* Christians are to “run with patience” the race set before them, “looking unto Jesus [*lit., ‘looking from, unto Jesus (i.e., looking from all that surrounds, unto Jesus)*)]...”

5) “*And take the helmet of salvation...*” (v. 17a).

I Thessalonians 5:8 reveals that this helmet is the “hope of salvation.” This is the salvation to be revealed (salvation of the soul) at the time Christ returns.

The hope set before Christians is *the hope of occupying a position with Christ in His coming kingdom*. There is *NO other doctrine* in the Word of God which will inspire and encourage a Christian more in the present conflict against Satan and his demons than the doctrine of “that blessed hope” (Titus 2:12, 13; cf. Col. 1:5, 27; Titus 1:2; 3:7; Heb. 3:6; 6:18).

6) “*...and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*” (v. 17b).

Christ Himself, in the temptation account, demonstrated that the one great weapon to be used against Satan is the Word of God.

Satan also knew and attested to the power of this Word when he attempted to use it against Christ (Matt. 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13; cf. Heb. 4:12).

David said, “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee” (Ps. 119:11). It is vitally important, it is imperative, *that Christians KNOW and USE the Word of God in the present conflict*.

Having properly clothed and armed themselves, Christians are to then be:

“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints” (v. 18).

Overcoming is a lifelong task, provision has been made, and proffered rewards await the victors.

In the words of Paul, as he was borne along by the Holy Spirit:

“*So run, that ye may obtain*” (I Cor. 9:24b).

5

The Tree of Life

Wisdom and Knowledge to Rule and Reign

“And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden... (Gen. 2:9a).

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God” (Rev. 2:7).

The promise concerning those who overcome being granted the privilege of partaking of the tree of life is the first of “seven” overcomer’s promises in Revelation chapters two and three. These promises pertain to *Christians ALONE*, and the realization of these promises awaits *the future Messianic Era*.

The time when Christians will enter into the blessings associated with these promises *MUST* follow the time set forth in chapter one — Christ appearing as Judge in the midst of the “seven” Churches.

Judgment *MUST* occur *FIRST*. *THEN*, *overcoming Christians will realize that which has been promised*.

The Seven Epistles

Overcoming in each of the “seven” promises is related to existing conditions in the particular Church to which the promise is given. One promise though is *NOT* to be looked upon as standing alone and being peculiar to *ONLY one Church*.

There are seven promises given to seven Churches. “Seven” is a number showing the completeness of that which is in view.

In this particular instance, the “seven” Churches show *the complete Church* of Matt. 16:18; and the “seven” overcomer’s promises show *the completeness of that which has been promised to ALL Christians, with these promises to be realized by ALL overcoming Christians*.

The seven Churches viewed together, as seen in these chapters, comprise an indivisible unit; and the seven overcomer's promises viewed together, as presented in connection with Christians comprising these seven Churches, *are indivisibly related in such a manner that one CANNOT be realized apart from the other.*

And viewing the overcomer's promises in this manner, that seen throughout each epistle would have to be looked upon the same way. Different facets of truth, *applicable to ALL Christians throughout the seven Churches*, are shown through the Lord's comments on things which have been singled out in each epistle concerning a particular Church.

1) *Applicable to All*

Viewing one facet of truth after this fashion, in the epistle to "the church of ['in'] Ephesus," reference is made to *a departure from "thy first love"* (v. 4). The command is then given, "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works."

This is followed by the warning that if *remembrance, repentance, and first works do NOT follow*, the "candlestick [Church in Ephesus; cf. 1:11-13, 20]" will be removed from its place. And this removal of the candlestick — this removal of the Church in Ephesus, the Christians in Ephesus — is, contextually, *millennial* in its scope of fulfillment.

This removal will occur at the judgment seat; *and it has NOTHING to do with eternal verities, with one's eternal salvation, etc.*

NOR do the warnings in the other epistles in Revelation chapters two and three. Rather, *millennial verities ALONE, as they relate to saved individuals*, are in view through that stated in these warnings.

The time element involved in the warnings would have to be the same as that seen in the overcomer's promises, for the latter has to do with overcoming or being overcome relative to the former.

And *millennial verities ALONE* are clearly revealed to be in view through that stated in several of the overcomer's promises. Conditions seen in several of these promises will not exist beyond the Millennium, during the eternal ages (e.g., 2:11, 26, 27; 3:5, 21).

Following the warning to the Church in Ephesus, reference is made to the "Nicolaitanes" (an Anglicized form of the compound Greek word, *nikolaites* [from *nike*, "a victor," "a conqueror"; and *laos*, "people"]). Thus, the word "Nicolaitanes" means, "to conquer [be victorious over] the people."

Within Church history, there is no record of a group of individuals known by the name, “Nicolaitanes” — in the Church in Ephesus, or in any other first-century Church (note that a reference to the “Nicolaitanes” is also repeated in the epistle to the Church in Pergamos [2:15]).

And, when coming across a reference of this nature, there is *ONLY* one thing that can be done in order to understand that which the Lord meant through using this word (whether by Christians during the first century, or by Christians today). The use of “Nicolaitanes” would have to be understood as a reference to *the actions of a group of individuals, described by the meaning of the word itself*.

From the meaning of the word, contextually, a reference to the “Nicolaitanes” could only be understood as a reference to *individuals forming a hierarchy within the Church, ruling over the people*. And these individuals were undoubtedly responsible, at least in part, for the existing conditions in Ephesus near the end of the first century, as well as the conditions subsequently seen existing in Pergamos (and possibly in one or more of the other five Churches, though this is not mentioned).

And the entire matter leads into the promise for those who overcome, *i.e.*, for those who *remember, repent, and do the first works*. These are the ones who will be allowed to partake of the tree of life during the Messianic Era (vv. 5-7).

All of these things, though directed to those in the Church in Ephesus, would be applicable to those in any of the other six Churches as well.

And the inverse of that is equally true. The things written to those in each of the other six Churches would be applicable to those in the Church in Ephesus, or to those in any of the Churches.

That is, the things recorded in each of these seven epistles would be applicable to Christians everywhere.

2) The Dispensation

It is also evident that these seven epistles, through the manner in which they have been Divinely arranged and structured, set forth truths within another realm. Viewed together, beginning with the Church in Ephesus and ending with the Church in Laodicea, it is evident that these epistles set forth a Divinely revealed, overall view of Church history, covering the entire dispensation.

In this respect, the message to the Church in Ephesus would reveal things concerning the Church at the beginning of the dispensation; the messages to the next five Churches would continue from that point and reveal things concerning the Church throughout at least most of the remainder of the dispensation; and the message to the Church in Laodicea would reveal things concerning the Church during the closing years of the dispensation.

(Revelation chapters two and three present one of only two places in Scripture where an overall history of Christendom throughout the dispensation is given. The other was also given by Christ, but years earlier during His earthly ministry, preceding Calvary.

The earlier history of Christendom can be seen in the first four parables in Matthew chapter thirteen [*ref. the author's book, *Mysteries of the Kingdom*, Chapters III-VI*]. And interestingly enough, both of these accounts center around a history of Christendom as it pertains to *the Word of the Kingdom* — something which Church history books written by man *NEVER even mention, much less center around*.

And *UNTIL* man understands the true nature of Church history, from the standpoint revealed in Matthew chapter thirteen and Revelation chapters two and three, *he can NEVER properly understand Church history*. He *can NEVER* properly understand why the Church, after almost 2,000 years of existence, has ended up in its present decadent state.

And, as a result, he can do little more than what is presently being done — approach the whole matter from a position other than how it is handled in Scripture.)

Near the beginning of the Church's existence on earth, as shown by the first of the seven epistles in Revelation chapters two and three, there was a departure of Christians from their first love. And this revealed something with far-reaching ramifications which would occur in Christendom during the early years of its existence. The time element is not given in the epistle, but it would have to be seen in conjunction with a general deterioration of spiritual conditions in Christendom, occurring over the first several centuries.

Christians during the early years of the Church were busily engaged in the Lord's work as they waited, anticipated, and longed for His return. They *loved His appearing* (*cf. II Tim. 4:8*).

But as time went on and the Lord remained in heaven, the leaven which the woman placed in the three measures of meal in Matt. 13:33 began to do its damaging work, resulting in Christians gradually losing their first love. And the end result of the loss of this first love was the onset of what is known in Church history as “The Dark Ages.”

Although Christians departing from their first love emanates out of a sequence of events which fit into a framework of early Church history, this is not something peculiar to that period. Rather, this is something which has continued to exist since that time; and the attendant warning to Christians concerning the possibility of the candlestick being removed *MUST* extend throughout the entire period.

The retention or removal of the candlestick *is contingent on either overcoming or being overcome relative to the matter at hand* (v. 7). Eternal verities *are NOT in view at all*. The thought set forth in this passage projects the matter out into that time when Christ will deal with the Church in *judgment*, and a retention or removal of the candlestick anticipates the Church as it will appear *following* the issues of the judgment seat of Christ.

3) Called, Called Out

The word *Church* in the Greek text is a compound word (*ekklesia*, from *ek* and *kaleo*) which means “called out.” And the word is used in the New Testament in two senses:

1) As the Church appears *preceding the issues of the judgment seat* (which would be during the present dispensation [Rev. 2, 3], or as the Church is seen *before the judgment seat* [Rev. 1-3]).

2) As the Church will appear *following the issues of the judgment seat* (which would be as the Church is seen in Rev. 19:7-9, as the bride of Christ [cf. Heb. 12:23]).

Only the “called” (all of the saved) can comprise the Church today (as it is looked upon in Rev. 2, 3), for the “called out” are yet to be revealed and removed from the called.

The Church will appear in the true sense of the word itself (*ekklesia*, “called out”) only after the “called out” have been removed from the “called,” which will occur following Christ dealing with all Christians at His judgment seat (note that all those being addressed in Rev. 2:1-7

are in the Church [as the Church presently appears], but some are in danger of being removed [as the Church will one day appear]).

Christ's warning concerning the removal of the candlestick in Rev. 2:5 — the removal of the Church in Ephesus, the Christians in Ephesus — *MUST* be understood in the light of the two ways in which the word "Church" is used in Scripture.

The message is to individuals in the Church *as it appears today, which comprises ALL of the called, ALL of the saved, NOT just the called out* (for the Church in the latter sense is yet to be revealed).

And any of the called who leave their "first love" and do not "repent, and do the first works," *CANNOT be among the called out*. They *CANNOT* comprise the Church as it will appear in that coming day.

Rather, they will *be removed*, spoken of elsewhere as *being disproved* (Gk., *adokimos*" [cf. I Cor. 9:27; II Tim. 3:8; Titus 1:16; Heb. 6:8]).

These two appearances of the Church present a sharp contrast in Scripture:

The Church on earth immediately *preceding* its removal to appear before the judgment seat is described as "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (which includes only those Christians alive at that time [Rev. 3:14-18]).

But the Church *following* the issues of the judgment seat is described as the "glorious church [the Church in her glory (the bride of Christ)], not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing" (which will include overcoming Christians from throughout the dispensation [Eph. 5:25-32]). And it is the Church in her glory, the bride of Christ (Rev. 19:7-9), which will be extended the privilege of partaking of "the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God" (Rev. 2:7).

The Church as it will exist in that coming day is referred to in Heb. 12:23 as the "Church of the firstborn." The thought has to do with *a called out group of firstborn sons*.

This moves matters beyond the adoption (the placement of firstborn sons) and presents the Church as being comprised only of individuals *called out of the body*, not individuals called out of the world (so to speak), as the Church is seen during the present day and time.

(Paul, in his Church epistles, though he wrote to all of the saved in a particular locality, often worded matters more in keeping with the

thought of the Church as it will appear in that coming day [as presented by the writer of Hebrews in Heb. 12:23; *e.g.*, Rom. 1:7, 8; Eph. 1:5-14; I Thess. 1:5-10; 5:1-9]. And this would be in complete keeping with Paul's central message [pertaining to *the mystery*], which was *the central message* proclaimed throughout Christendom during the first century.)

The Church as it will exist in that coming day will appear in complete keeping with the type in Genesis chapter two — Eve formed from *a part of Adam's body*, which had been removed from his body.

The bride of Christ, in the antitype — synonymous with the Church as it will appear in that coming day — will be formed from *a part of Christ's body*, which will have been removed from His body.

ALL Christians together form the body of Christ. *BUT, ALL* Christians *CANNOT* form the bride of Christ.

ONLY those removed from the body can form the bride.

The type has been set, and the antitype *MUST* follow the type in *EXACT* detail. There can be *NO* variance between the two.

And the called out, in that day, forming *the bride*, will be placed as *firstborn sons* (*i.e.*, be adopted), with a view to their occupying positions with Christ in the kingdom.

(For a more detailed discussion concerning the bride being removed from the body, refer to the author's book, *The Bride in Genesis*, Ch. I, "Adam and Eve.")

Note that the Church will be looked upon in that coming day in two respects in Scripture — as *a bride*, and as *a firstborn son*. These are simply two ways in which Scripture presents the matter.

On the one hand, *Christ MUST have a bride to reign as consort queen with Him*; then, on the other hand, *ONLY firstborn sons can rule*.

NONE of this is true in the angelic realm, *ONLY* in the human realm. Angelic rulers are *ALL sons*, but *NOT firstborn sons*; and there can be *NO* thought of marriage within the angelic realm itself, for all angels are of the same gender, referred to in a masculine respect.)

In Genesis, Proverbs, and Revelation

"The tree of life" is mentioned nine times in Scripture, in three different books — three times in Genesis (2:9; 3:22, 24), four times in Proverbs

(3:18; 11:30; 13:12; 15:4), and twice in the Book of Revelation (2:7; 22:2).

BUT, what was the original purpose for the tree of life (seen in Genesis), which will be realized yet future (seen in the Book of Revelation)?

The tree of life was one of the numerous trees in the garden in Eden. And Adam, with Eve, was commanded to eat of all these trees, with the exception of one — “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Gen. 2:9, 16, 17).

Adam, the first man, had been created for the specific purpose of assuming *the rulership over the earth*, and the fruit of the tree of life was singled out as *a specific provision* for man as he exercised this rule.

An evident connection between man’s rule and his partaking of the tree of life can be seen by noting *the appearance of this tree* in the beginning when man was in a position to rule, *the absence of this tree* during the entire period when man is not in a position to rule (aside from the tree being referenced in Proverbs), and *the reappearance of this tree* in the Book of Revelation when man will be brought back into a position to rule (cf. Gen. 1:26-28; Rev. 2:26,27).

The period during which man has been barred from eating of the tree of life *began* following Adam’s fall, resulting in his disqualification to rule; and this period will *end* following the issues of the judgment seat, at which time man will once again find himself in a position to rule.

Adam, following the fall, was driven from the garden to prevent his partaking of the tree of life. Adam *could NOT* be permitted to eat of this tree in a fallen condition, for had such occurred, Adam, in a fallen state, would have realized that which fruit from this tree was meant to provide.

Thus, *NOT ONLY* did God remove Adam from the garden, *BUT* “Cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way,” were placed at “the east of the garden...to keep the way of the tree of life [to prevent fallen man from reentering the garden and partaking of this tree]” (Gen. 3:22-24).

Studying Gen. 3:22-24 apart from the context and related Scripture could lead one to believe that the purpose for the tree of life in the beginning, in Genesis, was to provide perpetuity of life for Adam in his unfallen state.

However, such *could NOT* have been the case at all. “Death” *did NOT* enter into the picture until *after* Adam’s sin (Gen. 2:15-17; 3:6ff; cf. Rom. 6:23), at which time he was barred from the tree of life.

Adam had lived in an *undying state* prior to his sin, as he continued to live in an antithetical *dying state* following his sin; and to say that the tree of life was given to Adam in his unfallen state to provide perpetuity of life, preventing death, *CANNOT possibly be correct*.

NOR could it possibly be correct to say that the tree of life would have had anything to do with providing *physical life* (keeping Adam alive physically) following the fall.

A tree can produce *ONLY* “after his kind” (Gen. 1:11, 12). In this respect, *fruit* from the tree of life simply *could NOT* have produced one result before man’s fall and another following man’s fall.

In Rev. 2:7, partaking of the tree of life has been promised to the overcomers from among those *already possessing eternal life*.

Consequently, in this passage, the tree of life *can have NOTHING whatsoever to do with perpetuity of life*; and *EXACTLY* the same thing could *ONLY* be seen in the Genesis account when man was first brought upon the scene.

The tree of life in both Genesis chapters two and three and Revelation chapter two appears in the *SAME* setting.

The tree of life reserved for Christians in Rev. 2:7 is associated peculiarly with *a provision for those who will rule and reign as co-heirs with Christ*. And viewing Adam’s position in the Genesis account — created *to rule and reign*, in possession of an unending life, with the fruit of the tree of life at his disposal — *the SAME thought concerning regality in connection with the tree of life could ONLY hold true*.

Thus, Adam in a fallen state, NO longer in a position to rule, could NOT have been allowed to eat of the tree of life, for fruit from this tree would have provided “life” in relation to regality.

This whole overall thought concerning the tree of life in Scripture *would have to hold true*, for that seen relative to this tree in Revelation chapter two is drawn from that which was *first* seen relative to this tree in Genesis chapters two and three.

The fruit of the tree of life *was in the past* (seen in the Book of Genesis) and *will be in the future* (seen in the Book of Revelation) *a provision for the rulers in the kingdom*. *This is an evident fact which MUST be recognized*.

And, in that coming day following the Millennium, the tree of life will be for “the healing of the nations” (Rev. 22:2).

The Greek word translated “healing” is *therapeia*, from which the English word “therapy” is derived.

This is a medical term which has to do with *restorative healing*. In that day, God will *restore ALL of saved mankind to the original place which man occupied at the time of his creation*. And, consequently, *the whole of saved mankind, with regality in view, will have access to the tree of life*.

During the preceding Messianic Era, the tree of life will have been made available to overcoming Christians (Rev. 2:7), those ruling and reigning as co-heirs with Christ. And this tree will probably be made available to certain others at this time as well, others occupying regal positions with Christ in His reign from the heavens over the earth (e.g., certain Old Testament saints, Tribulation martyrs [Matt. 8:11, 12; Rev. 20:4-6]).

But following the Messianic Era, in the eternal ages, this tree is seen being made available to the nations of the earth, something which would have been completely out of place during the Millennium. And this will be an apparent end result of Israel's evangelistic endeavors during the Millennium, along with Christ and His co-heirs' rule with a rod of iron during this time.

Man was created in the beginning to *rule and to reign*. And though only a part of saved mankind will have been brought back into a position to occupy the throne at the beginning of the Millennium (with the tree of life made available to them at this time), at the end of the Millennium the whole of saved mankind will be brought back into this position (with the tree of life made available to them at this time).

Wisdom, Understanding

"Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding.

For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold.

She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her.

Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honor.

Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.

She is *a tree of life* to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is everyone that retaineth her" (Prov. 3:13-18).

Following the introduction to “the tree of life” in the opening chapters of Genesis, there are only *four references* to this tree throughout Scripture until one arrives at Rev. 2:7.

Solomon used the expression, “a tree of life,” four times in the Book of Proverbs (3:18; 11:30; 13:12; 15:4); and it is within this revelation given through Solomon that one finds *information pertaining to the type “provision” — past and future — which fruit from this tree would provide.*

And through putting all of this together, the reason then becomes apparent why this tree, with its fruit, was among the trees provided for Adam and Eve to eat in their unfallen state, and why fruit from this tree is being reserved for overcoming Christians to partake of during the Messianic Era.

(Then, there is also a connection between this tree and the complete restoration of the nations of the earth beyond the Messianic Era, with all of mankind realizing the purpose for man’s creation in the beginning [Rev. 22:2].

For additional information on this subject, refer to the author’s book, *The Time of the End*, Ch. XXXVI, “The Eternal Ages.”)

In the first of these four passages, *wisdom* and *understanding* are said to be “a tree of life.” Viewing this in the light of the wisdom and understanding possessed by Solomon as he ruled over Israel is the association provided by Scripture to correctly understand *one facet* of the tree of life. *Solomon possessed wisdom and understanding as he ruled; and Christians MUST, in like manner, possess wisdom and understanding as they rule, as would have been necessary for Adam had he ruled.*

1) Solomon Properly Equipped

Shortly after Solomon ascended the throne following the death of David, the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Ask what I shall give thee.” Solomon, recognizing that he was but as a “little child” in understanding the affairs of state within the kingdom over which he ruled asked for *wisdom* and *knowledge*. Solomon asked God for the ability to judge the people of Israel in equity, justice, and righteousness.

Such a request pleased the Lord, and Solomon was granted not only “*wisdom* and *knowledge*” but also “*riches*, and *wealth*, and *honor*.” His ability to rule, his material wealth, and the respect which he com-

manded — all coming from the hand of the Lord — would later be shown to exceed that of any king upon the face of the earth (I Kings 3:5-15; II Chron. 1:7-17).

Solomon's ability to judge among his people in a unique manner through the wisdom and knowledge which the Lord had bestowed began to be displayed through a decision which he rendered concerning two women and a child.

These two women dwelled alone in the same house, and both had given birth to sons, one three days before the other. The son born last died one night because his mother lay upon him; and as the other mother slept with her son at her side, the mother of the dead child took the living child from his mother's side and placed the dead child in its stead.

However, upon awakening, the mother now in possession of the dead child realized that the child was not hers and found that her child was still alive and being claimed by the other mother.

And not being able to resolve the matter between themselves, their case was brought before Solomon.

Solomon was told what had allegedly occurred; and as he listened to both women claiming the living child, he was unable to ascertain which was the true mother.

He then called for a sword and commanded that the child be divided into two parts, giving half to each woman. Solomon, in his wisdom, knew that the true mother would be revealed through the actions which each woman would take when they heard his decision.

And this is exactly what occurred. The true mother pleaded for the child's life, telling Solomon to not harm the child but to give him to the other woman. The other woman, whose child had died, on the other hand, insisted that the child be divided.

Solomon then knew which of the two was telling the truth, and the child was returned to his true mother (I Kings 3:16-27).

Solomon's *wisdom* in this matter spread throughout all Israel, and the people "feared the king; for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him, to do judgment." Not only did God give Solomon wisdom to judge in all matters, but Solomon possessed wisdom of such a nature that it spread throughout the entire known world.

His wisdom "excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men...

and his fame was in all nations round about...and there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all the kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom" (I Kings 3:28; 4:29-34).

The queen of Sheba came "to prove him with hard questions" (I Kings 10:1ff), and in the end stated:

"It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom.

Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard" (I Kings 10:6b, 7).

2) Christians Properly Equipped

The wisdom and understanding which Solomon possessed as he ruled in the kingdom of Israel (associated with "a tree of life") provides the central reason why the tree of life is found in association with Adam's rule in Genesis and with the Christians' rule yet future.

The fruit of this tree *would have provided* (for Adam) and *will provide* (for Christians) the necessary wisdom and understanding to govern in equity, justice, and righteousness.

God's bestowal of *wisdom, understanding, riches, wealth, and honor* upon Solomon typifies that which He will bestow upon overcoming Christians during the coming age.

Through the fruit of the tree of life, God will provide the necessary *wisdom* and *understanding* to rule in the kingdom; through being co-heirs with God's Son, Christians will come into possession of unlimited *riches* and *wealth*, for all the Father's possessions will belong to the Son; and in these positions, Christians will realize a status of *honor* and *glory* befitting those elevated to such noble rank (Gen. 24:10, 36, 53; John 16:13-15; I Peter 1:9-11; 4:12, 13; Rev. 4:11; 5:12).

The tree of life in Eden was a literal tree with literal fruit, as will be the tree of life in the new Jerusalem following the Millennium (Rev. 22:2).

However, there is a possibility that the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God, reserved for Christians during the Millennium, may not be a literal tree as such. There is a sense in which Christ Himself is the Tree of Life, a Tree upon which Christians will one day feed, similar to the feeding upon Christ seen in John 6:48-56.

But, a feeding upon Christ in relation to the tree of life could only be at a *future time alone*. Scripture associates a present feeding in this respect with “manna,” not with a “tree.”

The tree of life is located in *the paradise of God* and is connected with *regality*, something from which Christians are presently *estranged*.

This is *NOT the day* when Christians are to rule and reign. *That day* lies in the future. Thus, any feeding upon Christ today could not be associated with the tree of life. Rather, it would have to be associated with manna.

(As previously seen, in Gen. 1:12, God introduced something concerning trees which is *unchangeable*. Trees which yield fruit will *always* yield their fruit “after his kind.”

The tree of life is located in *the paradise of God* and associated with *regality*; and fruit born by this tree *MUST* be viewed accordingly. The tree will bear fruit “after his kind,” associated with *the paradise of God* and with *regality*; and this fruit can be eaten by man *ONLY after he finds himself exercising regality in the paradise of God, during the Messianic Era.*)

Insofar as a feeding upon manna with respect to Christ, note the third overcomer’s promise (Rev. 2:17). The Israelites fed upon literal manna in the wilderness, but Christ is the Manna upon which Christians feed. Christ is “the bread of life”; and we “eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood.”

Through this process, we acquire *that wisdom which comes from above*; or, as Scripture states, “Christ...is made [‘has become’] unto us *wisdom...*” (John 6:48-58; I Cor. 1:30; cf. I Cor. 2:6-10; Eph. 1:8; Col. 1:9, 28).

Christ is the Living Word which came down from heaven; and feeding upon the Living Word is accomplished through feeding upon the inseparable Written Word. In Christ are “hid all the treasures of *wisdom and knowledge*” (Col. 2:3); and feeding upon Him, through the Written Word, allows us to develop and grow, becoming more and more like Him through acquiring this wisdom and knowledge.

Wisdom and knowledge acquired during the present time though is *NOT for the purpose of equipping Christians to rule and reign*. We are living during the time Christ is in heaven, with the present existing kingdom under the dominion and control of Satan. Wisdom and

knowledge presently being acquired is for *the SOLE purpose of equipping Christians to carry on the Lord's business during His time of absence.*

Wisdom and knowledge of a nature which will equip Christians to rule and reign will be acquired *ONLY* from the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God. *IF* this is a reference to Christ Himself, such a feeding upon Christ *can ONLY refer to something which is NOT available today but reserved for the overcomers during the coming age.*

Christians allowed to partake of the tree of life in that day will, through partaking of this tree, be properly equipped for carrying on the Lord's business following His return when He is revealed as "King of kings, and Lord of lords"; and Christians carrying on His business then will do so through reigning as co-heirs with Him.

John, in two of the books which he wrote — the Gospel of John and the Book of Revelation — deals with the entire matter of saved individuals partaking of manna during the present time and partaking of both the tree of life and hidden manna yet future.

Six of the eight times that John deals with man partaking after the preceding fashions have to do with man partaking of manna during the present time, during man's 6,000-year day. And the seventh and eighth times have to do with man partaking of the tree of life and hidden manna during a future time, during the Lord's 1,000-year day, during the Messianic Era.

(For more information on "the hidden manna," refer to Ch. VII in this book.)

The six partakings occurring during man's 6,000-year day are seen in John's gospel:

1) *Life* — spiritual life, a passing "from death unto life" — derived through the One Who said "I am the resurrection, and the life (John 1:4; 10:10; 11:25).

2) *Food* — the "bread of life" (John 6:35).

3) *Water* — the "living water" (John 4:14; 7:37).

4) *Breath* — a continued breathing beyond the Spirit breathing life into the one having no life at the beginning (John 20:22).

5) *Light* — the "light of life" (John 8:12).

6) *Dwelling Place* — abiding "in the vine" (John 15:1-5).

But the Lord's 1,000-year day will follow Man's Day; and John dealt with man eating during this day through reference to both *the tree of life* and *hidden manna*, providing a seventh and an eighth partaking of Christ within that which he later wrote, recorded in the Book of Revelation:

7) *The Tree of Life* — related to *regality* and *a future inheritance in Christ's kingdom* (Rev. 2:7).

8) *The Hidden Manna* — also related to *regality* and *a future inheritance in Christ's kingdom* (Rev. 2:17).

Then, as previously seen, a reference to *the tree of life* in association with the ages beyond the Messianic Era is also seen at the end of this same book (Rev. 22:2).

Fruit of the Righteous

"The fruit of the righteous is a *tree of life*; and he that winneth souls is wise" (Prov. 11:30).

The second mention of the "tree of life" in the Book of Proverbs is in connection with *righteousness* and *soul-winning*. This is the identical connection one will find in the New Testament when studying the Christians' association with the tree of life.

The "righteous" in Prov. 11:30 are the ones who will be allowed to partake of the tree of life. With respect to Christians, such a righteousness *CANNOT* be looked upon as synonymous with the imputed righteousness of Christ received at the time one was saved, for every Christian possesses this righteousness.

But, as is plainly revealed in Rev. 2:7, *NOT* every Christian will be allowed to partake of the tree of life. The righteousness in this verse *can ONLY* have to do with "the righteous acts of the saints," which form the wedding garment.

The ones referenced are those Christians who will be properly clothed at the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7-9, ASV). These are the Christians who will comprise *the Church consisting of firstborn sons* (Heb. 12:23) and subsequently enter into the kingdom in positions of power and authority with Christ (Matt. 24:45-47; cf. vv. 48-51).

Soul-winning in the New Testament is largely misunderstood in Christian circles today. The common terminology, which is *NOT* correct at all, is to equate soul-winning with carrying the message of salvation by grace through faith to the unsaved.

BUT, equating soul-winning with the message of salvation by grace through faith serves *ONLY* to obscure both issues, leaving one hopelessly mired in a sea of misinterpretation.

Soul-winning is one thing, and proclaiming the message of salvation by grace through faith is another. The former has to do with the saved, and the latter has to do with the unsaved. The messages involved in both issues *MUST* be kept separate and distinct, which necessitates Christians understanding proper distinctions in these two realms.

Salvation by grace through faith, carried to the unsaved, is the presentation of the simple gospel message. The unsaved are to be told "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures" (I Cor. 2:1, 2; 15:3).

Christ has paid the penalty for sin. The work of redemption has been accomplished on man's behalf, and God is satisfied.

Provision has been made for unredeemed man to be saved through receiving that which Christ has done on his behalf. And he does this through simply *believing on the Lord Jesus Christ* (Acts 16:31).

Redeemed man, on the other hand, is to hear an entirely different message. He is to be taught *the reason for his salvation*.

He is to be told that Christ has *gone away* "to receive for himself a kingdom"; he is to be told that *during the time of his Lord's absence* he is to be busy with the talents and pounds which the Lord delivered to and left in charge of His servants (Christians); he is to be told that *a day of reckoning* is coming; he is to be told that *the Lord will return to judge His servants* on the basis of their faithfulness in carrying out His business during His time of absence; and he is to be told that *the outcome of this judgment* will determine every Christian's position in the coming kingdom (Matt. 25:14-30; Luke 19:11-27).

And it is within this overall message to the saved that one finds the salvation of the soul taught in Scripture, *NOT* within the message of salvation by grace through faith, proclaimed to the unsaved.

"Soul-winning" has to do with *winning those who are already saved to a life of faithfulness to the Lord*. "Soul-winning" is *winning one's life*.

This involves winning Christians (those possessing "life") to be

occupied with the Lord's business during His time of absence, anticipating His return. And more specifically, this involves winning Christians to be occupied in this manner with that portion of the Lord's business delivered to them personally.

Illustrated in the parables of the talents and the pounds, one servant was responsible *ONLY* for bringing forth an increase in the talents or the pounds *which had been placed in his possession, NOT in those which had been placed in another servant's possession*. Issues and determinations resulting from the judgment seat will be based strictly on *the evaluation of works performed by Christians in complete keeping with that set forth in these two parables*.

Direct references to the salvation of the soul are found in New Testament passages such as Matt. 16:24-27; Heb. 10:38, 39; James 1:21; 5:19, 20; I Peter 1:9-11 and are always spoken of in a future sense within a context dealing with those who are already saved.

Soul-winning is associated *with the righteous acts of the saints, with overcoming, and with one day being extended the privilege of partaking of the tree of life*. This is the reason that soul-winning is found within a context of this nature in Prov. 11:30.

The wise are the ones who win souls (win lives):

"And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever" (Dan. 12:3).

Hope Realized

"Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but when the desire cometh, it is *a tree of life*" (Prov. 13:12).

The third mention of the "tree of life" in the Book of Proverbs is in connection with *hope* that is realized. There is *NO* tree of life as long as one's hope is deferred. *ONLY* when "the desire cometh [hope is realized]" does the tree of life come into view.

This thought from the Book of Proverbs is in perfect accord with the Christians' present hope in the light of the two previous references to the tree of life in this book.

Christians have been "begotten" from above unto a "living hope"

through the “resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” Christ lives, and Christians will live with Him. But this fact is not the object of one’s hope. Hope is described as “living” because of resurrection, but hope itself lies in things beyond resurrection. These things are revealed as an “inheritance” and a “salvation” (I Peter 1:3-5).

“Hope,” “inheritance,” and “salvation” are inseparably linked in Scripture. It is *ONLY* because we are saved (passive, salvation of the spirit) that we can possess a “hope.” And the hope which Christians possess looks ahead to the reception of an inheritance within a salvation (future, salvation of the soul) to be revealed.

The “blessed hope” in Titus 2:13 is one of the more familiar passages written to Christians in this respect. This hope is often said to be the return of Christ for His Church, but that’s *NOT* what this or any other passage in the New Testament dealing with the Christians’ hope teaches at all. *Hope*, as in Titus 2:13, is associated with the “appearing of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (ASV).

The construction of the Greek text in Titus 2:13 actually makes *hope* synonymous with *the appearing of Christ’s glory*. Christians are the ones who possess this hope, as they are the ones who will be partakers of Christ’s glory when it is revealed. In this respect, participation in the coming glory of Christ will be the realization of one’s present hope, *for one CANNOT be separated from the other*.

Christians realizing their present hope, and the overcomers in Rev. 2:7 who will be allowed to partake of the tree of life, are one and the same. This is the reason Prov. 13:12 teaches that *hope realized* is “a tree of life.” Those Christians one day coming into a realization of their present hope will be the ones who constitute the rulers in the kingdom, the ones allowed to partake of the tree of life to equip them for service in their respective capacities in the kingdom.

A Wholesome Tongue

“A wholesome [‘tranquil’] tongue is *a tree of life*: but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit” (Prov. 15:4).

The Epistle of James in the New Testament forms the commentary for the fourth and last mention of the “tree of life” in the Book

of Proverbs, demonstrating a number of things about the use of the tongue and showing the connection between Prov. 15:4 and the three previous references to the tree of life in this book.

James is an epistle dealing strictly with the salvation of the soul, providing certain indispensable information necessary for a proper understanding of this all-important subject. The tree of life, on the other hand, is reserved for those Christians realizing the salvation of their souls; and a proper understanding of the tree of life is integrally related to a proper understanding of this salvation.

James mentions the tongue in chapter one (vv. 26, 27) and then goes into a lengthy discourse in chapter three concerning this small member of the body and what it is capable of doing (vv. 1ff):

“The tongue...boasteth great things...is a fire, a world of iniquity... it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell [*Gehenna*]...the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison” (3:5-8).

A Christian’s spirituality can be seen through the control of his tongue, for the tongue can be properly controlled only through the use of that *wisdom* and *knowledge* which comes from above (James 3:13-18).

This thought from the Epistle of James takes one back to Prov. 3:13-18, where *wisdom* and *knowledge* are associated with the tree of life. And, in this same respect, “a wholesome tongue” also finds its association with the tree of life. A wholesome (tranquil) tongue results from the proper use of Divinely imparted *wisdom* and *knowledge*.

Concluding Thoughts:

Man’s rule over the earth *MUST* await that time when Rev. 2:7 will be brought to pass. He that “overcometh” will realize *the salvation of his soul (life)*, realize *that blessed hope*, come into possession of *the required wisdom and knowledge* necessary to rule as a co-regent with Christ in the kingdom, and be shown to have *a wholesome tongue [a tranquil tongue]* in this rule.

This is what Scripture teaches concerning *the presence* of the tree of life in Eden, *the absence* of the tree of life in the world today, and the coming inheritance of the saints, when Christians *will be allowed to partake of “the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.”*

6

The Second Death

Hurt by, Not Hurt by

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death” (Rev. 2:11).

The words of the Spirit of God to the Church in Smyrna carry a special message to Christians who find themselves passing through times of various trials and testings during their pilgrim walk.

The Christians in Smyrna had been called upon to suffer, but NOT without cause or recompense.

“Suffering” is God’s *refining fire*, and those passing through the fire in Smyrna were extended a promise: “...be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (vv. 9, 10).

The overcomer’s promise then comes into view, stating simply and explicitly that overcoming Christians in Smyrna would “not be hurt of the second death” (v. 11).

Trials, Testings

The sufferings which Christians in Smyrna were called upon to endure are summed up in the words, “...behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried: and ye shall have tribulation ten days.”

Over the years there have been numerous interpretations concerning the ten days of suffering in Rev. 2:10.

Some expositors have called attention to ten periods of Roman persecution during the first three centuries of the Church’s existence and have sought to establish a correlation between the ten days in this verse and these ten periods in Church history, making each day represent a period of time.

Other expositors have sought to apply the ten days to a ten-year persecution during one of these periods, making each day represent one year.

Still other expositors have taken the number “ten” as symbolic, representing a limited but undefined period, usually within the larger period covered by the ten persecutions.

Regardless of how one looks upon the ten days of tribulation within a possible historical framework, the significance of the number “ten” *MUST* be taken into account.

“Ten” is the number of *ordinal completion*, pointing to *ALL the days of tribulation*. And if these ten days are to be thought of in connection with the ten periods of Roman persecution, they would have to be thought of as showing *completion* in relation to persecution by the Roman Empire.

But, regardless of how one views the matter relative to persecution by the Roman Empire, the thought encompassed in the number “ten” *MUST, of necessity, go beyond these persecutions*.

The seven Churches of Revelation chapters two and three are indivisibly related, revealing messages and promises to Christians throughout the dispensation; and the “ten days,” in their numerical sense, *MUST cover the complete period — the entire dispensation*. These ten days of tribulation *can ONLY refer to all trials and testings coming upon all Christians throughout the dispensation*.

Trials and testings are *the NORM* for the Christian life, *NOT the exception*. And the Epistles of James and I Peter have been written to encourage Christians passing through times of trials and testings by holding out before them prizes, rewards, compensations, which are intimately associated with the salvation to be revealed — *the salvation of the soul* (James 1:21; I Peter 1:9).

This is the identical thought expressed in the overcomer’s promise to the Church in Smyrna. A “crown of life” is in view, and the recipient of this crown is given the assurance that he will “not be hurt of the second death.”

The Epistle of James begins its message with the statement, “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.” Why? Temptations, testings, of this nature “worketh patience [‘patient endurance’]”; and allowing this patient endurance to have “her perfect work

[end-time work],” Christians will become “perfect and entire, wanting nothing [‘mature and complete, lacking nothing’]” (James 1:2-4).

Christians are to look upon such trials in the same manner as the apostles looked upon trials which confronted them. The apostles, in circumstances of this or a similar nature, *rejoiced* that “they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his [Christ’s] name” (Acts 5:41).

The Christian patiently enduring temptations after the fashion seen in James 1:2-4 is promised in verse twelve that “when he is tried [‘approved’ (at the judgment seat)], he shall receive the crown of life,” a parallel statement to Rev. 2:10. In both instances it is patiently enduring temptations, trials, and testings during the present time, with *a crown of life* in view; and this crown of life will be awarded *following one’s approval* at the judgment seat.

Crowns *MUST* be won through patiently enduring temptations, trials, and testings during the present “race of the faith” (I Cor. 9:24-27; I Tim. 6:11, 12; II Tim. 4:7, 8). And forfeiture of the proffered crown — resulting in non-approval at the judgment seat — is *a very real possibility*.

Note the warning in this respect:

“Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown” (Rev. 3:11).

Apart from the thought that a Christian can forfeit his crown, this verse would hold little meaning whatsoever. Christians receiving or not receiving crowns awaits decisions and determinations at the judgment seat.

Overcoming Christians will wear the crowns which they have won in the present race of the faith while occupying positions of power and authority with Christ during the coming age.

BUT, for non-overcoming Christians, the matter will be entirely different. NO uncrowned person will rule as co-heir with Christ in the kingdom.

Manner of Usage in Revelation

“The second death” is an expression peculiar to the Book of Revelation, and it appears four times in this book (2:11; 20:6, 14; 21:8). This expression is used *twice* in texts where the word “overcometh”

is used (2:11; 21:7, 8), *once* in connection with those who are martyred during the Tribulation (“beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God...” [20:4-6], with the thought of *overcoming* again seen), and *once* in connection with the unsaved dead from throughout Man’s Day (20:11-15).

“The second death” is defined in Rev. 20:14; 21:8 as being “cast into the lake of fire” and as having a “part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.”

It is evident in Rev. 20:14 that “the second death” is used referring to the unsaved.

And it is equally evident that this expression is used in the other three passages in the Book of Revelation (2:11; 20:6; 21:8) *referring to the saved*, in connection with *overcoming* (not subsequently being hurt of the second death) or *being overcome* (and subsequently being hurt of the second death).

To state otherwise, gloss over this, or attempt to read into the passage what clearly is not there (*e.g.*, see the statement as a litotes, as some have) *is to ignore the CLEAR wording and meaning of the text.*

1) Overcomers Will Not Be Hurt Of...

The “fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars” in Rev. 21:8 are usually looked upon by students of Scripture as a reference to unredeemed individuals, synonymous with the ones previously seen in Rev. 20:11-15.

However, contextually, this **CANNOT** be the case at all. The subject in verse seven, leading into verse eight, is *overcoming and realizing an inheritance in the kingdom as a son*.

(Reference is made to these overcoming martyrs ruling and reigning with Christ for 1,000 years [Rev. 20:4-6].

Only *sons* can rule in God’s kingdom [*cf.* Job 1:6; 2:1; Luke 3:38; Rom. 8:18, 19], and *ruling in the kingdom* is spoken of at times as *realizing an inheritance in the kingdom* [Eph. 1:14, 18; 5:5; Col. 3:24; I Peter 1:4].)

Verse eight simply describes the “unbelieving [‘unfaithful’]” ones (*cf.* Luke 12:46) — the non-overcomers — and reveals that which will be their lot following their appearance before the Lord in judgment.

A similar description of individuals to that of Rev. 21:8 appears in I Cor. 6:8-10, where an *inheritance* in the kingdom is also in view:

“Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren.

Know ye not that the unrighteous *shall not inherit the kingdom of God?*

Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate [the word, contextually, refers to *male prostitutes*], nor abusers of themselves with mankind [homosexuals, the last of four references to different types of sexually immoral individuals],

Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, *shall inherit the kingdom of God.*”

In this section of Scripture, the text clearly reveals that *Christians ALONE are in view.*

The words “ye do wrong” in verse eight (referring to the manner of living of the “brethren” in the Corinthian Church), leading into verses nine and ten, are a translation of the Greek verb *adikeo*. The noun form of this word (*adikos*) then appears in verse nine (translated “unrighteous”), establishing a connection with verse eight which provides the proper identification of the individuals Paul is addressing in verses nine and ten.

In verse eight, Paul calls attention to the fact that certain Christians in the Corinthian Church were conducting their affairs in an unrighteous manner.

(Those referenced in these verses, of necessity, would have to be saved individuals, for they were part of the Church in Corinth. Scripture recognizes “the Church” as comprised of *the saved alone, NEVER a mixture of saved and unsaved individuals.*

The thought of both saved and unsaved individuals comprising a Church is solely man’s ideology, and it is an ideology which is *completely foreign to ANY use of the word “Church [Gk., ekklesia]” in Scripture.*

Ekklesia means “called out,” and that referred to through the use of this word during the present dispensation would be *a group of individuals called out of the world — something which could NEVER include the unsaved.*)

Continuing this same line of thought from verse eight into verse nine, Paul asks the question:

“Know ye not that the unrighteous [a reference to Christians from v. 8] *shall not inherit the kingdom of God?*”

The remainder of verse nine, along with verse ten, then lists a number of unrighteous acts in which it is possible for Christians to become involved, concluding with the statement in verse ten that those engaged in unrighteous living of this nature “shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”

The subject at hand, *inheritance in the kingdom*, rather than eternal life, should be carefully noted.

ONLY Christians are presently in line to either receive or be denied this inheritance:

“If children, then heirs...” (Rom. 8:17).

A person *MUST* be a child of God, a child of the Owner, a Christian (or, in the past dispensation, he *MUST* have been an Israelite), before inheritance in the kingdom can even come into view.

These sections of Scripture in I Corinthians and the Book of Revelation (I Cor. 6:8-10 and Rev. 21:7, 8) are actually companion passages.

In both passages, those being addressed (Christians) and the matter being discussed (inheriting or being disinherited, with the kingdom in view) are *the SAME*. *There is NO message to the unsaved in these verses*, for the issues of eternal life or eternal damnation *are NOT present*; and this fact *MUST* be recognized, else teachings surrounding inheritance in the kingdom, conveyed by the passages, will be missed entirely.

Revelation 21:8 *CANNOT* be equated with Rev. 20:14, even though both verses refer to “the lake of fire” and “the second death.” These two verses *are NOT dealing with the same thing*, the same individuals, or even the same time period.

Revelation 21:8 deals with the judgment of *the saved preceding the Millennium*, with *millennial verities* in view; and Rev. 20:14 deals with the judgment of *the unsaved following the Millennium*, with *eternal verities* in view. *NOTHING* is the same in the two passages, save the existence of *the same lake of fire, with an associated second death*.

The seven overcomer’s promises in Revelation chapters two and three reveal different facets of that which God has promised to those who overcome the three great enemies confronting every Christian — *the world, the flesh, and the Devil* (ref. Chapter IV in this book). The promise to the overcomer in the Church in Smyrna that he would not be “hurt of the second death” is *ONLY one facet of the larger scope covered by ALL of the overcomer’s promises to the seven Churches*.

The entirety of the matter appears to be summed up by the words, “inherit all things,” in Rev. 21:7. The overcomer will be *a co-heir with Christ in the kingdom and realize all the promises to the overcomers in chapters two and three* (cf. Heb. 1:2).

2) To Have No Power Over Martyrs

The martyrs of Rev. 20:4-6 are themselves revealed as overcomers. These are the individuals who gain “the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name” during the Tribulation (Rev. 15:2).

A segment of this group was seen when the fifth seal was opened (6:9-11; cf. 13:7-15); and they were told at this time to “rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.”

But when events depicted in Rev. 20:4-6 come to pass, the Tribulation will be over, the beast and false prophet will have been cast into the lake of fire, the armies of the earth will have been overthrown, Satan will have been bound in the abyss, and the martyred saints of the Tribulation will have been resurrected to be judged (19:11ff).

These individuals, *overcoming during the Tribulation*, will, as Christians *overcoming today*, occupy positions with Christ in the kingdom.

(These positions though will be separate from those forming the bride of Christ. The bride will be comprised solely of saved individuals from the present dispensation. But the Tribulation martyrs will come out of a period covering seven unfulfilled years of the previous dispensation, out of time covered by Daniel’s unfulfilled Seventieth Week.)

The second death will have “no power” over these Tribulation martyrs in view (v. 6). They, as will have been the case with numerous Christians prior to this time, will be revealed as *overcomers* and *will NOT* “be hurt of the second death” (v. 4).

As in Rev. 2:11; 21:7, 8, there is *NO* allusion in this passage to the unsaved dead being cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:14). Rather, an inheritance in the kingdom is in view; and saved individuals, even though disinherited, with *ONLY* that referred to as “the second death” awaiting them, will *NEVER* be cast into the lake of fire to suffer the same consequences which the unsaved will one day suffer in this place.

To Be Hurt Of...

EXACTLY what does it mean “to be hurt of” the second death in Rev. 2:11?

In the light of Rev. 20:4-6; 21:7, 8, which deals with overcoming or being overcome, *this can mean ONLY one thing:*

Non-overcoming Christians are going to “have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death” (Rev. 21:8b).

“Fire” in Scripture is associated with *the judgment of the saved as well as the judgment of the unsaved*; and, following judgment, non-overcoming Christians will be “hurt of the second death,” which is associated with *the lake of fire*.

Thus, the time when this will occur is *following events at the judgment seat*. And though the Christians’ works will be tried in fire at the judgment seat, this is *NOT* synonymous with Christians having a part in “the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.”

Rather, at this judgment, Christians will be shown to have either overcome or to have been overcome, with the carrying out of decisions and determinations made at the judgment seat occurring at a time following these events.

(Note in the judgment of the unsaved in Rev. 20:11-15 that the lake of fire and the second death enter into the matter *ONLY following judgment*. The lake of fire and the second death come into view *ONLY following decisions and determinations surrounding their judgment*.)

And it will be the same for the saved preceding this time. They will first be judged. *ONLY then, ONLY following the decisions and determinations surrounding their judgment*, do the lake of fire and the second death come into view.)

Each of the overcomer’s promises is *millennial* in its scope of fulfillment. That in view through overcoming, or not overcoming — as the case may be — *will be realized during the 1,000-year Messianic Era ALONE*.

The fact that these are *millennial ONLY* in their scope of fulfillment can be illustrated quite easily.

Note the promises to two of the seven Churches in Rev. 2:26, 27; 3:21. *NO* such scene as presented in these verses will exist beyond the Millennium.

Christ and His co-heirs, beyond the Millennium, will *NO longer* rule over the nations, as this rule is pictured in Rev. 2:26, 27. Rather, the Gentiles comprising these nations will, themselves, be brought into positions of rulership with Christ and His co-heirs, as this rule extends beyond the earth, out into the universe (Rev. 22:2, 5).

And the Son, beyond the Millennium, will *NO longer* sit on His Own throne, as seen in Rev. 3:21. Rather, He will sit on “the throne of God and of the Lamb,” from whence universal rule will emanate (Rev. 22:1, 3, 5).

And the same is true relative to the overcomer’s promise to the Church in Smyrna, having to do with the second death. This promise *can ONLY be millennial* within its scope of fulfillment, which clearly reveals that the conditions alluded to for the non-overcomer in this promise will exist for *the duration of the Messianic Era ALONE, NOT throughout the eternal ages beyond.*

Scripture deals with *millennial rewards and/or loss, NEVER with eternal rewards and/or loss.*

This should be easy enough for anyone to understand, for if rewards are eternal, so is loss of rewards. And loss of rewards involves an association with *death* (Rom. 8:13), *something which Scripture clearly reveals will NO longer exist in the eternal ages beyond the Millennium* (I Cor. 15:26; Rev. 21:1-4).

In the overcomer’s promise to the Church in Smyrna, there is a clear implication that *those who do NOT overcome will be hurt of the second death.* And *any attempt* to take this promise and make it mean something other than what it clearly states *serves ONLY to destroy the promise,* something which the Lord sounded a solemn warning against (Rev. 22:18, 19).

On the other hand, the promise that *those who do overcome will NOT “be hurt of the second death”* would be meaningless unless this promise is taken at face value and allowed to mean *EXACTLY what it says,* clearly implying that *those who do NOT overcome will “be hurt of the second death.”*

“The second death” in the Book of Revelation is associated with *the lake of fire* (Rev. 21:8). And *those who do NOT overcome* (v. 7) are going to have their part in this lake of fire (v. 8). That is, *they will be hurt of the second death by having a part in the lake of fire.*

But *EXACTLY* what is meant by a saved person being hurt of the second death and having a part in the lake of fire in Rev. 21:8?

Revelation chapter twenty-one moves beyond the Millennium into the eternal ages, and the first six verses provide the complete story concerning conditions as these ages begin.

Note the words, "It is done," in the first part of verse six. This is the translation of a verb in the perfect tense in the Greek text, indicating that *the matter has been brought to completion and presently exists in that finished state*.

Then, beginning with the latter part of verse six and continuing through verse eight, overcoming and/or being overcome are again, for the last time, dealt with in this book. And this takes a person back to the same place seen in chapters two and three.

Then, the remainder of the book is simply a commentary for the eight verses which open and begin this section.

First, a commentary is provided for the first part of this opening section. Revelation 21:9-22:5 forms a commentary for this part of the section (21:1-6a), which has to do with conditions beyond the Millennium. Note how this commentary in chapter twenty-two closes: "...and they shall reign forever and ever [throughout the endless ages]" (v. 5).

Then, the remainder of chapter twenty-two (vv. 6ff) forms a commentary for the second part of this opening section, which has to do with conditions before and during the Millennium (21:6b-8).

And this will explain why, *outside the gates of Jerusalem during the Messianic Era*, one will be able to find "dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie" (22:15).

This information is given to shed light on and provide additional detail for verses in the preceding chapter (vv. 6b-8), and the information in these verses in the preceding chapter was given to shed light on the previous overcomer's promises, particularly the one to the Church in Smyrna dealing with "the second death" (2:11).

To distinguish between millennial and eternal conditions in this respect, note that those *outside the gates* during the eternal ages will be the Gentile nations, as the New Jerusalem rests on the new earth (21:24-27); but those *outside the gates* during the preceding Messianic Era, with the New Jerusalem in the heavens above the earth, will be

the non-overcomers (22:14, 15). And the place which they will occupy is described at least four other ways in Scripture — through the use of *Gehenna*, *the outer darkness*, *the furnace of fire*, and *the lake of fire*.

The picture surrounding an association between *Gehenna* and *the lake of fire* appears unmistakable.

As *Gehenna* was the place of refuse for the earthly city of Jerusalem, *the lake of fire* is seen as the place of refuse for the heavenly city of Jerusalem. And as *Gehenna* was on the opposite side of the city from that side where God dwelled (*south*, as opposed to *north* [cf. Lev. 1:11; Isa. 14:13]), thus will it be with the counterpart to *Gehenna* in the heavenly Jerusalem.

The lake of fire is used with respect to a place completely apart from Christ and His rule. And those “hurt by the second death” are seen occupying this place during the 1,000-year Messianic Era.

(Why does Scripture associate non-overcoming Christians with the lake of fire in relation to Christ’s millennial reign, in this manner? The answer would be the same as the reason why Scripture associates the unsaved with the lake of fire throughout the endless ages of eternity, following the Millennium.

The lake of fire *was NOT prepared for man*. Rather, it was prepared “for the Devil and his angels” [Matt. 25:41]. It was prepared for those who had rejected God’s supreme power and authority, as Satan sought to acquire power and authority above that which had been delegated [Isa. 14:13, 14]. Thus, in this respect, *the lake of fire is connected with REGALITY*.

And man, created to replace Satan and his angels, finds his connection with the lake of fire *on EXACTLY the same basis*.

Saved man, ignoring the very reason for his salvation [which is *REGAL*], will find himself associated with the lake of fire during the Millennium [an association connected with all that the existence of the lake of fire implies].

And *unsaved man*, ignoring salvation and the reason for man’s creation [which, again, is *REGAL*], will find himself associated with the lake of fire throughout the endless ages following the Millennium [an association connected with all that the existence of the lake of fire implies].)

But, relative to Christians and the coming kingdom of Christ, is Scripture dealing with something literal? Or, is Scripture dealing with metaphors?

Note how Scripture uses metaphors to deal with this same thing elsewhere.

In John 15:6 and Heb. 6:8, saved individuals are spoken of in a metaphorical sense, where a *burning with fire* is referenced. And the context both places has to do with either bearing fruit or not bearing fruit, which is *EXACTLY* the same thing seen in the Matthew thirteen parables (v. 42).

Or, as the matter is expressed in Revelation chapters two and three, either overcoming or being overcome.

And the negative side of the matter is expressed at least two other ways in Scripture — being cast into *Gehenna* (a reference to the place of refuse outside the city walls of Jerusalem at this time; Matt. 5:22, 29, 30; 23:15, 33) or being cast into *outer darkness* (Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30).

Overcoming or not overcoming and not being hurt or being hurt of the second death in Rev. 2:11 is expressed a slightly different way in Rom. 8:13:

“For if ye [a reference to ‘brethren’ in v. 12] live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify [put to death] the deeds of the body, ye shall live.”

Whether *Gehenna* or *outer darkness* in Matthew, a *burning with fire* in John and Hebrews, *being cast into a furnace or lake of fire* in Matthew and Revelation, or *suffering death or being hurt of the second death* in Romans and Revelation, different facets of *EXACTLY* the same thing are in view.

ALL of these are used in contexts showing that they have to do with saved people in relation to fruit bearing and the kingdom.

Through comparing Scripture with Scripture, it is plain that these are simply different ways of expressing *the SAME thing*. And since a literal casting into outer darkness, *Gehenna*, or a furnace or lake of fire *could NOT possibly be in view* (for these different places *could NOT possibly* be looked upon as referring to the same place in a literal sense), it is evident that *metaphors* are being used throughout.

BUT, relative to the unsaved and the lake of fire, this is simply *NOT* expressed other ways in Scripture as it is with the saved, leaving no room for any thought other than understanding the matter as *literal*, *NOT metaphorical*.

Aside from the preceding, *it is clear that ALL Christians, faithful and unfaithful alike, will be in the kingdom.*

This is seen in type in Genesis chapters eighteen and nineteen. Both Abraham and Lot, in the final analysis, are seen on the mount (a “mountain” in Scripture signifies a *kingdom*).

But note the stark difference in the place which each occupied. Abraham stood before the Lord, where he had always been (18:22; 19:27). Lot though found himself in a place separated from the Lord, in a place where he also had always been (19:1, 30).

Saving a Soul from Death

“Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him;

Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins” (James 5:19, 20).

According to I Cor. 3:11-15, Christians whose works are burned at the judgment seat will “suffer loss.”

This CANNOT refer to the loss of rewards, for rewards enter into this judgment ONLY after a person is approved. The disapproved will have NO rewards to lose.

The ONLY thing in their possession possible for them to lose will be their souls (lives). Matthew 16:25-27 refers to the saved coming under judgment and the possibility of a person losing his soul. The word “lose” in these verses and the word “loss” in I Cor. 3:15 are translations of the same word in the Greek text.

The loss experienced by the person in Matt. 16:25-27 is that of his *soul*; and it *MUST* be the same in I Cor. 3:11-15, for the judgments referred to are the same.

The Epistle of James, referring to the salvation of the soul at the outset (1:21), concludes by referring to the possibility of a Christian experiencing “death” in relation to his *soul* (5:19, 20).

This thought is set forth in an opposite sense to that of realizing the “salvation” of his *soul*. Failing in the present race of the faith (I Cor. 9:24-27; cf. II Tim. 4:7, 8), *a Christian will be disapproved at the judgment seat. He will have failed to overcome, be victorious; and, failing in this manner, he will lose his soul.*

Thus, experiencing “death” in James 5:20 can, contextually, *ONLY* be synonymous with *the loss of the soul (life)*; that is to say, a person entering into this experience will be “hurt of the second death.” “Losing one’s soul [life]” and “being hurt of the second death” are two ways of saying the same thing.

In order for a “second death” to exist, there *MUST* have previously been a “first death.” Such a death, of course, is introduced in the fall of Adam:

“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Rom. 5:12).

Every man comes into this world via the birth from below and becomes a partaker of the first death through his association with Adam. And the second death will befall unredeemed man, with eternal verities in view, because of his continued association with Adam.

But for redeemed man, the second death is a different matter entirely. Through a bringing forth from above, he is no longer associated with Adam and death in the same sense as unredeemed man; and the possibility of his being hurt of the second death concerns events which occur in an entirely different sphere of activity.

Adam fell from the position in which he had been created; and more is involved in Adam’s fall than eternal verities, affecting only the unredeemed.

Adam had been called into existence to assume rulership over the earth; and the entrance of sin (along with bringing about eternal separation from God, apart from redemption) resulted in his disqualification to rule in Satan’s stead. Adam, through the fall, found himself disqualified to occupy the very position for which he had been created.

Redemption itself *did NOT* place Adam back in this position (Gen. 3:21-24); *NOR* does redemption today place man back in this position.

Redeemed man today, as Adam following his fall and redemption, *remains barred from the tree of life, awaiting the salvation of his soul.*

Following the fall in Genesis chapter three, *the tree of life does NOT enter the affairs of man again UNTIL the salvation of the soul is brought to pass; and this will occur ONLY following the issues and determinations surrounding the judgment seat, following Man’s Day.*

Man ultimately occupying the position which Adam was created to assume requires that he be identified with *a new Federal Head — the second Man, the last Adam.*

The second Man, the last Adam, appeared and met Satan in a face-to-face confrontation *to show that He was fully qualified to function in the realm (a regal realm) which the first man, the first Adam, forfeited in the fall.*

He then provided redemption for man through the sacrifice of Himself and presently awaits the day when He will take the kingdom.

Those “in Christ” have been redeemed, with a view to their being co-heirs with Christ after He wrests control of the kingdom from Satan and his angels.

Those ruling with the second man, the last Adam, will constitute His bride and reign as consort queen with Him, as Eve would have reigned as consort queen with the first man, the first Adam, had both remained obedient and occupied the position for which man had been created.

The second death, as it will affect Christians, can be properly understood *ONLY* in the light of a parallel between that which Adam failed to realize in the past and that which unfaithful Christians will fail to realize in the future — the very purpose for their existence. And as *the first death* entered into man’s former failure, *the second death* will enter into man’s latter failure — for the saved on the one hand, and for the unsaved on the other.

Experiencing “the second death” for the redeemed, through failure to realize one’s calling, can *in NO way* pertain to eternal verities. Such *CANNOT* be in view at all.

Christians are present possessors of an eternal salvation based entirely upon the finished work of Christ at Calvary; and there can be *NO such thing* as “the second death” affecting any Christian on the basis of his presently possessed eternal salvation, else the finished work of Christ itself would be called into question and come into disrepute.

The Christians’ association with “the second death” *can ONLY pertain to millennial verities and the loss of one’s soul, the EXACT association provided by each reference in the Book of Revelation.*

Unfaithful Christians will experience “the second death” during the millennial reign of Christ. That is to say, they will lose their souls (lives) and be denied positions with Christ in the kingdom.

Again, “the second death” for such Christians is *millennial ONLY*, *NOT eternal*.

Non-overcoming Christians, through experiencing “the second death,” will be:

“...punished with everlasting [Gk., *aionios*, ‘age-lasting’] destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;

When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe...” (II Thess. 1:9b, 10a).

For the unredeemed though, “the second death” can only pertain to *eternal verities*.

As a result of Adam’s sin and their nonacceptance of Christ’s sacrifice on Calvary, the unredeemed reside in a condition described in Scripture as “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1; Col. 2:13).

They, in this condition, can have *NOTHING* to do with matters pertaining to rulership over the earth. Eternal verities *ALONE* are in view; and the second death, as it will affect the unredeemed, *MUST* be understood in this respect.

Unredeemed man’s judgment will occur *ONLY* following the Millennium, for he has *NOTHING* to do with the millennial age, *ONLY* with the ages beyond.

Thus, unredeemed man will experience “the second death” *following the Millennium, with ONLY the subsequent endless ages in view*. The unredeemed will *remain* in their spiritually dead condition and, in the lake of fire, be *eternally separated* from God:

“And death and hell [‘Hades’] were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire” (Rev. 20:14, 15).

7

The Hidden Manna, White Stone

Continued Provision to Rule and Reign

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it” (Rev. 2:17).

The third of the seven overcomer’s promises is given in the message to the Church in Pergamos, a Church located in a wealthy city where pagan worship flourished. Pergamos was a religious center filled with pagan cults, housing temples and shrines dedicated to the false gods of the Gentiles.

Pergamos, at this time, was also a center for the Roman government in Asia; and Satan, who ruled the earth through the Gentile nations (and continues to rule in this same manner today), was said to have his throne in Pergamos (v. 13).

This though could only refer to a prominent place for his rule in the Roman Empire rather than to the actual location of his throne, for his throne would still be located *in the heavens* at this time, *NOT on the earth*.

The Gentile nations ruling under Satan would exhibit power connected with Satan’s throne (*cf.* Ezek. 28:14; Dan. 10:12-20; Luke 4:5, 6). And it would have to be in this respect that Satan’s throne was said to be in Pergamos — a center of Gentile government, idolatry, and false worship.

Satan’s throne *will NOT* actually be upon the earth *UNTIL* he, along with his angels, is cast out of the heavens shortly before the middle of the Tribulation period (Rev. 12:7-12). It will *THEN* be established in Babylon, Satan’s earthly capital (Isa. 14:4ff; Dan. 2:31-45); and his throne will then be occupied by Antichrist, the last king of Babylon preceding its destruction (Rev. 13:1, 2).

The Roman Empire was the great persecutor of early Christianity. Jewish persecution entered into the matter. But, preceding 70 A.D., this persecution was centered mainly around believing Jews during the offer and re-offer of the kingdom to Israel (from 30 A.D. to abt. 62 A.D.).

Christians, as the Jews, were monotheistic; and they fixed their eyes upon the one true God, not upon Caesar. And if this period of persecution is to be associated in a historical sense with that which is stated about any one of the seven Churches in Revelation chapters two and three, it would seemingly have to be the Church in Smyrna (2:8-11).

Numerous Christians during this period of Roman persecution were imprisoned, tortured, and killed. But the more widespread this persecution became, the more Christendom flourished and grew. This is what led Tertullian, one of the early Church fathers who lived during that time, to say, *"The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church."*

Along with a Satanic persecution from without during this period, there was also a Satanic corrupting work from within. Very early in the dispensation, as seen in the fourth of seven parables in Matthew chapter thirteen (v. 33), leaven was placed in three measures of meal, which would have to do centrally with the Word of the Kingdom and Christendom (the subject matter seen throughout these parables).

And this resulted in a corrupting work *from within*, which paralleled the persecution *from without* (ref. the author's book, *Mysteries of the Kingdom*, Chapter VI, "Parable of the Leaven").

In relation to leaven placed in the three measures of meal in Matt. 13:33, "leaven" in Scripture is spoken of as a *corrupting substance*, and the number "three" in Scripture is the number of *Divine perfection*. This number shows *Divine perfection within that which is in view — Divine perfection within that which is being corrupted by the leaven*.

"Three measures of meal" — three measures of ground grain, used to make *bread* — are in view. The reference is to *the Word of God* (Matt. 4:4; cf. Isa. 55:1, 2), though not the Word in a general sense.

Rather, the reference, *contextually*, is to the Word in a specific sense, a specific part of the Word, a specific teaching in the Word. And a corrupting agent is seen being placed within that which is perfect.

The subject at hand leading into this fourth parable in Matthew chapter thirteen has to do with *the Word of the Kingdom*. It has to do with how the message surrounding the coming kingdom of Christ

would begin to be proclaimed in Christendom and how this message would progressively change *because of something (a corrupting agent) placed within the message* (vv. 19-24, 31, 33).

Thus, during the first several centuries of the dispensation, there was not only a Satanic work *from without* but one *from within* as well.

Then, at the beginning of the fourth century, Satan brought matters *together* in his efforts to destroy Christianity. His efforts *from within* (the working of the leaven through several centuries of time) had produced such corruption within Christendom that he could merge these efforts with those *from without* (persecution by the Roman Empire).

And to bring this to pass, *Satan brought Roman persecution to an end and simply merged a corrupt religious system with a pagan political system.*

The Roman emperor Diocletian, coming into power near the end of the third century, was the last of the persecuting emperors.

His persecuting edicts were repealed during the opening years of the fourth century by Constantine the Great after he had come into power, and Christianity was then regarded as simply *another religion in the countries over which Rome ruled.*

This move by Constantine set the stage for a succeeding move having far-reaching ramifications: The day came when Constantine (for reasons upon which historians differ) embraced Christianity, an act subsequently followed by his efforts to force Christianity on the Empire as its *ONE* and *ONLY* religion. And these efforts by Constantine began a sequence of events which, toward the end of the fourth century, ultimately resulted in *a COMPLETE merger of Church and State.*

In the year 380 A.D., Theodosius I issued an edict that made Christianity *the exclusive state religion*, and in the year 395 A.D., Christianity was finally recognized as *the OFFICIAL and ONLY religion of the Roman Empire.* Christianity then found itself *COMPLETELY enmeshed within a world power in the sphere of governmental authority over which Satan exercised control, COMPLETELY out of line with God's plans and purposes for the new creation "in Christ."*

If the message to the Church in Pergamos has to do with a particular period in Church history, it would have to be this period, where a merger of Church and State occurred. This is the period which followed the Roman persecutions; and the names "Smyrna" and "Pergamos," in this respect, would themselves be significant in pointing to these periods.

"Smyrna" is a transliterated Greek word meaning *myrrh* (a resinous gum used for embalming), which could possibly point to the martyrs under Roman persecution during the first several centuries of the Church's existence. "Pergamos," on the other hand, comes from the Greek word *gamos*, meaning "marriage"; and this word could possibly point to that period in Church history, beginning with Constantine, when the Church was wed to the world.

This entire matter is depicted in the parable of the mustard seed in Matt. 13:31, 32. The mustard seed, the smallest of seeds, would, through *natural growth*, germinate and become "the greatest among herbs." However, the mustard seed in the parable germinated and, after a period of time, experienced *an abnormal growth*, becoming a "tree."

The very next and last thing stated in this parable is the fact that once the herb had become a tree, "the birds of the air" then came and lodged in its branches.

A "tree" in Scripture symbolizes *a national power* (Judges 9:8-15; Dan. 4:10-12, 20-22), and the "birds" in Matt. 13:32 are associated with *Satanic activity* (cf. vv. 4, 19). The mustard seed germinating and experiencing natural growth portrays the Church during the early years of the present dispensation; and the herb subsequently experiencing abnormal growth, producing a tree, allowing the birds of the air to lodge in its branches, portrays that which Christianity became during and following the reign of Constantine.

The Church merged with the state, becoming *a tree, a world power*; and Satan with his agents simply moved in and began accomplishing that which, under Roman persecution, had not been accomplished.

Where *the pagan*, persecuting emperors seemingly failed, the first so-called *Christian* emperors succeeded. And out of this condition in which the Church found itself arose two major problems:

- 1) There were those in the Church in Pergamos who held to "the doctrine of Balaam."
- 2) There were those in this Church who held to the "doctrine of the Nicolaitanes" (note also "the deeds of the Nicolaitanes" in the message to the Church in Ephesus [2:6]).

These two doctrinal problems crept into the Church early in its

history, but they are not at all peculiar to the historical state of the Church as seen in Revelation chapter two.

The intermingling of Christians in the affairs of the world (governmental, and other affairs) is something from which the Church has never really withdrawn, and the same problems produced by conditions of this nature in the fourth century are still with us today (*cf.* II Tim. 2:3, 4).

Rather than Christianity converting the world, the world converted Christianity; and the lasting effects of this unholy relationship — very evident in the closing days of the Laodicean period in which we live — is what led Andrew Bonar, a nineteenth-century Scottish minister, to say:

"I looked for the Church and found it in the world. I looked for the world and found it in the Church."

Doctrine of Balaam

Jude 11 records "the error of Balaam," II Peter 2:15 records "the way of Balaam," and Rev. 2:14 records "the doctrine of Balaam." All three of these are used in passages referring to Christians entering into a state of affairs within Christendom which not only defiles their high calling but which also dishonors the Lord who purchased their salvation with His Own blood.

The error and *way* of Balaam appear in companion portions of Scripture and would seem to refer basically to the same thing. *The error* of Balaam is associated with "reward" in Jude, and *the way* of Balaam is associated with the "wages of unrighteousness" in II Peter.

Thus, *the error* and *way* of Balaam have to do with "monetary gain"; and, according to the Old Testament account, monetary gain derived through this means is acquired through one's willingness to compromise the principles of God and proclaim things contrary to the revealed Word of God (though Balaam was prevented from doing this and could only utter that which was in accord with the revealed Word of God).

The error and *way* of Balaam can be found in Numbers chapters twenty-two through twenty-four.

Balak, king of the Moabites, hired Balaam to come into his land and pronounce a curse upon the children of Israel. Balak had seen that which Israel had done to the Amorites; and knowing that this nation

would soon be passing through his country, he was afraid because of the exhibited power which Israel exercised through the nation's God.

Balak knew that the only way Israel could be defeated was through severing this power. Thus, Balak hired Balaam to come into Moab and pronounce a curse upon the Israelites, incurring God's wrath upon them in order to ultimately bring about their defeat at the hands of the enemy.

However, once in Moab, in four separate prophecies, being unable to curse the one whom God had not cursed (Num. 23:8), only blessings proceeded from the lips of Balaam. Balak, angered by the turn of events, sent Balaam out of Moab to his own country.

The doctrine of Balaam though was different than his *error* and *way*. His *doctrine* had to do with that part of his teaching which was contrary to the revealed Word of God, and it is seen in Scripture following the account of his error and way.

1) *Past Teaching*

Scripture surrounding the doctrine of Balaam and its tragic results is given in Num. 25:1-3:

"And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab.

And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods.

And Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor: and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel."

The Israelites, after coming into Moab, began to commit fornication with the "daughters of Moab," eat meat sacrificed to idols, and bow down and worship the false gods of the Moabites.

In order to put a stop to these sins and stay the hand of God's judgment upon the entire camp of Israel, Moses was instructed to slay every Israelite who had "joined himself unto Baal-peor." Because of their sins, twenty-four thousand Israelites perished under God's judgment.

What caused the Israelites to depart from the one true and living God (Who had delivered them from Egypt) and begin serving false gods and following the idolatrous ways of the Moabites?

The answer is given in Num. 31:16:

“Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through *the counsel of Balaam*, to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord.”

As previously seen, Balaam could not curse the one whom God had not cursed. Only beautiful prophecies filled with blessings flowed from his lips when he was called into Moab by Balak. But Balaam did succeed in leading the Israelites astray through *his counsel*.

The Israelites, through *the counsel of Balaam*, were led to commit fornication, eat things sacrificed to idols, and bow down before other gods. And because of these sins, the judgment of God fell upon His people.

The counsel of Balaam — i.e., “the doctrine of Balaam” — in the light of his prophecies (Num. 23, 24), could only have had to do with sins committed by the Israelites in view of promises and blessings associated with their covenant relationship with God.

In this respect, briefly stated, this doctrine could only have had to do with the fact that the Israelites were the covenant people of God, God’s covenants (Abrahamic and Mosaic at the time) could not be broken, and consequently the Israelites, in relation to realizing covenant promises and blessings, could sin with immunity.

Such, of course, *was NOT the case at all*.

It was true that the covenants established between God and Israel *could NOT be broken*; it was also true that Israel’s position as firstborn *could NOT be changed*; *BUT, it was NOT true that the Israelites, in relation to realizing covenant promises and blessings, could sin with immunity*.

God’s wrath was manifested because of the sins of His people, and the thousands of Israelites who succumbed to the counsel of Balaam were overthrown in the wilderness, short of the goal of their calling.

2) *Present Teaching*

The doctrine of Balaam is one of the most widely taught doctrines in the Church today. Christians know — as their counterparts in the Church in Pergamos — that they have been saved by grace through faith, and *NOTHING can alter that which has been effected by their having “passed from death unto life”* (John 5:24; Eph. 2:1ff).

They now possess spiritual life, which *can NEVER be taken from them*; and, because of the unchangeable nature of the life which they

presently possess, they reason that *they can conduct their lives in any manner which they choose, and it will make NO difference.*

However, as in the case of the Israelites, so in the case of Christians. Christians, as the Israelites under Moses, have been saved for a specific, revealed purpose. Every Christian is enrolled in a race (I Cor. 9:24-27); every Christian is engaged in a conflict (Eph. 6:10-18; II Tim. 2:4, 5). And the goal set before every Christian is to win the race, be victorious in the conflict.

God has made provision for Christians in order that at the end of the race they might say with Paul in II Tim. 4:7, 8:

"I have fought a good fight ['I have strained every muscle in the good contest']. I have finished my course ['race'], I have kept the faith:

Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness..."

The enemy, Satan, on the other hand, is doing everything within his power to bring about defeat in the lives of Christians. Satan's main objective in the present warfare is to prevent Christians from qualifying for crowns and thus positions of rulership with Christ in His coming kingdom.

God is presently bringing into existence a new order of *sons* to replace the order now ruling in the heavens; and the incumbent rulers — Satan and his angels — know this and are doing all within their power to retain their present governmental control over the earth.

The main facet of the doctrine of Balaam which is being promulgated in Churches today is the teaching that future blessings and rewards have been set aside for every Christian solely on the basis of Christ's finished work at Calvary and the Christian's positional standing "in Christ." In this respect, all Christians — regardless of their conduct during the present time — will receive crowns and positions of power and authority with Christ in the kingdom.

However, that which is clearly taught throughout the Word of God is to the contrary. *Though the Israelites' positional standing before God could NOT be changed, they could NOT and did NOT sin with immunity.*

And EXACTLY the same thing is true concerning Christians. *Though the Christians' positional standing before God CANNOT be changed, they, as the Israelites, CANNOT sin with immunity.* Sin in the camp of Israel

resulted in the Israelites being overthrown in the wilderness, short of the goal of their calling. *And it will be NO different for Christians.*

“...and I took the crown that was upon his head” (II Sam. 1:10; cf. Rev. 3:11).

Doctrine of the Nicolaitanes

Outside of Revelation chapter two, there is no known sect in Church history (Biblical or secular) referred to by the name “Nicolaitanes.” Some early writers tried unsuccessfully to connect this group of individuals with *Nicolas of Antioch*; and others, following in their steps, try this even today. However, such a connection cannot be established, which leaves one with a *sole* method of identification — *the meaning of the word itself*.

The reference *can only be to a sect in the Church in Pergamos* (known also to those in Ephesus) whose practices and doctrine are *self-explained by the term* which the Spirit of God used to identify them.

Apart from this means of identification, *NOTHING* can be known about the Nicolaitanes.

The word “Nicolaitanes” is a transliterated, compound word from the Greek text (*nikolaites*), derived from *nike* (“a victor,” “a conqueror”) and *laos* (“people”). Thus, the word simply means, “to be victorious over the people,” “to conquer the people.”

Using the meaning of the name itself after this fashion, the Nicolaitanes would have to be identified as individuals (leaders) in the Church who had subjugated the remaining Christians to their self-imposed authority — individuals comprising a ruling, priestly class (the clergy over the laity), *something condemned by Scripture in NO uncertain terms*.

Authority within the Church must ALWAYS be based SOLELY upon “service.” Those occupying positions of leadership (elders, deacons) must *always minister (serve) within their sphere of activity*, which is to bear no relationship whatsoever to authority exercised by those in the world (cf. Matt. 20:25-28; I Cor. 16:15, 16).

“Nicolaitanism” is simply *a corruption of delegated authority within the Church, exercising this authority after a forbidden pattern — after the pattern set forth by those in the world*.

Nicolaitanism, being introduced in the message to the Church in Ephesus, was apparently in existence very early in Church history; but it would only appear natural that this doctrine coming into full bloom awaited that period covered by the Church in Pergamos.

Nicolaitanism patterns itself *after the structure set forth in worldly governmental systems*; and it was through the actions of Constantine and others in the fourth-century Roman Empire, during the period in Church history which seemingly parallels that seen in the message to the Church in Pergamos, that the way was opened for an already-existing world system in the Church to follow this pattern to a level heretofore unattained. Once the union between Church and state had been established, worldly practices in the Church *could ONLY become commonplace*.

Since the Church has never really separated itself from the position which it began to assume during the days of Constantine, *one can ONLY expect to find Christendom saturated with "the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes" from the fourth century right on into the present day and time*.

In fact, viewing the matter from this perspective, while looking upon it within the framework of the leavening process in Matt. 13:33, the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes would have to be considered a false teaching which would undoubtedly *increase with time*; and *this would make it even more prominent in the Church today, near the end of the dispensation, than at any other time in history*.

The leaven which the woman placed in the three measures of meal *can ONLY* progressively continue its deteriorating work throughout the dispensation. And this leaven *can ONLY* do its most damaging work near the end of the dispensation, during the time in which we presently live.

"The doctrine of Balaam," viewed within the framework of the same perspective and same leavening process, would have to be looked upon after an identical fashion in relation to *time*. This is a doctrine which will undoubtedly, as "the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes," be more widely proclaimed in the latter days than at any other time in the history of the Church. And "the doctrine of Balaam" will, in many instances, be proclaimed by those holding to "the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes."

Such can ONLY be the ever-increasing, degenerate state of teaching emanating from the lukewarm Laodicean Church during the closing years of the present dispensation, immediately preceding Christ's return for the Church.

The Overcomers

Contextually, the overcomer's promise in Rev. 2:17 will be realized by those Christians who conduct their affairs in a manner separate from the widespread teachings of "the doctrine of Balaam" and "the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes."

It *DOES* make a difference how one lives after he has been saved; and the Headship of the Lord Jesus Christ, rather than man, *MUST* be recognized as one seeks to live a life pleasing unto the Lord.

The beliefs and practices of those holding to "the doctrine of Balaam" and "the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes" have completely permeated the Churches, such beliefs and practices are part and parcel with those of the world, and to the victor *ALONE* belongs the promise which God has given. The overcomer *ALONE* has been promised that he will be allowed to partake of *the hidden manna* and will be given *a white stone with a new name* written on the stone, which no man will know other than the one receiving it.

1) The Hidden Manna

"Manna" is found in both the Old and New Testaments, *but "the hidden manna" is found ONLY in the third overcomer's promise in the Book of Revelation.*

The Israelites were provided manna during their pilgrim journey between Egypt and Canaan; and Christians, in like manner, have been provided Manna during their pilgrim journey between the antitype of Egypt (the world) and the antitype of Canaan (a heavenly land, wherein Christians will realize an inheritance). And any teaching concerning the future "hidden manna" *MUST* be drawn from past and present appearances of the manna as a provision for God's people.

(The fact that the future provision for God's people is presently "hidden" may be an allusion to the manna which was kept "before the Lord" in the Holy of Holies of the tabernacle.

This manna was placed in "a golden pot" within the ark of the covenant, *hidden* from the people but *visible* to God [Ex. 16:14-35; John 6:48-54; Heb. 9:4]. So it is with the hidden manna during the present time. It is *hidden* from the people but *visible* to God.)

The manna given to the Israelites during the wilderness journey was a provision for their physical needs.

This manna was a special food, prepared by God, containing everything necessary for the sustenance and well-being of the physical body. It was provided fresh day-by-day, and the Israelites were to gather and eat the manna after the fashion in which it was given.

NO supplementary food was provided; NOR was any required.

The “manna” which the Israelites were given in the wilderness typified Christ, “the living bread which came down from heaven.”

And this “living bread” is the provision which Christians have been given for their wilderness journey. Christians “eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood” (John 6:48-54) through the assimilation of the Word of God. This Word is a special food, prepared by God, containing everything necessary for the sustenance and well-being of the spiritual life.

The Spirit of God will render this food fresh day-by-day; and Christians are to partake of the Living Word through the Written Word, after the manner in which it has been given.

NO supplementary food has been provided; NOR is any required.

The “manna” upon which Christians presently feed has been given to properly prepare and equip them for *the wilderness journey*.

And the “hidden manna” can only be a parallel provision for *things beyond the wilderness journey*. The overcomers will be allowed to partake of the hidden manna to properly prepare and equip them as they rule and reign in the kingdom.

The provision is “manna” *now* and “hidden manna” *yet future*, both given to equip Christians during particular periods for particular types of service.

The hidden manna in the third overcomer’s promise and the tree of life in the first overcomer’s promise would have to be integrally related in this realm. Both are set forth as provisions to properly equip Christians as they rule and reign, both point to Christ (the true Manna, the true Tree of Life), and both together will form God’s complete provision for the rulers in the kingdom.

However, a distinction *MUST* be drawn between the two, viewing each in the sense of a different facet of this provision. Since partaking of the tree of life will provide that special wisdom and knowledge

necessary to judge in equity, justice, and righteousness (*ref.* Ch. V in this book), it can be safely assumed that partaking of the hidden manna will apparently constitute God's provision to properly prepare overcoming Christians in all other realms of life. Such could possibly include physical needs as well as spiritual needs.

Not that much has been revealed about the resurrection body. Christ partook of food in His resurrection body (Luke 24:41-43; John 21:5-14; *cf.* Matt. 26:29), but the reason for His partaking of food or details surrounding the matter are not given. If the resurrection body requires sustenance for the rigors of the office Christians are to hold, the hidden manna may very well provide that sustenance, along with any other requirements for sustenance which Christians may possess.

2) The White Stone, New Name

During the days in which the Book of Revelation was written, and days prior to that time, giving one a white stone meant that the person had been charged with some offense but had been acquitted.

Since works *ALONE* will be reviewed at the judgment seat, justification shown by the white stone *MUST emanate out of a judgment of works*. Thus, justification on the basis of Christ's finished work at Calvary *CANNOT* be in view at all, for overcomers and non-overcomers alike would receive such a stone if that were the case.

A white stone will be given to those Christians whose works endure the fire, revealing justification on the basis of that coming under judgment — *a justification on the basis of works, works emanating out of faithfulness* (*cf.* James 2:14-26; *ref.* Chapter III in this book).

A white stone was also given to the victor in a contest or battle, which is *EXACTLY* what is in view through overcoming in the present battle, the present warfare, one "not against flesh and blood," but:

"...against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world ['age'], against spiritual wickedness in high places ['against the spirit forces of wickedness in the heavenlies']" (Eph. 6:12).

Satan and his angels use the world and the flesh in their never-ceasing efforts to bring about a Christian's defeat. And the promised white stone will be given to *the victor* — the one overcoming *the world, the flesh, and the Devil*.

With the preceding in mind, understanding the white stone, along with the new name written on the stone, can possibly best be seen in Joseph's exaltation by the Pharaoh of Egypt.

Joseph, because of his faithfulness to God, was, through Divine providence, brought into a position of such favor with Pharaoh that he found himself exalted to the throne. Pharaoh took his own ring and "put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck." He then positioned him as "*ruler over all the land of Egypt*," and bestowed upon him a new name — "*Zaphnath-paaneah*" (Gen. 41:39-45).

The white stone will identify the overcomer as the one shown justified, victorious in conquest, and elevated to noble rank.

As Joseph in the type, he will be placed in the position of a ruler and be given a new name.

Joseph was placed over *all Egypt*, and the overcoming Christian will be placed over *all the earth* ("Egypt" is always a type of *the world* in Scripture). He will then be given "*a new name...which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.*"

Such is the present prospect set before Christians, as given in the overcomer's promise to the Church in Pergamos.

Concluding Thoughts:

When overcoming Christians go forth to rule with Christ in the kingdom, everything will be in a state of readiness.

Through the provision of *the tree of life, the hidden manna, the white stone, and the new name*, Christians will be properly equipped for *every facet of life in the kingdom* as they rule the nations with Christ.

They will be given *wisdom and knowledge* to rule in equity, justice, and righteousness; they will be provided with the necessary *sustenance* (physical and / or spiritual) to equip them for the office which they are to hold; they will be given *identifying stones*, showing their victory over the world, the flesh, and the Devil; and the One with Whom they are to rule as co-heirs will know them by *a new name*.

Through God's provision, *a perfect rule will issue forth when man is once again brought back into the position for which he was originally created.*

All authority in that day will emanate from one throne (cf. Rev. 2:26, 27; 3:21), and *NOTHING short of an absolute rule* will suffice.

8

Power Over the Nations *Realizing the Rights of Firstborn Sons*

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

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

And I will give him the morning star” (Rev. 2:26-28).

Remaining within the thought that each of the seven epistles in Revelation chapters two and three possibly points, in a particular sense, to a different period in Church history, the message to the Church in Thyatira would seemingly have to point to that period following the days of Constantine.

In this respect, it would show a continued description of deteriorating conditions in Christendom following the time when the Church became wed to the world during the days of Constantine, depicted in the preceding message to the Church in Pergamos.

(The manner in which the Church both began and will end during the 2,000-year dispensation can clearly be seen in Revelation chapters two and three in the messages to the Churches in Ephesus [the first Church dealt with] and Laodicea [the last Church dealt with]. But to contend for that revealed about any one of the seven Churches to fit *completely into a particular period of Church history* rather than covering, at least to some degree, *an overall scope of Church history* would be an incorrect way to view matters.

Even remnants of that seen in both the Church in Ephesus and the Church in Laodicea can be seen in Christendom throughout the dispensation. The thought inherent in that which is said about these two churches, in the light of related Scripture, has to do with Christendom becoming less like that seen in Ephesus and more like that seen in Laodicea as the dispensation progresses.

THEN, near the end of the dispensation, after “the whole” has been leavened [Matt. 13:33], *ONLY* that seen in the Laodicean Church, for all practical purposes, will remain — *a completely leavened Christendom which, relative to any proclamation of the Word of the Kingdom, can only be described as “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked”* [Rev. 3:17b].

And a sad part of the matter is that the Church in that day — which appears very much to be the present-day Church — *will NOT even recognize that they occupy this completely leavened position.*

In the same preceding respect, messages to the remaining five Churches seemingly fit into different periods of Church history [though each, after at least some fashion, would have to cover the whole scope of Church history].

Attention will be called to these different periods into which these different Churches seemingly fit [more so at particular times than at other times during the dispensation], but doing this is as far as the matter will be taken.)

Once the door had been opened and the world welcomed within, as seen in the Church in the Roman world during the fourth century, the working of the leaven producing corruption in the true Biblical message *could ONLY have dramatically increased.*

And any remaining remnants of pristine Christian doctrine and worship *could ONLY* have begun to gradually be corrupted by the ways and practices of the world, a corruption which would eventually encompass such proportions that *ALL Christendom would ultimately be affected.*

That which continued to occur following the time when the Church became wed to the world, seemingly described in the message to the Church in Thyatira in Revelation chapter two, is simply another facet of the working of the leaven which the woman placed in the three measures of meal in Matt. 13:33 — “...*till the whole was leavened.*”

The message to the Church in Thyatira, in this respect, would actually present the far-reaching results of that which was introduced during the days of Constantine.

The world had been invited within, providing added fuel for the leaven which was already working; and this message would present *the depths* to which the world ultimately carried Christianity.

Regardless of how one views matters in relation to Church history, *ONE fact cannot be denied*. The false teaching being accepted and practiced by Christians in Thyatira was of such *a degenerate nature* that the Spirit of God reached back hundreds of years in time and associated the entire matter with one of the darkest periods in Israeli history — *the days of Jezebel*. And to properly understand conditions among Christians as they existed in Thyatira, *one must understand conditions in the camp of Israel during that time*.

(The false doctrine being taught, accepted, and practiced in Thyatira emanated from “that woman Jezebel.”

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

Calling the woman teaching false doctrine in Thyatira by the name “Jezebel” *can ONLY be an allusion, through association, to Jezebel in the Old Testament*, rather than to the actual name of the person [even though, conceivably, this could also have been the actual name of the person teaching in this Church; *but, even if so, the allusion could ONLY still exist*].

The false doctrine being promulgated by this person [with its attendant results] evidently so closely approximated the beliefs and practices of Jezebel in the Old Testament [with their attendant results] that *the person teaching these things in the Church in Thyatira was referred to by the name of her counterpart from the Old Testament*.)

Jezebel

Jezebel appeared in Israeli history during Old Testament days at a time when wickedness was reaching a pinnacle through the unlawful deeds of a succession of Israeli kings. The kingdom had been divided following Solomon’s death, and the kings reigning over the northern ten tribes (the kingdom of Israel, beginning with the reign of Jeroboam) not only themselves “did evil in the sight of the Lord” but they also caused the people of Israel “to sin” (*cf.* I Kings 15:25, 26, 33, 34; 16:18, 19).

This wickedness began to reach a pinnacle during the days of Omri (the sixth king following Jeroboam), and it reached a pinnacle during

the reign of his son, Ahab. It is recorded of Omri that he “did worse *than all* that were before him”; and it is recorded of Ahab that he, in turn, “did evil in the sight of the Lord *above all* that were before him.”

It was during the dark days of Ahab’s reign in Israel that Jezebel appeared, with Baal worship subsequently being introduced. Jezebel was the daughter of an idolatrous king-priest whom Ahab had married, a follower of the ways of her father and the one responsible for Baal worship being brought over into the camp of Israel.

It was after Ahab’s marriage to Jezebel that he “went and served Baal, and worshipped him”; and it was during this time that he “reared up an altar for Baal” and “made a grove” (also connected with idolatry), doing more “to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him” (I Kings 16:25, 30-33).

Also, during the reign of Ahab, Jericho was rebuilt; and for centuries a curse had rested upon the person who rose up and rebuilt this city (I Kings 16:34; cf. Joshua 6:26).

Jezebel was responsible for the death of numerous prophets of the Lord, and she sought Elijah’s life after he had destroyed the prophets of Baal, following the declaration of the one true and living God by fire on Mt. Carmel (I Kings 18:4, 17-40; 19:1, 2).

But the act which appeared to be the final straw, bringing iniquity to a point where God could no longer stay His hand (cf. Gen. 15:16), was Jezebel’s acquisition of Naboth’s vineyard for Ahab. Jezebel, through forged letters, brought about Naboth’s death in order that Ahab might possess his vineyard; and Ahab himself became a partaker of this deed through subsequently possessing the vineyard.

And because of this, *judgment of a nature befitting this sin* was pronounced upon both Ahab and Jezebel. The Lord said of *Ahab*, “In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine”; and the Lord said of *Jezebel*, “The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel” (I Kings 21:1-23; cf. I Kings 22:35-38; II Kings 9:30-37).

Following this pronouncement of judgment upon both Ahab and Jezebel, Scripture provides a summary statement concerning the lives of these two individuals:

“But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, *whom Jezebel his wife stirred up.*

And he did very abominably in following idols, according to all things as did the Amorites, whom the Lord cast out before the children of Israel" (I Kings 21:25, 26).

Jezebel in the Old Testament sets forth *the epitome of corruption*, and there was a woman teaching in the Church in Thyatira whose influence and corrupt teachings were compared to those of Jezebel.

During Jezebel's day in the Old Testament, corruption was produced by bringing the things of the world over into the camp of Israel; and during the day of her counterpart in the New Testament, corruption was produced through the same means — bringing the things of the world over into the Church.

A terrible judgment was pronounced upon Jezebel in the Old Testament (I Kings 21:23; cf. II Kings 9:30-37), and *a similar judgment* was pronounced upon her counterpart and those who followed her ways in the New Testament (Rev. 2:21-23).

The message concerning Jezebel in Revelation chapter two, along with the Old Testament counterpart, is clearly stated for *ALL* to behold:

God will NOT tolerate Christians entering into an unholy relationship with the world. Such a relationship is associated with fornication, idolatry, and adultery. And a relationship with the world of this nature, according to Scripture, can end ONLY one way. It can end ONLY in death (vv. 20-23; cf. Rom. 8:13).

Doctrine, Deep Things

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

But that which ye have already hold fast till I come" (Rev. 2:24, 25).

The teachings of the woman called "Jezebel" in the Church in Thyatira are referred to in a twofold, synonymous respect:

- 1) The "doctrine" of Jezebel.
- 2) The "depths ['deep things'] of Satan."

That is, what is referred to as *the doctrine of Jezebel* had to do with "the depths ['deep things'] of Satan."

God has His “deep things,” and *Satan* has his “deep things” (I Cor. 2:10; Rev. 2:24).

The deep things of God are associated with that which is separate from the present world kingdom under Satan, *the coming world kingdom under Christ*. Such is evident from the context of I Cor. 2:10.

The deep things of Satan, on the other hand, are associated with that which is diametrically opposed to the coming kingdom of Christ, *the present kingdom under Satan*. Such is evident from the context of Rev. 2:24.

1) As These Things Affect Israel

Israel's standing among the nations is that of *firstborn*.

When God instructed Moses to say unto Pharaoh, “Israel is my son, even my firstborn” (Ex. 4:22), God was announcing the proper place which Israel had been called to occupy in relation to the Gentile nations of the earth.

Israel, as God's firstborn son, was the nation in possession of the birthright; *and NO Gentile nation has ever or will ever come into such a position*. Among the nations of the earth, *a firstborn status is reserved for Israel ALONE*.

God has stated concerning Israel, “*You ONLY* have I known of all the families of the earth.”

God has chosen Israel to be “a special people unto himself, *ABOVE* all people that are upon the face of the earth” (Deut. 7:6; 14:2; Amos 3:2; cf. Ps. 147:19, 20; Rom. 9:4, 5).

During the days of Jezebel in the Old Testament, one of the world's false religions was brought over into the camp of Israel, into the worship of the one true and living God. This was done under the direction and leadership of Satan in an effort to thwart the plans and purposes of God concerning Israel, God's firstborn son, the nation in possession of the rights of primogeniture.

Israel had previously been called out of Egypt to ultimately realize these rights in the land covenanted to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And the introduction of Baal worship into the camp of Israel, through Jezebel, was nothing more than *Satan's attempt to prevent Israel from assuming her God-ordained position as “a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation”* (Ex. 19:6).

The birthright possessed by Israel consisted of three things:

- 1) *Ruler of the household, under and for the Father.*
- 2) *Exercising the office of priest in the family.*
- 3) *The reception of a double portion of all the Father's goods.*

The first segment of the birthright placed the firstborn in the position of "heir" with respect to a rule of the Father's house, under and for the Father. "Sonship" implies rulership and carries the thought of supremacy.

In this respect, Israel, a national power, was to be the supreme nation and rule over ALL the other nations — ALL the Gentile nations of the earth.

This earth, a province in the kingdom of God, constitutes the Father's house when the birthright with respect to nations is in view; and Israel, as God's firstborn son, was to bear rule over ALL the nations in this house, under and for the Father.

Israel occupied the standing as firstborn among ALL nations while still in Egypt, but Israel would not actually realize these rights UNTIL the nation had been removed from Egypt and established in the land covenanted to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The second segment of the birthright would place Israel in a priestly position with respect to both God and the nations. Israel was to be a "kingdom of priests" in the midst of the nations (Ex. 19:6), resulting in the nations being blessed through Israel, in accord with Gen. 12:1-3.

A first-mention principle relating to these blessings had previously been established in Gen. 9:25-27. "The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Ex. 3:6) was first "the God of Shem" (Gen. 9:26).

NEITHER Ham NOR Japheth had a God, and the ONLY way either could receive spiritual blessings was through Shem and his God.

Or, to say it another way, the descendants of Ham and Japheth (the Gentile nations) are "without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12) and can receive spiritual blessings ONLY through the descendants of Shem (the nation of Israel) and their God.

Although the lineage of Shem also, among others, includes the descendants of Ishmael and the sons of Keturah, spiritual blessings for nations emanating from these lines are derived through the same means as those for the Gentile nations (for, in this respect, these nations are looked upon as Gentile nations [Gen. 17:18-21; 21:5-12; 22:2; 25:1-6]).

The third segment of the birthright placed Israel in a position to receive the double portion of all the Father's goods. This segment of the birthright, as the first two segments, also had to do with Israel's position among the nations. There are two spheres of governmental power and authority in a rule over the Gentile nations — earthly and heavenly — and the double portion of the birthright pertained to Israel ultimately coming into possession of BOTH (cf. Gen. 22:17, 18).

It was necessary that *BOTH* be extended to Israel at some point in the corridors of time, for Israel, as the firstborn, was the appointed heir.

The way was opened under the leadership of Moses at Kadesh-Barnea, and later under Joshua on the east side of Jordan, *for Israel to go into the land and realize the earthly portion of this inheritance.*

BUT, the heavenly portion of the inheritance was NOT to be opened to the nation UNTIL almost fifteen hundred years later.

Under Moses and Joshua, when *the earthly portion* of the inheritance was in the offing, God Himself dwelt in the midst of the nation.

Some fifteen hundred years later, when *the heavenly portion* of the inheritance was in the offing, God Himself once again (in the person of His Son) dwelt in the midst of the nation.

Satan is the "god of this world ['age']". He is the "anointed cherub ['messianic angel']," *the one created to rule and reign* (Ezek. 28:14; II Cor. 4:4).

Satan and his angels presently rule the earth through the Gentile nations. *They rule from the heavens through counterparts among the Gentile nations upon the earth* (note Dan. 10:12ff; the "prince of the kingdom of Persia," and the "kings of Persia" [v. 13] are heavenly beings [angels in the kingdom of Satan] who rule through counterparts in the kingdom of Persia [Iran today] on earth; and it is the same with all other Gentile powers, past and present).

The nation of Israel though has been placed in *an entirely separate and distinct position* from that occupied by the Gentile nations.

Israel is *NOT* to be "reckoned among the nations" (Num. 23:9). Israel is *NOT* a nation through which Satan and his angels rule, as they do through the Gentile nations. The angelic prince of Israel in Daniel chapter ten (where the princes of Gentile nations are mentioned) is *Michael* (vv. 13, 21); and *Michael is NOT one of the princes ruling under Satan.*

Thus, the deep things of Satan in relation to Israel and her calling in the Old Testament involved taking things from his kingdom, from

the Gentile nations of the earth, and placing them among a separate and distinct people who were not to be reckoned among those nations.

In the case of his work through Jezebel, it was Baal worship which was transferred from the Gentile nations into the camp of Israel. And the Israelites, following Baal, associated themselves with Gentile idolatry *and could, under NO circumstances, realize their calling as firstborn while in this condition.*

Rather than Israel ruling over the Gentile nations of the earth, Satan's rule over these same nations would continue unabated, with Israel uprooted from her land and scattered among these nations.

And rather than Israel realizing national blessings, with the Gentile nations in turn being blessed, Israel would incur God's wrath.

And it was to this end that Satan vented his wrath against Israel throughout the Old Testament, and it is to this end that he continues to vent his wrath against this same nation today.

(God's dealings with Israel on a national basis have been put on hold. Israel has been set aside for a dispensation, during which time God is removing from the Gentiles a people for His name.

But Satan *knows* that God's discontinuance of His dealings with Israel in this manner is only temporary. He *knows* that God will once again turn to and resume His dealings with Israel relative to the nation's standing as *firstborn* [else the complete, revealed program of God — which Satan knows all too well — would remain unfulfilled].

Satan *knows* that Israel is yet to be placed at the head of the nations upon the earth, with the Gentile nations being blessed through Israel; *and he continues to do ALL within his power to prevent this from happening.*)

2) As These Things Affect Christians

A part of that which was being made known to "the principalities and powers in heavenly places" in time past through Israel is NOW being made known through the Church (Eph. 3:9-11; cf. 6:11ff).

In time past, Israel was in possession of both *earthly* and *heavenly* promises and blessings, having to do with both *earthly* and *heavenly* spheres of power and authority in the kingdom (Gen. 22:17, 18; Heb. 11:8-16).

However, at the time of Christ's first advent, Israel forfeited *the heavenly portion* of the kingdom; *and an entirely new creation, the one new man "in Christ," was called into existence to be the recipient of the prof-*

ferred positions of power and authority with Christ from the heavens (Matt. 21:43; I Peter 2:9, 10).

The calling possessed by the Church is to ultimately inhabit, with Christ, the very realm where Satan and his angels presently dwell.

The incumbent rulers (Satan and his angels) have forfeited their right to continue exercising power and authority from this realm, and Israel has forfeited her right to one day supplant these rulers.

Thus, within God's plan for the ages, the Church was brought into existence to ultimately occupy this heavenly realm (cf. Eph. 6:11, 12; Heb. 3:1).

Although Israel still retains her *earthly calling* and will yet be removed from the nations of the earth to fulfill this calling, the Church will fulfill God's plans and purposes for *the heavenly portion* of the kingdom (along with certain O.T. saints who looked beyond an earthly calling to a heavenly [cf. Matt. 8:11, 12; Luke 13:28, 29; Heb. 11:8-16]).

Christians are the ones who will be called forth to dwell in *the heavens* and reign as co-heirs with Christ in the kingdom.

And Satan, knowing these things (things which very few Christians seem to have any understanding of at all [cf. II Cor. 4:3, 4]), *presently NOT ONLY directs his wrath against Israel BUT against the Church as well.*

The reason Satan placed "that woman Jezebel" in the Church in Thyatira is the same reason that he placed "Jezebel" in the camp of Israel during Old Testament days. The deep things of Satan, introduced into the camp of Israel in the Old Testament and into the Church in Thyatira in the New Testament, have to do with the incumbent ruler's (Satan's) efforts to thwart God's plans and purposes concerning others moving into regal positions of power and authority presently under his dominion and control.

Satan has done, is doing, and will continue to do *ALL* within his power to prevent either Israel or the Church from realizing their respective calling. And the intensification of his efforts during the closing days of the dispensation in which we presently live is something which Christians who aspire to be overcomers and realize their calling *MUST be keenly aware of and understand.*

Satan's efforts in his warfare against Christians today has *ONE primary goal* in view: *to overcome Christians rather than seeing Christians overcome him, resulting in their disqualification to occupy proffered positions in the coming kingdom of Christ.*

The deep things of Satan introduced into the Church today, as in the camp of Israel during Elijah's day, have to do with the things of the world brought over into the things of God — the world in the Church — resulting in Christians (as the Israelites) being led astray.

And, in the light of the Old Testament counterpart, this is what is involved in Jezebel's seduction of the Lord's servants "to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols" in the Church in Thyatira (Rev. 2:20); and those Christians, defiled after this fashion, through her efforts, who fail to repent of their deeds, will suffer "death" (vv. 21-23; cf. Rom. 8:13), which could *ONLY* be an allusion to the previously mentioned "second death" (v. 11).

Christians, as the Israelites, possess a birthright; and this birthright consists of the same three things as the one possessed by Israel:

- 1) *Ruler of the household, under and for the Father.*
- 2) *Exercising the office of priest in the family.*
- 3) *The reception of a double portion of all the Father's goods.*

Overcoming Christians will realize *the first* aspect of the birthright through ruling as "joint-heirs" with Christ in the kingdom (Rom. 8:17), *the second* through ruling as "kings and priests" (Rev. 5:10), and *the third* through coming into possession of both heavenly and earthly aspects of the inheritance with Christ — ruling from *the heavens over the earth* (Ps. 2:8, 9; I Peter 1:4; cf. Gen. 24:10, 36, 53; John 16:13-15).

Non-overcoming Christians though will have forfeited their rights of primogeniture, realizing *NO* aspect of the birthright. They *will NOT* be among the "many sons" Christ will bring unto glory with Him to rule "the world ['inhabited world'] to come" (Heb. 2:5, 10). "The deep things of Satan" will have accomplished their purpose in the lives of such Christians; and they, as Esau, when they realize that which could have been theirs, *will lift up their voices and weep* (Heb. 12:14-17; cf. Gen. 25:27-34; 27:26-38).

Kingly Power

One day the Lord Jesus Christ is going to receive a kingdom. "The kingdom of the world" will become "the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign forever and ever" (Rev. 11:15, ASV;

cf. Ps. 2:1ff; 110:1ff; Dan. 7:9-14).

Satan and his angels will be put down, Christ and His co-heirs (forming His bride) will move in and take over the government, THEN, the overcomer's promise given to Christians in the Church in Thyatira will be fulfilled.

The main thrust of the matter leading into and including this overcomer's promise centers around two world kingdoms — *the present kingdom of Satan, and the coming kingdom of Christ.*

The overcomer's promise then revolves around *being victorious over the things of the present kingdom* (introduced into the Church by Satan through "that woman Jezebel").

A Christian allowing himself to be overcome by the things of the present kingdom *will be denied participation in the coming kingdom*, but a Christian overcoming the things of the present kingdom *will be given "power over the nations" in the coming kingdom.*

Concerning the Christians' present activities in relation to one kingdom or the other, there is a specific promise concerning recompense:

"I will give unto every one of you according to your works" (v. 23b).

Christians involving themselves with the present kingdom of Satan will be recompensed accordingly.

Christians looking out ahead toward the coming kingdom of Christ, refusing to involve themselves with the present kingdom, will also be recompensed accordingly.

The time for the rendering of a "just recompense" to every Christian, according to the context and overall message of chapters one through three, will be at the future "judgment" of Christians — the judgment seat of Christ; *the issue*, as in I Cor. 3:11-15, will be "works," with a view to every Christian being revealed as either an overcomer or a non-overcomer, on the basis of works; and *the outcome* of this revelation has been clearly made known.

Christians revealed as overcomers will be given "power over the nations," while those Christians revealed as non-overcomers will be denied such power.

That the overcomer's promises are not only millennial in their scope of fulfillment but are also connected with regal positions as co-heirs with Christ in the kingdom is further made plain by the message to the Church in Thyatira.

NO such scene as that depicted in verses twenty-six and twenty-seven

exists during the present dispensation preceding the Millennium; *NOR* will such a scene exist during the eternal ages following the Millennium. And that which is true of the overcomer's promise here is equally true of the overcomer's promises throughout chapters two and three.

Christians before the judgment seat of Christ will be judged on the basis of *works* to determine their status relative to *overcoming*, with a view to *regal positions in the kingdom*.

The Morning Star

Not only were the overcoming Christians in Thyatira promised kingly power with Christ but they were promised "the morning star," which is *Christ Himself* (Rev. 22:16).

In Rev. 2:26-28, the promise of "the morning star" appears immediately following the promise concerning "power over the nations"; and in Rev. 22:16, the identification of Christ as "the bright and morning star" immediately follows His identification as "the root and offspring of David."

The clear implication in the latter reference, in the light of the overcomer's promise to the Church in Thyatira, is an allusion to *His regal position as David's Son*. The promise of "the morning star" to the overcoming Christian is an apparent reference to a special, peculiar relationship with Christ, *which can ONLY be connected with His reign*.

The expressions "morning star" in Rev. 2:28 and "bright and morning star" in Rev. 22:16 are used of Christ's relationship with His Church (anticipating His reign), as the expression "Sun of righteousness" in Mal. 4:2 is used of His relationship with Israel (anticipating His reign).

The morning star appears in the sky before the dawn, shortly before *the sun* appears on the horizon to lighten the sky. The apparent thought is that Christ will appear as the "bright and morning star" for the Church near the close of the time of this world's darkness; and He will appear to Israel, following the darkness, as the "Sun of righteousness...with healing in his wings."

Christ will first complete His dealings with the Church, with overcoming Christians being brought into a special, peculiar relationship with Him, *anticipating their reign as co-heirs*.

Christ will then turn to Israel and deal with His brethren after the flesh in such a fashion that their future confession, as recorded in Isaiah

chapter fifty-three, will include the statement, in fulfillment of Mal. 4:2:

“But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes *we are healed*” (v. 5).

Concluding Thoughts:

There is a battle presently being waged, it is being fought on two fronts, and the central issue involves *governmental control over the earth*. This battle is being waged by Satan and his angels, and it is being waged against Israel on one front and against the Church on the other.

God has demonstrated and continues to demonstrate to “the principalities and powers in heavenly places,” through Israel in the Old Testament and through the Church in the New Testament, that a completely new order of rulers (sons) *is about to be brought on the scene*.

And Satan with his angels, continuing to have this demonstrated to them, remain constantly at war against these two creations God has called into existence to be heirs in the coming kingdom.

Satan knew in the beginning when he sought governmental power and authority beyond that which had been delegated to him, seeking to be “like the most High” (Isa. 14:13, 14), *that he MUST be wholly successful OR face eternal judgment; and he knows today that failure in his onslaughts against Israel and the Church can ONLY bring about his long-impending, awaiting judgment*.

Thus, the picture we presently have set before us is that of warfare being waged by a mighty fallen celestial being and his minions — *the god of this age and those ruling under him* — *who know that their time is short unless they can somehow thwart God’s plans and purposes concerning Israel and the Church*.

THAT is what the warfare is about! And Satan knows, from his own experience in the past, that in failure *there can be NO room for mercy*.

Resultingly, he placed a Jezebel in the camp of Israel in the Old Testament, and he placed a Jezebel in the Church in the New Testament. These two moves had to do with the *deep things of Satan*, he continues with *his deep things* today, and he will continue as long as he is allowed to remain in power.

NOTHING has changed in his plans and methods; NOR will anything change, aside from a progressive intensification of his efforts as the dispensation draws to a close.

9

Clothed in White Raiment *The Righteous Acts of the Saints*

“He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels” (Rev. 3:5).

The message to the Church in Sardis presents a continued, extended view of the “children” of the adulterous woman, Jezebel, from the preceding message to the Church in Thyatira. And matters can be viewed in this manner, as Scripture moves from one epistle to the next, for most of the Christians comprising the Church in Sardis possessed a name that they *lived*, though they were actually *dead* (v. 1; cf. 2:23).

Along with a continued, extended view of the Church in this *spiritually destitute condition*, attention is also called to a “few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments” (v. 4).

Thus, there was a remnant within this Church, comparable to the remnant of seven thousand who had not bowed their knee to Baal during Elijah and Jezebel’s day in the Old Testament (I Kings 19:18).

This remnant in the Church in Sardis was comprised of those Christians presently overcoming the world, the flesh, and the Devil. And these are the ones who will one day be revealed as overcomers, subsequently realizing the overcomer’s promises during the 1,000-year reign of Christ.

Many expositors have sought to associate the Church in Sardis with the Reformation period in Church history, which began with events during the sixteenth century.

The allusion to this period of time and beyond — if the message to the Church in Sardis is to be associated with a particular period in Church history (though not really to the Reformation *per se*) — would appear to be correct, with the emphasis placed in two realms:

1) That which continued in existence within the mainstream of Christendom from the days represented by the preceding message to the Church in Thyatira.

2) That which would ultimately result within a smaller segment of Christendom because of the Reformation, represented by the succeeding message to the Church in Philadelphia.

And, as previously seen, these two segments of the Church in Sardis were represented by *those who were dead* (v. 1) and by *those who had not defiled their garments* (v. 4).

Then, the following two epistles, the messages to the Churches in Philadelphia and Laodicea, then project these two segments of Christendom *on into the latter days of the dispensation*. *They will exist side-by-side for a time, with the Church increasingly becoming more and more Laodicean, "till the whole" has been leavened* (cf. Matt. 13:33; Luke 18:8).

The Reformation itself *was NOT* a recovery of the doctrine surrounding "that blessed hope" but rather a recovery of the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith.

The reformers gave little attention to events surrounding Christ's return. Although they knew Christ would return at some future date, they turned their attention almost exclusively to evangelizing the unsaved.

Many of the reformers looked upon the Church as an instrument through which God would ultimately effect world conversion, something to be accomplished *prior* to His Son's return. And, to these men, Satan's main thrust to counter this goal was channeled through the Roman Catholic Church, with each succeeding pope holding the dubious honor of being the Antichrist.

The origin of much of the false postmillennial thought, still present to some extent in Christendom today, can be traced to the eschatological views held by many of the reformers.

Postmillennial thought in Christendom today though is usually seen in a different form than in the past. Today, it can be seen mainly in an increasingly popular ideology known as *theonomy* (a name given to the false teaching that the Church will be instrumental in bringing about the kingdom of God on earth through gradually taking control of the present government under Satan).

However, there is another side to the picture surrounding the course which Christendom began to take at the time of the Reformation. The truth concerning the return of Christ within the framework of premillennial thought, also present within the Church today, is something which likewise grew out of the Reformation.

During the seventeenth century, small numbers of Bible students in Europe (who, themselves, were among those ultimately reached with the true message of the gospel of the grace of God as a result of the Reformation) began turning their attention to the prophetic Scriptures.

Their work was furthered by other students in the eighteenth century; but the main impetus awaited the work of students in the nineteenth century, who built upon and brought to fruition the work of their predecessors.

It was during this latter period that the great advances in prophetic study were made, according a proper treatment to the numerous truths surrounding Christ's return.

The recovery of these truths was accompanied by a great resurgence in missionary endeavor, and it is this *recovery* and *resurgence* which appears to mark the beginning of that period covered concurrently by the messages to the Churches in Philadelphia and Laodicea.

There is *nothing bad* said about the Church in Philadelphia, and there is *nothing good* said about the Church in Laodicea.

An apex of the outworking of that which had its beginning during the days of Martin Luther *can be seen in the message to the Church in Philadelphia.*

And the end of that which began centuries earlier — seen on the one hand when the leaven was placed in the three measures of meal, and on the other hand through that which occurred during the days of Constantine and the ensuing years — *can be seen reaching its completion at the end of the dispensation in the message to the Church in Laodicea.*

Dead...Undefined

The thought of many of those in the Church in Sardis described as *living, but being dead*, *MUST be looked upon in an opposite sense to the thought of a few in the Church having "undefiled garments"* (vv. 1, 4). In this sense, "dead" would be equated with *defiled*, and "undefiled" would

be equated with *living*. And Christians alone are in view, those capable of producing *works* pleasing unto the Lord (vv. 1, 2; cf. Eph. 2:10).

“Death” in a *spiritual sense* is associated with both the unregenerate and the regenerate.

The unregenerate are spoken of as being “dead in trespasses and sins” because of *unbelief* (Eph. 2:1); and the regenerate can be spoken of in the sense which they are presented in Rev. 3:1 — *living, but dead* — because of *unfaithfulness* (cf. I Tim. 5:6; James 5:5), associated with what James calls a *dead faith*.

(The words “faith” and “believe” are different forms of the same word in the Greek text — noun [faith] and verb [believe] forms. Thus, either usage would carry the same meaning [e.g., Acts 16:31; Eph. 2:8].)

James is the great epistle dealing with *faith* and *works* in the sense that they are presented in the messages to the seven Churches in Revelation chapters two and three.

Works emanate out of faith; and James 2:14-26 refers to a *dead faith* which is incapable of producing the type works necessary to bring faith to its proper goal, the exact condition of those in Sardis whose existing state (“dead”) was associated with *works*.

They possessed *works*, but these works *did NOT* emanate from a living, active faith. Rather, such works emanated from a dead, inactive faith and were the type works which would be burned at the judgment seat (works described in I Cor. 3:12 by three combustible materials, “wood, hay, stubble”).

The distinguishing characteristic between those who were *dead* and those with *undefiled garments* in the message to the Church in Sardis is, thus, seen in their “works.”

This is really the overriding subject matter in each of the seven messages to the seven Churches in Revelation chapters two and three.

Each message, following descriptive aspects of Christ as *Judge* in the midst of the Churches (in keeping with the description given in chapter one), begins the same way:

“I know thy works...” (2:2, 9, 13, 19; 3:1, 8, 15).

And to properly understand the entire matter, along with the review and manifestation of two types of works at the judgment seat of Christ, *one*

MUST understand the relationship between faith and works in James chapter two.

James, as all of the New Testament epistles, deals centrally with *the future salvation of the soul* rather than the salvation which we presently possess, the salvation of the spirit (cf. James 1:12, 21, 22; 5:19, 20).

BOTH are wrought on the basis of WORKS.

Our present salvation (salvation of the spirit) has been wrought *on the basis of Christ's past, completed work*; and our future salvation (salvation of the soul) will be wrought *on the basis of the present works of those who have been justified on the basis of Christ's past, completed work.*

The review of works at the judgment seat will be *to determine the TYPE works, with a view to the salvation or loss of the soul.*

James 2:14-26 opens with two self-answering questions, and the structure of these questions in the Greek text *requires that both be answered in the negative* (the Greek negative "me" appears in the latter question [designating a "no" response], and *the integrally, inseparable nature of the two questions shows that the first MUST be answered in the same sense*).

The first question presents the relationship between faith and works in connection with *profit*, and the second question presents the relationship between faith and works in connection with *salvation*.

These two questions could possibly be better understood by translating the verse,

"My brethren, if anyone says he has faith, but does not have works, he cannot profit, can he? Faith cannot save him, can it?" (v. 14).

"Profit" and "salvation" are linked together in such a manner in James 2:14 *that one CANNOT be realized apart from the other*. That is, apart from an accrual of "profit," *salvation CANNOT be realized*; or, to state the matter another way, an accrual of "profit" leads to (is for the purpose of) the realization of *salvation* (at a future date).

And James specifically states *that neither can be realized by faith alone. Works MUST enter in and have their proper place in the matter.*

One *CANNOT profit* apart from an initial investment, and one is in *NO position* to procure the salvation of which James speaks apart from presently possessing salvation.

The Greek word translated "profit" is derived from a root word which means "to increase"; and the thought of an "increase" *does*

NOT enter into the picture UNTIL one has an initial supply, making an "increase," or "profit," possible.

"Profit" is *always* something in addition to that which one already possesses. Initial investments, from which individuals can profit, are possessed *ONLY* by the Lord's Own servants (Christians). There is *NO such thing* as the word "profit" being used in this sense in connection with the unsaved, for *they have NO initial investment in this realm.*

The parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30) and the parable of the pounds (Luke 19:11-27) provide two of the best Scriptural examples concerning "profit" on an initial investment in relation to the Lord's servants during the present day and time. As brought out in these parables, *the Lord has delivered ALL His goods to ALL His servants and has left them with the command, "Occupy till I come."*

The servants of the Lord *are to trade and traffic in the Lord's business during His time of absence.* Those who do so, under the leadership of the Lord, will realize a "profit" (cf. Matt. 25:15-17, 19-23; Luke 19:15-19). And through realizing a profit, or increase, on the initial investment, they will experience *the salvation of their souls* (cf. Matt. 16:24-27).

On the other hand, those who refuse to use the initial investment will not only remain profitless but they will, as a consequence, suffer "loss" (cf. Matt. 25:15, 18, 19, 24-30; Luke 19:15, 20-26). They will experience *the loss of their souls* (cf. Matt. 16:24-27).

Consequently, that which is involved in James 2:14, as explained in subsequent verses, is simply *faithfulness* to one's calling (resulting in works), or *unfaithfulness* to one's calling (resulting in no works [or valueless works *NOT* associated with faith]).

Works of the nature referred to in this verse emanate out of "faith" and bring faith to its proper goal, which is the salvation of one's soul (James 2:22; I Peter 1:9). Apart from such a manifestation of faith, giving rise to works, *there can be NO profit; NOR can the inherently connected salvation follow* (the salvation of the soul).

In the message to the Church in Sardis in Revelation chapter three, two types of works are in view. The first type has to do with *works not emanating from faith*, and the second type has to do with works of the opposite kind, *those emanating from faith.*

The first type works are those performed by Christians apart from the leadership of the Lord. *Faith*, associated with the Lord's leadership,

is *NOT* involved; and such works are *invariably* performed under the leadership of man for the praise, honor, and glory of man.

The second type works are those performed by Christians under the leadership of the Lord. *Faith*, associated with the Lord's leadership, is the primary factor; and such works *ALWAYS* redound to the praise, honor, and glory of the Lord.

BOTH type works will be very evident at the judgment seat — those which are worthless (comparable to "wood, hay, stubble") and those of intrinsic value (comparable to "gold, silver, precious stones").

The result of the manifestation of *works* at the judgment seat will be twofold:

- 1) The revelation of *an ACCRUAL of profit, resulting in the salvation of the soul on the one hand.*
- 2) The revelation of *NO profit, resulting in the loss of the soul on the other hand.*

Such will be the end of all works viewed, as seen in the seven messages to the seven Churches.

White Raiment

The "white raiment" in which the overcomers in Sardis are to be clothed *can ONLY have to do with the wedding garment* mentioned in Matt. 22:11, 12 and Rev. 19:8. The overcomers, synonymous with the bride, are to "array themselves" rather than "be arrayed"; and this fact should be reflected in the translation of both Rev. 3:5 and Rev. 19:8.

The verb appears in the middle voice in the Greek text in both instances, showing the subject (the overcomers, forming the bride) participating in the results of the action, necessitating the thought that the overcomers are the ones who, themselves, will accomplish this feat.

The "fine linen, clean and white" is specifically said, in Rev. 19:8, to be the "righteousness ['righteous acts'] of the saints." The word translated "righteousness" (KJV) is *plural* in the Greek text and can only be a reference to "righteous acts [*i.e.*, the 'righteousnesses of saints']," *which are specifically said to form the wedding garment.*

Such righteous acts are synonymous with works emanating from faithfulness to one's calling; and unfaithful Christians, accordingly,

will not possess works of this nature.

Their works, revealed as comparable to “wood, hay, stubble” at the judgment seat, will be burned (*cf.* Isa. 64:6); and without acceptable works / righteous acts, they will possess no material to make up the “fine linen” comprising the wedding garment.

Thus, such Christians will appear naked and ashamed in the presence of their Lord in that day.

The two types of righteousness in Rom. 5:17 and Rev. 19:8 correspond to the two types of justification in James 2:24 (one is acquired on the basis of *the work of Another [Christ]*, and the other is acquired on the basis of *the Christians' own works*).

There is a justification by faith, and there is a justification by works.

ONLY those who have been justified by faith are in a position to be justified by works. That is, a person *MUST first be justified on the basis of the work of Another before he can be justified on the basis of his own works (emanating out of faithfulness to his calling).*

Or, to state the matter within another frame of reference, note the Christians' calling.

A person MUST first be “called” BEFORE he can be “called out” of the “called.” He MUST first be a part of the body (be “in Christ”) BEFORE he can be removed from the body (removed to form the bride, comprising the antitype of Eve removed from Adam's body to form his bride).

Those in Sardis *who had NOT defiled their garments* would be allowed to walk with Christ, *arrayed in white raiment.*

They *would NOT* be found among those whose works were lacking, those described by the word “dead.” But even to the Christians with defiled garments the call was to “remember...and hold fast, and repent” (v. 3).

It was not too late for those possessing works which would one day be shown worthless at the judgment seat to become faithful servants of the Lord and produce works of intrinsic value.

The overcomer's promise was extended to *ALL* in Sardis; *BUT, not all* would heed the message, overcome, and realize this promise.

The clear, simple lesson taught by comparing Matt. 22:11, 12; Rev. 3:5; 19:8 is *the absolute necessity* of possessing a wedding garment if one would be numbered among those forming the bride of Christ.

The wedding garment is associated with *overcoming* (Rev. 3:5), *possessing righteous acts* (works emanating out of faithfulness [James

2:14-26; Rev. 19:8]), and *gaining admittance to festivities surrounding the marriage of the Lamb* (Matt. 22:11, 12; Rev. 19:9).

The overcomers alone will possess the wedding garment, and this garment alone will be recognized as the proper attire necessary for admittance to and participation in the marriage festivities.

The Book of Life

The possibility of Christians having their names *blotted out* of the book of life, in accord with Rev. 3:5, has troubled many individuals.

Such individuals view the book of life as a record containing the names of all who have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, and they know that for a Christian to have his name blotted out of such a book is *an absolute impossibility*.

One's eternal salvation is just as secure as the finished work of Christ upon which it rests.

And to infer that a Christian could possibly one day lose his eternal salvation would be bringing into question the complete efficacy of this finished work, or of the corresponding work of the Spirit breathing life into the one having no life (on the basis of Christ's finished work).

The problem emanates from wrongly associating "the book of life" with *eternal salvation*.

God has many books; and in these books He keeps records of many different things, records which will one day be opened (cf. Ps. 56:8; 139:16; Zech. 5:1-3; Mal. 3:16; Rev. 5:1, 2; 13:8; 20:12).

Note, for example, that at the future judgment of the unsaved dead in Rev. 20:11-15 a number of books will be opened, including "the book of life" (v. 12). God has a library in heaven, and *the book of life* is only one book within this library.

A book which seems to be entirely separate and distinct, but often confused with the book of life, is *the Lamb's book of life* in Rev. 13:8 (cf. Rev. 21:27). *This book would appear to be the place wherein the names of redeemed individuals have been inscribed rather than the book of life* in Rev. 3:5; 20:12.

The book of life will be opened at the judgments of both the saved and the unsaved. The entire scene in Rev. 3:5 has to do with issues of the judgment seat of Christ, with *the book of life* being the only book from God's library of books singled out and mentioned by name.

The same thing can be found in the judgment of the unsaved dead in Rev. 20:11-15. *The book of life alone is singled out and mentioned by name.*

The purpose and content of the book of life are clearly revealed in Rev. 20:12: "...the dead were judged out of those things which were *written in the books, according to their works.*"

The book of life is a book, among other books, containing *the deeds/works* of individuals, both those of the saved and those of the unsaved; and from the emphasis placed upon the book of life in connection with both judgments, along with information concerning other books in Scripture, one could conclude that this is probably God's primary record book containing *the deeds/works* of every individual.

Other books also record *deeds/works*, such as those mentioned in Ps. 56:8 and Mal. 3:16. But the primary record book in this realm, one in which a name can be retained or blotted out (depending on the record of that individual contained in the book), appears to be "the book of life."

The blotting of one's name out of the book of life in Rev. 3:5 is strictly for the non-overcomer, with the Messianic Era in view, and *has NOTHING* to do with eternal verities.

One's relationship to Christ *can ONLY be looked upon as a settled, closed matter prior to judgment, a matter which can NEVER enter into any future judgment in any fashion or form.*

Different companies of the saved are judged at different times, with their works in view (works recorded in a book, or books [Ezek. 20:34-38; Matt. 25:34-40; I Cor. 3:11-15; Rev. 20:4-6]); and the unsaved are judged at a subsequent time, with their works in view as well (works also recorded in a book, or books [Rev. 20:11-15]).

There is *NO such thing in Scripture* as a judgment of the saved and a judgment of the unsaved occurring together at the same time; *NOR is there any such thing in Scripture* as the issue of one's eternal salvation or eternal damnation being brought up at any future judgment.

Judgment in this respect, for both the saved and the unsaved, *occurred in past time*; and this past judgment can *NEVER* be brought up as an issue again.

All future judgments will be based *strictly upon the works of those being judged, which renders it impossible for issues surrounding eternal verities to ever enter into these judgments.*

Relative to the saved, judgment has already occurred, based on *their belief* and *Christ's finished work*; relative to the unsaved, judgment, as well, has already occurred, based on *their unbelief* and *Christ's finished work*:

“He that believeth on him is not condemned [‘judged’]: but he that believeth not is condemned already [‘has already been judged’], because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:18).

(For additional information on the past judgment of both the saved and the unsaved, as seen in John 3:18, refer to the foreword in this book.)

The book of life contains records that have been *lived*, and the blotting of a Christian's name out of this book *follows* his judgment on the basis of that which has been recorded in the book and involves *millennial verities alone*.

Such a Christian will be shown, *on the basis of his own works* (works burned at the judgment seat), to have been overcome; and he will suffer loss — the loss of his soul/life. *Rather than his name being left intact, it will be blotted out of the book of life*; and he will be among those denied positions of power and authority with Christ in the kingdom.

And the converse of the preceding will, as well, be true for the faithful Christian shown, in that future day, to have overcome the world, the flesh, and the Devil. *His name will be retained in the book of life*, and he will be among those occupying positions of power and authority with Christ in the kingdom.

Confession or Denial

Christ, in Rev. 3:5, has extended a twofold promise concerning *the name* of the properly-clothed overcomer in Sardis (“clothed in white raiment”) in that coming day:

- 1) “I will not [a double negative in the Greek text, ‘I most certainly will not’] blot out *his name* out of the book of life.”
- 2) “But I will confess *his name* before my Father, and before his angels.”

This will occur in heaven *following* issues of the judgment seat,

for the person whose name is to be confessed *MUST first be shown to have overcome through the record contained in the book of life* (and possibly other books as well).

Christ referred to this future event (along with the negative aspect [*denial of a confession of his name, resulting from his name having been blotted out of the book of life*]) on at least two occasions during His earthly ministry (Matt. 10:32, 33; Luke 12:8, 9). The verses in Matthew refer to *confession* or *denial* before “my Father which is in heaven,” and the verses in Luke refer to *confession* or *denial* before “the angels of God.”

The thought of one’s name having previously been blotted out of the book of life is not seen in these passages from the two gospel accounts, though it is seen when Scripture is compared with Scripture (these two passages compared with the message to the Church in Sardis).

Further, in the Book of Matthew, this matter appears in a context referring to *the salvation* or *loss* of one’s soul (vv. 38, 39; cf. Matt. 16:24-27).

Thus, this places the entire matter, as in Rev. 3:5, in connection with events surrounding findings and determinations at the judgment seat.

Paul, in his second epistle to Timothy, calls attention to the same thing (2:10-13); and the contextual setting has to do with *a future salvation, the glory of Christ, and the coming reign of Christ*:

“Therefore I endure [‘patiently endure’] all things for the elect’s sake, that they may also obtain the *salvation* which is in Christ Jesus with *eternal* [‘age-lasting’] *glory*.

It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him.

If we suffer [‘patiently endure’ (same word in the Greek text as in v. 10)], we shall also *reign* with him: *if we deny him, he also will deny us*.

If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.”

Note that verse thirteen refers to the fact that Christ *CANNOT* accept as faithful an individual who has proven unfaithful. To do so would be to deny His Own character, whether seen through statements in the written Word or actions of the living Word.

And the converse of that could only be true as well. Christ can *ONLY* accept as faithful an individual who has proven himself faithful.

Again, to do otherwise would be to deny His Own character,

whether seen through statements in the written Word or actions of the living Word.

Christ MUST remain faithful to do EXACTLY what He has said that He would do concerning confession or denial of Christians before His Father and before His Father's angels.

Thus, the parallel Scriptures to the confession of one's name before the Father and before His angels, as revealed in Rev. 3:5, have to do with *confessing Christ before men and patiently enduring*. And it is within these two realms that the entire matter is set forth.

Confessing Christ before men has NOTHING to do with a public confession of one's faith in Christ at the point of salvation, as is often taught.

Rather, such a confession is for *those who are already saved*, and this confession will be a natural outworking in the life of one exercising faithfulness to his calling. Confession or denial of Christians by Christ *in heaven*, during that coming day, is conditioned upon their overcoming or being overcome and has the coming Messianic Era in view.

And confession or denial of Christ *by Christians here upon the earth*, during the present time, should be looked upon as having the same end in view. There is a life to be lived, and the unfolding of this life under the leadership of the Lord should bring praise, honor, and glory to the Lord, as the individual looks out ahead toward events at the judgment seat and the reign of Christ which follows.

Patiently enduring, within its context in II Tim. 2:12, MUST be understood in the light of Paul's patient endurance in verse ten.

He patiently endured ALL things for the sake of other Christians in order that they might obtain the salvation having to do with age-lasting glory, ultimately occupying a position with Christ in the kingdom.

The record of Paul's life (now recorded in the book of life, awaiting the opening of this book at the judgment seat) *was one of his concern for others, with the coming kingdom of Christ in view.*

For the sake of other Christians, Paul let NOTHING stand in his way.

And Christians today are to govern their lives in a comparable manner, with the same end in view, as they too patiently endure ALL things.

Concluding Thoughts:

Decisions and determinations concerning *receiving rewards or suffering loss* will emanate out of issues surrounding the judgment

seat, and the realization of these decisions and determinations will be brought to pass in “the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ.”

God has offered *rewards* for faithfulness; and Christians are exhorted to “strive [Gk., *agonizomai*, from which the English word “agonize” is derived, i.e., ‘exert every possible effort’]” in the present race of the faith, with rewards in view, while moving toward the goal of their calling (cf. Luke 13:24; I Cor. 9:25; I Tim. 6:12).

“Rewards” are offered *as compensations in order to encourage Christians as they are being tested and tried while engaged in the Lord’s business during the time of their present pilgrim journey. And compensations of this nature are NOT to be taken lightly. Disdaining, ignoring, or neglecting proffered rewards is completely out of line with any Scriptural presentation of this subject.*

The mother of James and John possessed Godly aspirations for her two sons concerning future rewards, James and John themselves possessed the same aspirations, the other disciples in like manner possessed such aspirations, and Christians are exhorted to also possess aspirations of this nature (Matt. 19:27-30; 20:20-28; Mark 10:35-45; I Cor. 9:24-27; Eph. 1:17, 18; I Tim. 6:11, 12; II Tim. 4:7, 8; Titus 2:12, 13; II Peter 1:10, 11).

A day is coming in the near future when every Christian will be called to an accounting. *Lives lived* will be reviewed from the records which the righteous Judge will have on hand. When the books containing records of *the deeds/works* of Christians are opened, there will be a *just recompense* on the basis of that which is revealed.

Every Christian will be judged *SOLELY* on the basis of the things written in these books, and the entire matter will be carried out in *an equitable, just manner*. *Receiving rewards or suffering loss* will, in each instance, be *commensurate with revealed works*. *There will be NO exceptions.*

The Christians’ *deeds/works*, emanating from faithfulness or unfaithfulness, will come under scrutiny through being subjected to fire. Some works will be revealed as comparable to “gold, silver, precious stones” and endure the fire; other works though will be revealed as comparable to “wood, hay, stubble” and be consumed by the fire.

Christians with works enduring the fire *will receive rewards and positions in the kingdom*; *BUT*, Christians with works consumed by the fire *will suffer loss and be denied positions in the kingdom*.

Such will be the outcome of the judgment of *ALL Christians* at the end of this dispensation, preceding the Messianic Era.

10

A Pillar, A City

I Will Keep... I Will Write...

“Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name” (Rev. 3:12).

If the message to the Church in Philadelphia is to be looked upon as referring to a particular period in Church history, it could only be placed during a time which began in the nineteenth century and extended to the end of the dispensation. Then, the succeeding message to the Church in Laodicea would cover the same time as well.

Both messages form continuations of two segments of Christendom referred to in the message to the preceding Church, the Church in Sardis (those with undefiled garments, and those with a name that they lived but were dead). The message to the Church in Philadelphia constitutes a continuation of the former segment (those with undefiled garments); and the message to the Church in Laodicea constitutes a continuation of the latter segment (those with a name that they lived but were dead), *with both extending to the end of the dispensation.*

BUT, as evident from Scriptures such as Matt. 13:33 and Luke 18:8, along with the arrangement of the seven Churches in Revelation chapters two and three, *that segment of Christendom represented by the Church in Philadelphia could ONLY continue in a diminishing manner.*

This segment of Christendom could ONLY progressively be engulfed by that segment of Christendom represented by the Church in Laodicea.

The status of *Christians ALONE* is in view in the messages to the seven Churches; and the condition in which Christians find themselves, as viewed in these messages, is *ALWAYS* brought about by *WORKS*.

In this respect, *the reference to a condition described by the word “dead” could only refer to a spiritually destitute condition brought about by the absence of acceptable WORKS, which in James 2:14-26 is associated with a DEAD faith.*

Such individuals in the Church in Sardis *MUST* be looked upon in an opposite sense to those in the same Church who had not defiled their garments. Thus, the word “dead” could be equated with *defiled*; and in the message to the Church in Laodicea, *the SAME condition* is described another way by the word *naked* (vv. 17, 18).

The “white raiment” is also in view in the message to the Church in Laodicea (as in the message to the Church in Sardis); and those described as “naked” were said to be in a position wherein they would have been able to array themselves in “white raiment,” through *WORKS* (as were their counterparts in Sardis), a position which *could NEVER* be held by an unsaved person because of his alienated position outside of Christ (vv. 15, 18; cf. Rev. 19:7, 8).

The Church in Philadelphia is mentioned first, calling attention to *an open door* set before those who had exercised *patient endurance* through the trials and testings of this life (“patience” [v. 10] should be translated “patient endurance”). The full fruition of the work of the reformers and those who followed in their steps appears to be in view in the message to the Church in Philadelphia; and such a fruition *could refer ONLY to the condition in which the Church, for the first time following the Reformation, found itself during the nineteenth century.*

Two things marked the activities of Christians during those days:

- 1) Worldwide missionary activity, paralleled only by the missionary activity of Christians during the first century of the Church’s existence.

- 2) A restoration of the great truths surrounding Christ’s return, seen in the first-century Church.

If matters are viewed in this respect, *the open door* may relate to the former and *the patient endurance* to the latter.

(See Chapter IX in this book for comments concerning the association of “patient endurance” on the part of Christians with events surrounding Christ’s return.)

The planting and watering would have been carried out by the sixteenth century reformers and those who followed in their steps during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

But the forthcoming *increase* which God would give awaited the Church during the nineteenth century (*cf.* I Cor. 3:5-7).

Missionary endeavor became a major activity of the Church in the sixteenth century, and there was a beginning of the restoration of prophetic truth during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; but the full fruition of the entire matter was not seen until the nineteenth century.

During the nineteenth century, God raised up great missionary-minded individuals who entered into the labors of the reformers and those following in their steps, taking advantage of open doors in countries worldwide; and during this same time, God raised up great prophetic students who built upon the work of their seventeenth- and eighteenth-century predecessors.

God continued to raise up great missionary-minded individuals and great prophetic students for over one hundred years, extending well into the twentieth century. But then events took a different course. Mission doors around the world began to close, and, correspondingly, the ranks of the great teachers of prophecy began to diminish.

In this respect, there is an apparent connection between the Church being allowed to involve itself in great missionary activity and the ministry of the prophetic word. Such a connection existed at the beginning of the dispensation, and such has also existed near the end of the dispensation.

The terminus of the matter though has, for the past few decades, been rapidly *moving more and more away from* that sphere of activity typified by the Philadelphian Church and *moving more and more toward* that sphere of activity typified by the Laodicean Church.

The deteriorating effect produced by the leaven which the woman placed in the three measures of meal in Matt. 13:33 *could ONLY cause the Laodicean Church to become more and more prominent UNTIL, for all practical purposes, that seen in this Church ALONE would prevail at the end of the dispensation.*

The Hour of Temptation

"Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth" (Rev. 3:10).

The words "hour of temptation" in Rev. 3:10 are taken by most Bible students to be a reference to the coming time of *Tribulation*, with the promise being given in the message to the Church in Philadelphia that Christians will not enter into this time. The word "from" is a translation of the Greek word "*ek*," meaning "out of." Thus, the correct translation is, "I also will keep thee *out of* the hour of temptation..."

And many Bible students, seeing "the hour of temptation" as a reference to the coming Tribulation period, see this verse as a reference to the rapture, a promise that Christians will be kept *out of this time, out of the Tribulation*. That is, they see this verse as a promise to Christians that they will be removed from the earth before the Tribulation begins.

In turn, this has also led many Bible students to follow a selective rapture ideology, for all Christians *are NOT* included in this promise. Note that *ONLY those who have kept the word of His patience* have been promised that they will be kept "*out of the hour of temptation...*"

Thus, if this verse centers around a promise that Christians will be removed before the coming Tribulation, then a major problem exists, for a teaching of this nature would be in direct conflict with that which Scripture reveals concerning the rapture. Scripture is quite clear from both the Old Testament types and the New Testament antitype that the rapture will be *ALL-inclusive*. *ALL Christians will be removed at this time, NOT just those who have kept the word of His patience*.

The Tribulation comprises the last seven years of Daniel's prophecy of the Seventy Weeks. And, accordingly, this period of time has to do with seven years which will complete God's dealings with Israel during the preceding dispensation.

This preceding dispensation was interrupted seven years short of completion. Israel's sin had reached an apex (at Calvary); and God stepped in, stopped the chronometer marking off time for the dispensation, and instituted a new dispensation. Israel was set aside, and fifty-three days following the events surrounding Calvary, God sent His Spirit into the world to procure a bride for His Son.

God, at this time, through events beginning on the day of Pentecost, called into existence *one new man* (which was neither Jew nor Gentile); and the Spirit began His search for the bride among those comprising this *new man*, a search which would last for one dispensation, for 2,000 years.

Once the Spirit has completed His search, this *new man* (comprised of all Christians) will be removed from the earth and dealt with at Christ's judgment seat in the heavens.

THEN, once this has been accomplished, God will turn back to Israel and complete His dealings with this nation during Man's Day, completing the last seven years of the previous dispensation.

THIS will complete Man's 6,000-year Day.

Christ will *THEN* return, restore Israel, overthrow Gentile world power, and the 1,000-year Messianic Era will be ushered in.

Revelation 3:10 really has *NOTHING* to do with either the rapture or the Tribulation. Both are dealt with in the Book of Revelation, showing a pre-Tribulation rapture of all Christians. *BUT, NEITHER the rapture NOR the Tribulation is dealt with in this verse.*

The rapture is dealt with in Rev. 1:10; 4:1, 2a, and the Tribulation is dealt with in Rev. 6-19a. *BUT*, Rev. 3:10, understood within context, can *clearly* be seen to deal with something else entirely.

Revelation 3:10, within context, has to do with *WORKS emanating out of FAITHFULNESS* (cf. James 2:14-26), *with a view to OVERCOMING* (cf. vv. 8, 10a, 12). And the Christians in Philadelphia were promised that, because of their faithfulness, *they would be kept OUT OF a particular time of testing/trials — about to come upon "all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth."*

This promised *deliverance could ONLY* be the same as that seen in what is commonly called "the Lord's prayer" in Matt. 6:9-13: "And lead us not into temptation, but *deliver* us from evil [*lit.*, 'from the evil one' — from Satan]..." (v. 13a). This would be the same temptation which Christ spoke of in Mark 14:38 and which Paul wrote about in I Cor. 7:5. And it is the same temptation from which the Lord promised *deliverance* in II Peter 2:9.

Testings or trials are seen in Scripture within two spheres. They are seen as something which God uses in connection with the maturing process, with a view to *the person ultimately being approved at the judgment seat* (James 1:2-4, 12); and they are seen as something which *Satan uses in his efforts to bring about defeat in a Christian's life* (Mark 14:38; James 1:13-15).

The promise concerning *deliverance* in Rev. 3:10 would have to be understood within this overall frame of reference, in keeping with Christ's statement to His disciples in Matt. 6:13.

This "temptation ['trial,' 'testing']" by Satan *was about to* (literal

rendering from the Greek text) come upon “all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.”

The fact that this testing would be worldwide is another thing which has led many individuals to believe that the coming Tribulation was in view. *But, NOT so. Christians are being dealt with, NOT the world at large;* and the expression, “all the world,” *MUST* be understood in the same sense as it is used in Col. 1:5ff, where *Christians ALONE* are also in view.

In Col. 1:5, 6, 23, Paul states that the gospel (his gospel, the good news surrounding the mystery which had been revealed to him) had been proclaimed throughout “all the world,” “to every creature which is under heaven.” However, the message in this gospel, in Paul’s gospel — “if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel” (v. 23) — *was for Christians ALONE. The content of the message restricts this good news to Christians, allowing for ONLY one understanding of the passage.*

“To every creature which is under heaven” *can ONLY* be a reference to Christians (all Christians) scattered throughout the then known world, *NOT* to unsaved individuals in the world as well.

And the extent of the promise surrounding deliverance from a coming time of testing / trials in Rev. 3:10 is the same.

This is a promise *to faithful Christians* relative to a time of testing / trials which Satan would bring upon Christians (all Christians) scattered throughout the then known world, *seeking to bring about their defeat.*

They, because of their faithfulness, would overcome the world, the flesh, and the Devil. And, through this means, they would be delivered out of the onslaughts of Satan, as seen in Rev. 3:10.

And the context of this verse is *in complete keeping with this thought, NOT with thoughts surrounding the rapture.* Efforts to use Rev. 3:10 as a verse relating to the rapture *can ONLY have one end result, which is negative.* Such efforts *can ONLY serve to do away with that which actually is dealt with in this verse — a facet of teaching surrounding the Word of the Kingdom.*

There is an abundance of Scripture — in both the Old Testament and the New Testament — to show that the complete Church will be removed prior to the Tribulation. And, with this in mind, *one need NOT attempt to make Rev. 3:10 deal with something that it doesn’t deal with,* in an effort to teach that which is clearly taught so many places elsewhere in Scripture, even elsewhere in the Book of Revelation itself.

Behold, I Come Quickly

“Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown” (Rev. 3:11).

The Greek word translated “quickly” (*tachu*) is used six times in the Book of Revelation referring to the coming of the Lord for His saints (2:5, 16; 3:11; 22:7, 12, 20). This word, within its context in these passages, *can ONLY refer to the suddenness or swiftness* of an event coming at a completely *unexpected time* for many, though others will be *watching and waiting*.

This would be a continuation of thought from the previous verse relative to *patient endurance under trials and testings*. Individuals are exhorted to hold onto *that which they have*, for a revealed reason which both precedes and follows the exhortation. *That which they have*, contextually, *can ONLY have to do with the end result of patient endurance* (v. 10) — *occupying regal positions with Christ in His kingdom* (v. 11b).

That which is in view in Rev. 3:11 has to do with the *sudden, swift* nature of the Lord’s return. This is a parallel passage to that seen in I Thess. 5:1-9. Some Christians will be watching and some will not be watching when the Lord returns in this manner. Some will have patiently endured, holding fast that which they had. Others though will not have done so. And the end result will have to do with either occupying or being denied a position with Christ in the kingdom.

The suddenness or swiftness of Christ’s return is described in I Cor. 15:52 by the use of the Greek word *atomos*, translated “moment.” (Our English word “atom” is simply a transliterated form of *atomos*.)

When associated with *time*, as in I Cor. 15:52, *atomos* refers to the smallest, most minute unit into which time can be divided (*e.g.*, hours are divided into minutes, minutes are divided into seconds, and seconds are divided into fractions such as a millisecond [one-thousandth of a second], or a microsecond [one-millionth of a second]).

And there are divisions beyond a microsecond.

Events surrounding Christ’s return for His saints will occur within the scope of a unit of time lasting less than a microsecond — so *sudden* and *swift* that it will be beyond all finite comprehension. And the warning to Christians concerning *the unexpected nature* of this event

occurs numerous places in Scripture (cf. Matt. 24:45-51; 25:10-13, 24-30; Luke 12:42-46; 13:24-30; 19:20-26).

Christians being removed from this world (removed from Man's Day on earth and placed in the Lord's Day in heaven) is really *NOT* the main thrust of the matter though. Interpreters have too often erroneously sought to make it so.

The main thrust of the matter has to do with *the Christians' present manner of living (patient endurance) in view of the sudden, unexpected nature of the Lord's return (Behold, I come quickly [suddenly, swiftly]) and that which will be brought to light following His return (that NO man take thy crown).*

Christians, in actuality, will be removed from the earth preceding a judgment befalling the earth-dwellers, with a view to their appearance before the judgment seat of Christ in the heavens; and it is at this judgment that all decisions and determinations concerning *the presently proffered crowns* will be made.

Revelation 3:11 anticipates these events at the judgment seat following the removal of Christians from the earth. And, as previously shown, Rev. 3:10, leading into verse eleven, deals, *NOT* with the rapture, *BUT* with the same subject matter seen in verse eleven, providing introductory material for this verse.

"Crowns" have to do with regal power and authority.

Rulers are the ones who wear crowns, and crowns are presently being offered to Christians in view of their occupying positions as co-heirs with Christ in His kingdom. Christ will wear a crown in that day, and all who rule with Christ will likewise wear crowns.

There will be NO such thing as an uncrowned Christian occupying a position as co-heir with Christ during the day of His power. These positions of power and authority are REAL, the proffered crowns are REAL, and the warnings concerning the possibility of a forfeiture of these crowns are just as REAL.

The Overcomers

Thoughts from verses ten and eleven concerning faithfulness in view of the Lord's return, the judgment seat, and the reign of Christ, lead directly into the overcomer's promise in verse twelve.

This promise has several interrelated parts and brings matters introduced in the preceding verses to their climax. Those who *patiently endure* during the present time will be shown (through the issues of

the judgment seat) to have overcome, they will receive crowns, and they will occupy positions as co-heirs with Christ in His kingdom.

The overcomer's promise to the Church in Philadelphia describes certain things about the nature of these positions; and, *for the first and only time in the overcomer's promises, reference is made to the city from which Christians will conduct this rule.*

1) Pillars in the Temple

The promise to the overcomer in Philadelphia that he will be made a "pillar in the temple" is, of course, a figure of speech. "Christ" is *the temple* in one respect (Rev. 21:22); and in another respect, Christ is presently building a temple.

The temple presently under construction is being built with "living stones [Christians, who themselves are temples (temples of the Holy Spirit)]" (I Peter 2:5; cf. Matt. 16:18; I Cor. 3:16, 17; 6:19).

The figurative use of "pillar" in Rev. 3:12 must, for the spiritual lessons being drawn, refer back to that which is literal; and for these spiritual lessons it seems apparent that the reference can only be to "Solomon's temple," where special, specific reference is made *to pillars in the temple.*

(The only other temple built during Old Testament days was "Zerubabel's temple," built following the Babylonian captivity. Centuries later, following a reconstructing process, beginning under Herod the Great, this temple became known as "Herod's temple"; and this is the temple which was destroyed in 70 A.D.)

The grandeur of Solomon's temple so far overshadowed the grandeur of Zerubbabel's temple that the latter was looked upon as "nothing" in comparison to the former [Haggai 2:3].)

The son of David, Solomon, built a temple for the Lord; and the greater Son of David, Christ, is presently building a temple.

Revelation concerning the construction of the former has been given in such a manner that great spiritual truths can be drawn pertaining to the construction of the latter. The prophets recorded far more than just Jewish history. Their writings, recorded under the supernatural direction of the Holy Spirit, are fraught with significance and meaning.

When Solomon built the temple following his ascension to the

throne, he had a worker of brass from Tyre construct two massive pillars for the porch. Solomon named one of these pillars "Jachin," meaning *establish*; and he named the other pillar "Boaz," meaning *strength* (I Kings 7:13-21).

The overcomers in Philadelphia were promised future positions with Christ which appear to be described by the meanings of the names given to the two pillars in Solomon's temple.

The promise to the overcomers that they would "go no more out" refers to their fixed position as pillars in the temple; and with the two massive pillars in Solomon's temple in view, saying that overcoming Christians will be placed in the position of pillars in the temple is saying that these Christians will occupy *sure, secure, firmly established* positions of *strength* and *power*. And positions of this nature, in complete accordance with Rev. 3:12, will be realized when they rule and reign as co-heirs with Christ in the kingdom.

The manner in which Christians will conduct themselves during that coming day should be thought of in the same sense as the manner in which Christ will conduct Himself.

In the words of the psalmist, Christ, during His rule over the nations, will "break them with a rod of iron" and "dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel" (Ps. 2:8, 9); and in the overcomer's promise to the Church in Thyatira, Christians are promised that their coming rule will be conducted after the same fashion:

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

And he [the overcoming Christian] shall rule them [the nations] with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father" (Rev. 2:26, 27).

The position which Christians are to occupy today is, in many respects, diametrically opposed to the position which Christians are to occupy during the coming age. Matt. 5:5 states, "Blessed are the *meek* [present]: for they shall *inherit the earth* [future]."

The word "meek" refers to one's present manner of living, in view of a future inheritance. This word has to do with being "gentle," "humble," or "unassuming" as one patiently endures the trials and testings of life.

The same word is used in Matt. 21:5 relative to Christ at the time He rode into Jerusalem as Israel's *King, anticipating His rejection and crucifixion:*

"Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass."

This verse is a fulfillment of Zech. 9:9, where the word "lowly" is used in the translation rather than "meek."

"Lowly" is the translation of a Hebrew word meaning *poor* or *afflicted*, and this word refers to the position Christ assumed on our behalf. He Who was rich became poor that we, *through Him*, might be made rich (II Cor. 8:9).

The sufferings of Isaiah chapter fifty-three are in view, *but these sufferings do NOT stand alone; the glory MUST follow the sufferings, as the day follows the night* (Luke 24:26; Heb. 12:2; I Peter 3:13).

When Christ was upon earth the first time, appearing to Israel as *the meek or lowly One*, He allowed the governing Gentile power of that day to array Him as a mock King. He was clothed in purple, crowned with a wreath made from thorns, and given a reed for a sceptre. He was then mocked, spat upon, and smitten (Matt. 27:27-31). *He, the One destined to break the nations with a rod of iron, ALLOWED this to happen.*

WHY? Simply because it was NOT time for Him to take the sceptre.

This occurred during the time of His sufferings and humiliation, which was during the Times of the Gentiles (the interval during which Gentile nations hold the sceptre); and *NOT ONLY MUST events surrounding His sufferings and humiliation (past) be fulfilled, BUT the Times of the Gentiles (presently continuing) MUST be fulfilled as well before Christ can come into His glory.*

Christ remained in a completely "unassuming, gentle, humble" state while being persecuted unjustly at the time of His first coming.

However, the day is coming when He will return and be seen by the world after an entirely different fashion.

He will *THEN* be seated upon a "white horse" rather than an "ass," and He *WILL* come forth to "judge and make war" (Rev. 19:11ff).

The words "meek" or "lowly" *will NOT fit His character at all in that day, for He WILL take the sceptre and break the nations* (cf. Ps. 2:6-9; 110:2-5; Dan. 2:34, 35, 44, 45).

In this light, Christians, as *partakers* with Christ (I Peter 4:12, 13; cf. Rom. 8:17; II Tim. 2:12), are to conduct their affairs (both present and future) after the same manner in which Christ conducted and will conduct His affairs (both past and future).

The government of the earth, continuing under Gentile dominion, is *NO more* the Christians' concern during the present time than it was Christ's concern when He was upon earth almost two millenniums ago.

Christians *are NOT* to hold the sceptre today. Rather, they are to assume the same position relative to world government which Christ assumed.

They are to patiently endure the trials and testings of life in an "unassuming, humble, gentle" spirit; and if called upon to so do, they are to continue in this manner through any unjust treatment which God may allow to befall His people, *looking forward to ANOTHER DAY — the day when Christians, with Christ, will hold the sceptre and break the nations.*

2) Engravings on the Pillars

Christ returning to the earth at the termination of the Tribulation, as the conquering King, will put down all power and authority. He will have "on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords"; and He will possess a "new name" which no man will know (Rev. 3:12; 19:12, 16).

In the ancient world, the columns of cities were often inscribed with the names of conquerors, and this appears to be the thought in Rev. 3:12. Christ will inscribe upon the pillars of the temple (upon overcoming [conquering] Christians) three things:

- 1) "The name of my God."
- 2) "The name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem."
- 3) "My new name."

This will be brought to pass after Christ puts down all present ruling powers/authorities and assumes, with His co-heirs, governmental control over the earth.

At that time Christians will be intimately identified, after the fashion revealed in Rev. 3:12, with *God the Father, God the Son, and the new Jerusalem*. And they will then exercise *sure, secure, firmly estab-*

lished positions of *strength* and *power* as they rule with the Son from the new Jerusalem.

It seems evident that the new Jerusalem will be a satellite city of the earth during the coming age. Overcoming Christians, along with a select group of Old Testament and Tribulation saints (those who qualified to rule from the heavens), will dwell in this city.

This, however, is *ONLY* for the coming age. Once the new heavens and the new earth have been brought into existence (Rev. 21, 22), the new Jerusalem will rest upon the new earth and so remain throughout the ages of eternity. And during these ages, the new Jerusalem will continue to be the dwelling place of a segment of the redeemed and continue as the center of governmental power and authority.

The new Jerusalem is described in Rev. 21:9-21, with additional information concerning the city and its inhabitants given in the verses following (21:22-22:21). This city measures about fifteen hundred miles in length, in breadth, and in height; it is constructed of "pure gold, like unto clear glass"; and a wall over two hundred feet high, constructed of "jasper" (with "twelve gates" constructed of "twelve pearls," resting on foundations garnished with all manner of precious stones), surrounds the city. Certain things are also stated concerning the "street" of the city, the "temple" in the city, the "light" for the city, the "tree of life," and a "pure river of water of life."

The fact that the length, breadth, and height of the new Jerusalem are equal should not lead one to conclude that the city has been constructed in the shape of a cube, with possibly numerous tiers or levels to the city within the cube.

No geometric shape is given in Scripture; and it would seem to be more in keeping with that which is revealed to think of the new Jerusalem in the same sense as walled cities in the Middle East down through history, with one exception — the possibility of an elevated central point (elevated to equal the length and breadth), housing the center of government (allowing matters to remain as they have always existed in God's universal government, *a rule from the heavens over a domain*).

Many things seem to fit much better by viewing the city after this fashion (e.g., the wall surrounding the city, the gates to the city, the street in the city, and the river flowing out from the throne of God, appear to depict the city built on a single level [Rev. 21:17-21; 22:1, 2]).

Another thing which should be understood about the new Jerusalem is the fact that this city was brought into existence either prior to or during the days of Abraham (Heb. 11:16) and has, since that time, been associated with *Abraham and his seed*.

The seed of Abraham in the Old Testament, to whom heavenly promises and blessings pertained, were *the lineal descendants of Isaac, Jacob, and Jacob's twelve sons*. And the seed of Abraham, to whom these same heavenly promises and blessings pertain today, are *Christians* (Gal. 3:16-18, 26-29; cf. Gen. 22:17, 18; Matt. 21:43; I Peter 2:9, 10).

BUT, in reality, Abraham and a segment of his seed from both dispensations will ultimately enter into the proffered heavenly promises and blessings.

(Though the kingdom of the heavens was taken from Israel and is presently being offered to a new nation — *the one new man* “in Christ,” comprised of Christians [cf. Matt. 21:43; I Peter 2:9, 10] — *certain Old Testament saints aspired to and qualified to occupy heavenly positions in the theocracy prior to that time when the kingdom was taken from Israel.*

And the nation of Israel, forfeiting the right to rule from heavenly places in later years, *CANNOT do away with the promises made to these Old Testament saints*. Regardless of that which the nation did at Christ's first coming, *these Old Testament saints WILL realize that which has been promised to them.*)

The “place” presently being prepared for Christians in John 14:2, 3 has *NOTHING* to do with a supposed present construction of the new Jerusalem. In the “Father's house are many mansions [*lit., ‘abiding places’*],” and Christ has gone into heaven to “prepare a place” for Christians *in the Father's house*.

The new Jerusalem is *a city in the Father's house, NOT the Father's house*. His “house” includes *ALL under His sovereign control*, and in the broadest sense of the word would include the entire universe.

However, Biblical revelation concerns itself with *this earth*; and Christ going away “to receive for Himself a kingdom, and to return” relates itself to *governmental control over the earth*.

The “place” which Christ has gone away to prepare for Christians is *a position with Him in this kingdom*. Overcoming Christians *in that coming day will dwell in the new Jerusalem and occupy their place with Christ upon His throne, in complete accordance with that which is revealed in the overcomer's promise in Rev. 3:12.*

11

Seated on the Throne *Christ and His Co-Heirs Together*

“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne” (Rev. 3:21).

The first thing which a person *MUST* get fixed in his mind when studying the message to the Church in Laodicea is the fact that the Spirit of God is addressing *Christians*. The unsaved *are NOT in view at all; they CANNOT be in view*. This message is to a *Church* (vv. 14-22), and the New Testament knows *NOTHING* about unsaved people having a part in the formation of a Church (*i.e.*, saved and unsaved together).

WORKS, with a view to either overcoming or being overcome, are seen throughout the passage. And, with spiritual values involved, this is a realm into which the unsaved CANNOT enter.

Thus it is with the structure of each of the other six messages to the six Churches preceding the message to the Church in Laodicea.

In this respect, the Church in Laodicea is *NO different* than the Church in Philadelphia, or any of the other Churches. *ALL seven messages are to Christians, to those “in Christ”; and ALL have to do with WORKS, resulting in Christians either overcoming or being overcome.*

Too many people deal with certain problems which arise in the Christian life in a rather loose manner. When, for example, sin manifests itself in the life of an individual claiming to be a Christian, one of the most common ways which other Christians often deal with the matter is to begin questioning the person’s salvation.

The thought often centers around the premise that if a person is saved he will follow a certain course of action; and if he doesn’t follow this course of action, his conduct reveals that he was never really saved in the first place.

This type thinking though is *completely contrary* to any Scriptural teaching on salvation by grace through faith. It is a *corruption* of the pure gospel of the grace of God, *for works have been introduced into a realm where works CANNOT exist* (cf. Eph. 2:8, 9; Rom. 11:6).

A person can NO more show by his works (any type actions on his part) that he has been saved than he can perform works to be saved in the first place. Works CANNOT enter after any fashion, either preceding or following the time one is saved.

A person CANNOT perform works to be saved.

A person CANNOT perform works to stay saved.

And a person CANNOT perform works to show that he has been saved.

Salvation is *by grace through faith* apart from works, and it *MUST* forever so remain. As in Jonah 2:9, "*Salvation is of the Lord*" (cf. Eph. 2:8, 9; Titus 3:5).

The Church in Laodicea is described as "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

This description applies to a group of "lukewarm" Christians, "rich" in the things of the world, that Christ is about to "spue ['vomit']" out of His "mouth ['stomach']" (vv. 15-17). The scene within that portion of Christendom depicted by the Church in Laodicea, in this respect, is one portrayed as producing sickness to the very stomach.

These Christians had been called into existence with the things of the coming age in view; but, instead, they had prostituted their high calling through their intimate association with the things of this present age, the present world system under Satan. And it is the One Who made this calling possible, through His sacrifice on Calvary, Who is associated with sickness in the respect that it is set forth in this passage.

Being vomited out of the stomach has no reference to eternal verities, for such *are NOT in view*. The message is to those who already possess eternal life, and *it is life for the coming age ALONE which is in view*.

The scene in these verses anticipates the judgment seat of Christ, with Christians standing *naked* and *ashamed* in the presence of Christ (v. 18). Such Christians will be rejected for positions with Christ on the throne, with the attitude which Christ exhibits toward their revealed works expressed in very vivid language.

However, there is another side to the picture presented in these verses. Despite the attitude of such Christians as set forth in the message to the Church in Laodicea, Christ still extends an invitation for them to “repent.”

They have forsaken Him; *BUT, He has NOT forsaken them.*

Christ still holds out before them proffered crowns, necessary for positions on the throne with Him in that coming day.

It is *NOT* too late for them to buy “gold tried in the fire” (that they might be rich), clothe themselves in “white raiment” (that the shame of their nakedness *might NOT be manifested*), and anoint their “eyes with eyesalve” (that they might see).

Christ stands at the door of the lukewarm Church of today and knocks, as He stood at the door of the Laodicean Church in Revelation chapter three after the same fashion; and the invitation to the individual Christian within the Church — whether in the Laodicean Church then, or the Laodicean Church of today — is the same:

“...if *any man* hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him [not come into that individual, but come inside the Church to that individual], and will sup with him, and he with me” (v. 20b; cf. vv. 18, 19).

The End, Goal

The present dispensation will one day end, be brought to a close; and Scripture presents the Church at the termination of this dispensation in a dual respect. The messages to the Churches in Philadelphia and Laodicea present these two facets within Christendom, forming God’s Own commentary concerning the concluding period of Church history, *with the Church in Laodicea becoming MORE and MORE prominent as the age nears its completion.*

There will always be faithful Christians, extending right on up to the time of the rapture. God will always have a faithful remnant (cf. I Kings 19:14, 18; Rev. 11:3ff), a witness on earth, seen by the presence of the Church in Philadelphia. But Christendom, by large — the Church as a whole, foreshadowed by the Church in Laodicea — through an unholy alliance with the world, will, for all practical purposes, *stand ALONE* as the Church in the world at the end of the dispensation.

1) Beginning and Working of the Matter in History

As seen in previous chapters dealing with the seven Churches in Asia during John's day, *there is an event in Church history which precipitated conditions as they exist today, almost two millenniums later.*

And that event was the placing of leaven in the three measures of meal by the woman in Matt. 13:33.

Once this act had been accomplished, which appears to have occurred very early in the history of the Church, the end of the matter was set. The leaven would work in the meal "till the whole was leavened," and such would ultimately result in conditions existing in the Church at the conclusion of the dispensation which would parallel those existing in the first century Church in Laodicea.

"Leaven" in Scripture has to do with that which is *evil, vile, corrupt.*

The Israelites, immediately following the Passover, were told to "put away leaven" out of their houses (Ex. 12:14-20); Jesus told His disciples to "beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees" (Matt. 16:6); and Christians are told, "Purge out therefore the old leaven" (I Cor. 5:7), with an allusion made in the following verse (v. 8) to the feast of unleavened bread in Exodus chapter twelve (showing a type-antitype arrangement of the teaching set forth).

The leaven which the woman placed in the three measures of meal in Matt. 13:33 was destined to ultimately corrupt the entire mass.

And this is *EXACTLY* the climactic time we are nearing (or, seemingly already at) in Church history today. *The whole* is to be permeated by the working of the leaven, and the message to the Church in Laodicea shows *the end result of the matter.*

Leaven actually works best in a place *where the temperature is not too hot nor too cold, and the lukewarm state of the Laodicean Church points to ideal conditions after this fashion.* And the leaven, after many centuries of deteriorating work, *will be brought into the advanced stages of its action and do its MOST damaging work within the lukewarm confines of the Laodicean Church near the end of the dispensation.*

The working of this leaven will be so complete that the question is asked in Luke 18:8, "...when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith ['the faith'] on the earth?"

The response to the question, designated by the wording in the Greek text, is *negative.* The Son of Man *will NOT* find "the faith"

upon the earth when He returns. Rather, He will find conditions as depicted in Rev. 3:14ff.

"The faith" in Luke 18:8 can only be synonymous with *faith* exhibited by Christians in passages such as I Tim. 6:12 and Jude 3.

This is the faith *connected with laying hold on eternal life [life for the age]* in I Timothy, the faith *in opposition to the great apostasy of the latter days* in Jude, the faith *destroyed by the working of the leaven within the lukewarm confines of the Laodicean Church, producing the conditions described as "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."*

This is *the reason* Christendom exists as it is seen today.

The corruption brought about by the leaven, destroying "the faith," has produced a condition in which the return of Christ is either *NOT taught at all* or it is invariably taught in such a way that things surrounding "the faith" *are NOT dealt with*.

(Christendom today, from a humanistic standpoint, can be seen in all types of stages, covering a wide panorama of differences.

For example, there are Churches which are either exclusively homosexual or churches openly accepting homosexuals into their fellowship, both seeing homosexuality as simply an alternate lifestyle [in line with the world's view].

Then there are very liberal Churches which bear little resemblance to that which Scripture teaches; there are more orthodox-type Churches which are seemingly teaching correct Biblical doctrine in a number of areas; and there are Churches which pride themselves on their fundamentalism, etc.

But there is ONE thing which, with rare exception, ALL of them have in common, revealing their true identity—as being Laodicean, NOT Philadelphian. With rare exception, NONE of them either know anything about or will have anything to do with the Word of the Kingdom, the central message of Scripture which the leaven has been centering its attack around for two millennia.

In fact, many of the Churches which pride themselves on their fundamentalism, unlike many of the more liberal Churches which are out of the mainstream of things in this respect, *will often go out of their way to fight teachings surrounding the Word of the Kingdom.*

And, because of the working of the leaven throughout two millennia of time, the preceding is perfectly understandable.

The leaven knows NO boundaries within Christendom, ONLY ONE object: Destroy ANY and ALL teaching pertaining to the Word of the Kingdom.

True fundamentalism in Christianity *would necessitate an adherence to the fundamentals of the Christian faith, which, of necessity, would have to center around the Word of the Kingdom.* This is the way it WAS in Ephesus [the first of the seven Churches in Rev. 2, 3], *UNTIL they left their first love.*

And this is the way it *MUST be* in any Church today which would look upon itself as *Philadelphian* rather than *Laodicean* — which would require an adherence to or a return to that taught and believed in Ephesus, *to true fundamentalism, BEFORE the Church left its first love.*

Between these two points, *there is NO middle ground. A person, or a complete Church, is either for Christ or against Christ* [Matt. 12:30; Luke 11:23].

A Church is either *Philadelphian* [centers its teaching around the Word of the Kingdom] or *Laodicean* [centers its teaching around other than the Word of the Kingdom]. And the latter, *regardless of how fundamental they might appear to be, is STILL Laodicean, NOT Philadelphian.*)

The very reason for the existence of Christians upon the earth is *inseparably linked to the coming kingdom.* Christians are the ones destined to occupy the throne with Christ; and this is *the heart of that which has come under attack through the working of the heaven.*

Every Christian is in line to inherit the rights of the firstborn, the rights of primogeniture; and these rights, in their entirety, *have to do with positions in the coming kingdom.*

EVERYTHING moves toward that day when Christ will take the kingdom; and this appears to be something viewed in a somewhat similar respect by BOTH the world around us and by the worldly-minded Laodicean Christians.

(“The world” though really doesn’t possess a spiritual capacity to understand the things surrounding that day when Christ takes the kingdom. All that “the world” can know is *fact* concerning the matter, *i.e.*, that Christ one day will take the kingdom.

The worldly-minded Laodicean Christians, on the other hand, possess a capacity for spiritual truth. But the things surrounding that day when Christ takes the kingdom *are of little to no interest to them.* They usually know little more [often no more] about the matter than “the world” itself.

They, as the world, are often quite content with the status quo.)

2) Goal and Conclusion of the Matter in Prophecy

When the birth of the nation of Israel occurred in Egypt, followed by this nation being removed from Egypt, there was a *purpose, a goal,*

behind the matter.

Israel, as *God's firstborn son*, was to be removed from one land, placed in another, and realize the rights of primogeniture in that land. Israel was to enter into the land of Canaan and rule over the Gentile nations of the earth. Not only was Israel to rule after this fashion, but Israel was also to be "a kingdom of priests" through whom all the Gentile nations would be blessed (Gen. 12:3; Ex. 19:5, 6).

Israel being placed in this position would bring about the fulfillment of one part of Gen. 22:17 (*the earthly seed* of Abraham [*"the sand which is upon the seashore"*]) would "possess the gate of his enemies [rule over his enemies]"); and, through this means, Gen. 22:18 could be fulfilled insofar as the earthly aspect of the kingdom was concerned ("And in thy seed shall all the nations [all the Gentiles] of the earth be blessed").

(For the earthly aspect of the kingdom to be brought into full fruition though, the entirety of Gen. 22:17, 18 would have to be brought to pass. The heavenly aspect of the kingdom would have to be brought into existence as well.

The seed of Abraham would have to possess the gate of the enemy in both *heavenly* and *earthly* realms. The removal of Satan and his angels from the heavenly realm of the kingdom in the middle of the Tribulation and their being bound and cast into an abyss at the end of the Tribulation, an abyss which is sealed for 1,000 years, anticipates this [Rev. 12:7; 20:1-3].

And the establishment of the kingdom in an overall respect demands this, for Scripture clearly reveals that *BOTH the earthly seed of Abraham [Israel] and the heavenly seed of Abraham [the Church] will reign with Christ in the kingdom at this time — one upon earth, the other in the heavens.*)

When God called the Church into existence, as when He called Israel into existence, there was a *purpose/a goal* behind His calling; and the thought of eternal redemption in connection with Christianity (which too often is erroneously made the key issue) doesn't even begin to deal with the matter.

Christians have been called into existence (they have become possessors of eternal life) in order to *realize an inheritance "reserved in heaven," associated with a "salvation" to be revealed* (I Peter 1:3-11). Christians have been called into existence to be removed from one land, be placed in another, and realize the rights of primogeniture in that land.

Christians are to inhabit a heavenly land and occupy the throne as co-regents with Christ when He rules the nations with a rod of iron.

And Christians, comprising “the Church of the firstborn [a called out group of firstborn sons]” — as Israel fulfilling the rights of primogeniture on earth — are to exercise a priestly function in this rule. Christians are not only to be “kings” but they are to also be “priests” in that day (Heb. 12:23; Rev. 5:10; cf. Ex. 19:5, 6).

The nations are not only *to be ruled* by Christians (from a heavenly sphere) but the nations are *to receive spiritual blessings* through the position which Christians will occupy as well (as Christians exercise the full rights of the firstborn); and, as this rule progresses through Israel on earth (as a restored and believing Israel is placed at the head of the nations), *spiritual blessings* will flow out to the Gentile nations through Israel (as Israel exercises the full rights of the firstborn).

Christians being placed in this position in the heavens will effect the fulfillment of one part of Gen. 22:17 (*the heavenly seed* of Abraham [*“the stars of the heaven”*]) will “possess the gate of his enemies [rule over his enemies]”); and Israel being placed in this position on earth will effect the fulfillment of the other part of Gen. 22:17 as well (*the earthly seed* of Abraham [*“the sand which is upon the seashore”*]) will “possess the gate of his enemies”).

Then Gen. 22:18 will be fulfilled in relation to both heavenly and earthly aspects of the kingdom (“And in thy seed shall all the nations [Gentile nations] of the earth be blessed” [cf. Gal. 3:17, 18, 29]).

And this will bring a fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham in Ur of the Chaldees at the time of his call (Gen. 12:1-3), long before either Israel or the Church was ever brought into existence.

Genesis 22:17, 18 will, thus, find its proper fulfillment in the coming age when God’s firstborn sons (Christ, Israel, and the Church [following the adoption]) occupy their proper places in relation to the earth as they exercise the rights of primogeniture.

Israel will occupy the earthly sphere of the kingdom in the capacity set forth in these verses; *the Church will occupy the heavenly sphere of the kingdom* in the capacity set forth in these same verses; and *Christ will rule in both spheres of the kingdom*.

Christ will rule *from His Own throne in the heavenly Jerusalem*, with Christians occupying positions as co-heirs on the throne with Him (Rev.

3:21; cf. Rom. 8:14-21); and Christ will also rule *from David's throne in the earthly Jerusalem*, in the midst of His people Israel (Luke 1:31-33).

And within this complete structure of the kingdom (heavenly and earthly spheres), *the seed of Abraham* will "possess the gate" of the enemy, and the Gentile nations of the earth will "be blessed."

The nation of Israel in the Old Testament moved beyond the things surrounding the death of the paschal lambs in Egypt and advanced toward the land of Canaan. However, the actions of "many" brought displeasure to the Lord; and these individuals were overthrown in the wilderness, short of realizing the purpose for their deliverance from Egypt (I Cor. 10:1-5). They were overthrown on *the right side* of the blood but on *the wrong side* of the goal of their calling.

Thus it is with Christians during the present dispensation. They have appropriated the blood of the Passover Lamb and placed themselves in a position to move toward a heavenly land, wherein their calling will be realized.

But the actions of "many" will bring about the displeasure of the Lord, resulting in their overthrow, short of realizing the purpose for their deliverance from this world. Their overthrow will occur on *the right side* of the blood but on *the wrong side* of the goal of their calling.

The Laodicean Church sets forth the far-reaching heights of failure on the part of the Church in this respect.

The Church in the latter days of the dispensation, saturated through and through with leaven, will be filled with Christians *having NO regard for the purpose surrounding their salvation*.

And one day, appearing at the judgment seat in this condition, they will suffer the fate awaiting those in the Church in Laodicea who spurned the call to "repent." *They will be REJECTED for positions with Christ in the kingdom, FAILING to realize the very purpose for their salvation.*

The Overcomer's Promise

The promise that the overcomer will one day be allowed to sit with Christ on His throne comprises the pinnacle toward which all of the overcomer's promises move.

ALL of the promises are *millennial* in their scope of fulfillment, and *ALL* have to do with Christians occupying future positions as co-heirs

with Christ. *ALL* point to and find their fulfillment in Christians exalted, with Christ, to the place for which they were called into existence.

Overcoming Christians occupying the throne with Christ *MUST* be properly equipped to fulfill all the functions of the office which they are to hold. Merely being seated on the throne in fulfillment of the seventh and last of the overcomer's promises will be insufficient in and of itself.

All the things contained in the first six overcomer's promises MUST also be realized in the lives of Christians as they occupy positions on the throne, for ONLY in this manner will Christians come into possession of all which God requires for those ruling as co-heirs with His Son.

1) Overcoming or Being Overcome

The analogy given in Rev. 3:21 has to do with Christians patterning their lives after Christ's life, with *overcoming* and *the throne* in view.

Christ overcame and is presently occupying a position with the Father on His throne, and Christians are to overcome and one day occupy a position with the Son on His throne. The exact wording of the text is, "...to him that overcometh...even as I also overcame..."

A conflict, ending in victory, is in view FIRST; and THEN the throne comes into view. The latter is NOT attained without the former.

Christ's overcoming is associated with His *sufferings* during the time of His shame, reproach, and rejection; and Scripture makes the matter very clear that overcoming for Christians is to be no different.

Christ has "suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps"; and *overcoming Christians MUST enter into these sufferings.*

Regarding this matter, Christians are told:

"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:

But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are *partakers of Christ's sufferings*; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy" (1 Peter 4:12, 13; cf. 1 Peter 2:21-23).

The thought is very simple:

Christians are to follow the example which Christ has left, knowing, as He knew, that connected with the SUFFERINGS is the shame, reproach, and rejection; BUT, beyond all of this lies the GLORY (Heb. 12:1, 2).

In Revelation chapters two and three, *overcoming* is with a view

to the throne; and in portions of Scripture such as the Book of I Peter, *suffering* is with a view to *glory*. *Overcoming* is inseparably connected with *suffering*, as is *the throne* with *glory*.

The sufferings of Christ find their beginning in the fact that He “came unto his own [‘own things’], and his own [‘own people’] received him not” (John 1:11).

(There is a distinction in the Greek text between two words in this verse which is not brought out in the English text at all. The gender of the first word translated “own” is neuter [pl.], indicating “things”; but the gender of the second is masculine [pl.], indicating “people.”)

The “things” to which Christ came refer to those things which were rightfully His: the Davidic throne, His Own throne, the domain over which He was to rule, etc.; and the “people” to whom He came refer to His brethren after the flesh, the nation of Israel.

Christ suffered at the hands of His Own people, among others, because of things which were rightfully His, to which He came.

ALL the sufferings of Christ, after some fashion, were associated with His “own things”; and coming into possession of His “own things” is something which *MUST NOT ONLY follow His sufferings BUT is something which CAN ONLY be millennial in its scope of fulfillment.*

His “own things” are intimately linked with His coming rule over the earth. He was born “King of the Jews,” He presented Himself to Israel as the nation’s “King,” He was crucified “King of the Jews,” and when He returns it will be as “King of kings, and Lord of lords” (Matt. 2:2; 21:5; 27:37; Rev. 19:16). Christ *at THAT time, NOT before, will come into the realization of His Kingship and come into possession of His Own things.*

While here on earth the first time, at the beginning of His earthly ministry, Christ met the incumbent ruler (Satan) face to face in order to reveal that He was fully qualified to redeem that which the first Adam had forfeited in the fall. Such included not only fallen man ultimately being placed back in the position for which he was originally created but it included the restoration of the ruined creation itself (the forfeited domain, which was rightfully His).

Following this, Christ suffered rejection time and time again by the Jewish people; and the entire matter was climaxed by His being arrayed as a mock King by those to whom the Jewish religious lead-

ers had delivered Him — the Gentile power of that day, the Romans.

Arraying Christ as a mock king, they placed a robe on Him, a crown of thorns on His head, and a reed for a sceptre in His right hand. Then they bowed the knee to Him in a mocking fashion, ridiculing His true position as King, spitting upon Him, and taking the reed and striking Him on the head. And crucifixion then followed (Matt. 27:27ff).

During all of this, His “own things” were held in abeyance. There was no attempt on Christ’s part to interfere with the incumbent powers and authorities, whether of Satan and his angels holding the sceptre in the heavens or of the Gentile nations holding the sceptre here on earth.

It was NOT time for Him to take the sceptre. He suffered through all of this, climaxed by Calvary itself.

He has overcome, and the call has gone forth for Christians to overcome *as He overcame*. And overcoming, as He overcame, looks ahead to that future day when Christ will come into possession of His “own things,” *with overcoming Christians ascending the throne with Him*.

The things of that day though are *future* in their entirety and have *NOTHING* to do with man during the present day and time.

Man during the present day and time is still living during the day of Christ’s shame, reproach, and rejection; and the attitude which Christians are to exhibit toward the “things” to which Christ came *MUST* parallel the attitude which Christ took toward these things when He was upon earth the first time.

Involvement in the affairs of the present world system *does NOT* become Christians at all.

Such involvement would result *in their being overcome by the world rather than their overcoming the world*. Such involvement would be *occupying an opposite position to that which Christ occupied relative to a world controlled by Satan and his angels through the Gentile nations*.

The words, “as I also overcame,” and the words, “Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps,” *MUST be pondered and heeded by any Christian aspiring to be an overcomer*.

When Christ returns to earth the second time, He will once again come to *His Own things* and to *His Own people*; *BUT, this time He will come into possession of His Own things, and His Own people will receive Him*.

Many of the things to which Christ came in the past and will come in the future, given to Him by the Father, are presently being extended

to Christians. Overcoming Christians are to inherit with Christ; and, insofar as the heavenly aspect of the kingdom is concerned, these Christians are to participate with Christ in the things to which He came almost two millennia ago.

Christians occupying their proper place in Christ's rejection, shame, and reproach today will result in these same Christians occupying their proper place in Christ's acceptance, glory, and exaltation yet future.

2) *My Throne, My Father's Throne*

The Son is *presently* seated with His Father on His Father's throne (Ps. 110:1). BUT, at the end of Man's Day — for the duration of the Millennium, when the Lord's Day will exist on earth — Christ will sit on *His Own throne*; and it will be during this time that the overcomer's promise in Rev. 3:21 will be fulfilled.

Following the Millennium, after all things have been brought under subjection to Christ, *the kingdom will be delivered up* "to God, even the Father." At that time the Son will also Himself "be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all [*lit.*, '...that God may be all things in all of these things']" (I Cor. 15:24-28).

The Son's throne will then cease to exist as a separate throne, and *there will be ONE throne* — "the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Rev. 22:1, 3).

The Father's throne is the point from which God presently administers His rule throughout the entire universe. Messianic angels — Satan among them, though as a rebel ruler — presently rule under God throughout God's creation (Job 1:6; 2:1; Ezek. 28:14). And the earth, in this respect, is one of numerous provinces in God's kingdom which are ruled by messianic angels.

Scripture clearly infers that numerous provinces (worlds) exist throughout the universe, over which messianic angels rule.

The scene presented in Job chapters one and two is that of Satan appearing in the midst of certain other angels who can only be his equals (*i.e.*, other messianic angels who rule under God over other provinces, as Satan rules the earth under God). And it appears that within the sphere of God's government of the universe these messianic angels are summoned into His presence at scheduled times in what could be called *congresses of the sons of God*.

(Man, during the past few years, has, for the first time, been able to look through his powerful telescopes and see some of the other solar systems in his own galaxy [similar to the one in which he lives].

Man now knows, through his own scientific achievements and discoveries, that other solar systems exist in the universe. And the more man views the heavens with his increasingly powerful telescopes, the more he realizes that these other solar systems are far more numerous than he at first thought.

But this is as far as man can go with the matter within his science.

Scripture though *begins beyond the point* where man presently finds himself. Scripture begins at the point of revealing that messianic angels rule over provinces in the universe, simply inferring that other provinces exist [provinces other than the earth, provinces which man is presently discovering]. And these can only be other provinces in other solar systems [*i.e.*, planets revolving around other stars (the earth's sun is a medium-size star)], not only in our galaxy but evidently in all the estimated billions of galaxies scattered throughout the universe.

Scripture no more attempts to prove the existence of these other provinces than it does the existence of God Himself. As with the existence of God, Scripture simply deals with these other provinces from the standpoint that they exist, providing revelation beginning at this point.

It is left to finite man to believe that he has wrought some great astronomical achievement through recent findings, made possible by his use of more powerful telescopes and an orbiting telescope.

Man though, in his scientific achievements in this realm, *has NOT even arrived at the point where Scripture, dealing with these things, begins; NOR can man ever arrive at this point through his science.*

Actually, man, in his quest for knowledge pertaining to all which exists in the universe, has yet to arrive at and believe or understand the simplicity of the very opening words of Scripture — “In the beginning God created the heaven [‘heavens’] and the earth” [Gen. 1:1].

Had man simply turned to and believed the Scriptures in the beginning, rather than seeking answers through science, he could have learned millenniums ago things concerning how the universe was brought into existence [something which *he can NEVER discover* within his science] or how the universe is structured [something which *he can ONLY begin to discover* within his finite, scientific ability].

For additional information on the preceding, refer to the author's book, *The Most High Ruleth.*)

Christ is presently seated with His Father upon a throne from which the government of the universe is administered. The future government which Christ will administer from His Own throne though will be limited to the earth over which Satan presently rules, for He is to replace Satan and rule over the same domain.

The other messianic angels are not in view at all in this sphere of activity. They administer affairs over provinces unrelated to Satan's domain and unrelated to the reason for the appearances of the first man, the first Adam, and the second Man, the last Adam.

The creation of man, in keeping with the entire matter, is peculiar to the earth. Man's creation is *directly related to the governmental administration of THIS earth*; and once man finds himself in the position which he was created to occupy (when he finds himself seated on the throne with the second Man, the last Adam, ruling over the earth), his rule will have to do with *THIS earth ALONE*.

Angelic rule on the earth will THEN end, for man will replace angels (Heb. 2:5); *BUT, angelic rule elsewhere in the universe will remain completely unaffected*. Angelic rulers elsewhere in the universe had *NO involvement* with Satan's fall and man's subsequent creation.

Satan and his angels are the ones who rebelled, resulting in their disqualification to rule and necessitating their ultimate removal. Satan sought a regal position above that in which God had placed him; he sought a regal position above the other messianic angels; he sought to occupy a position in which he would be like God Himself, from which he could administer power and authority throughout the universe.

He led a great host of the angels ruling under him in this rebellion, and his failure to succeed brought about a wrecked kingdom and the pronouncement of judgment (Gen. 1:1, 2a; Isa. 14:13-17).

The creation was later restored, and man was brought into existence *for the express purpose of taking the sceptre which Satan had forfeited*.

However, man's fall resulted in both *a ruined creature and a ruined creation*, necessitating the appearance at a later date of the second Man, the last Adam, with a view to the subsequent "restitution of all things" (Gen. 1:2b-28; 3:6, 7, 17, 18; Acts 3:21).

ONLY after all things have been restored will man realize his calling — *holding the sceptre while seated on the throne with Christ*.

ALL things relating to man — his creation, fall, redemption, and coming

rule — are peculiarly related to the earth. Thus, during the coming age, the only change in governmental affairs throughout God's universe will be in the sphere of Satan's present governmental administration — *his rule over the earth upon which man resides.*

On this province, man, realizing his high calling, will come into the position previously occupied by angels; but elsewhere in the universe, angelic rule over other provinces in the kingdom of God can only continue unchanged.

Concluding Thoughts:

Christendom, near the conclusion of this dispensation, *will be marked by one main feature, foretold almost two millenniums in advance: APOSTASY.* This is the situation revealed by the sequential arrangement of the first four parables in Matthew chapter thirteen, the seven Churches in Revelation chapters two and three, the books of II Peter and Jude, and by portions of Scripture such as I Tim. 4:1ff and Luke 18:8.

The working of the leaven which the woman placed in the three measures of meal in Matt. 13:33 *CANNOT* be checked or stopped within the lukewarm confines of the Laodicean Church of today. Deterioration will continue *UNTIL the whole has been leavened.*

The people of God though *have NOT been left alone and helpless* against the deteriorating process of the leaven. God has promised that He will *NEVER leave NOR forsake* His people (Deut. 31:6; Heb. 13:5).

Christians are in possession of *God's Word* and *the indwelling Holy Spirit*; and a knowledge of this Word, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, is *the ONE great protection, the ONLY protection*, which Christians possess against the false doctrine produced by the working of the leaven (cf. Isa. 8:20; John 16:13-15; 17:14; II Cor. 4:16; Phil. 1:6; Col. 3:10).

Then, *God's Son* has promised that He will be with His people *UNTIL the end of the age* (Matt. 28:19, 20); and, as depicted in the message to the Church in Laodicea, He stands and knocks at the door of the lukewarm Church during the final eroding stages of the working of the leaven, extending an invitation to any Christian who will heed His voice.

This invitation, contextually, is with a view to *overcoming*; and overcoming is, in turn, with a view to ultimately occupying *a position with Christ on His throne.*

12

Crowned Rulers *Crowns, Thrones, Regality*

“After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.

And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.

And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.

And round about the throne were four and twenty seats [thrones]: and upon the seats [thrones] I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had upon their heads crowns of gold.

The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created” (Rev. 4:1-4, 10, 11).

The Book of Revelation opens in chapter one with brief statements concerning Christ, which center around His return and subsequent reign (vv. 1-8). The book then continues with events surrounding John being removed from Man’s Day on earth and placed in the Lord’s Day in heaven.

This is followed by a revelation of that which John saw in heaven — *the complete Church in Christ’s presence, represented by ALL seven Churches in chapters two and three.* And Christ, seen in the midst of these seven Churches, *appears as a Judge, NOT as a Priest.*

The complete Church, ALL Christians — shown by the number “seven,” pointing to the completion of that which is in view (i.e., the complete Church) — is seen in Christ’s presence in a judicial scene.

This is the ONLY sequence of events which could possibly be in view.

It is evident that John, along with being removed from Man’s Day and being placed in the Lord’s Day, *was also moved forward in time.*

He was moved to a time at the end of the present dispensation, for not only is the removal of the Church from the earth seen in John being removed from the earth, but that which will occur immediately following the Church being removed is shown by that which John saw in heaven — *the complete Church in Christ’s presence, with Christ appearing as Judge.*

Thus, following introductory remarks concerning Christ (which are Messianic in nature), the rapture, followed by the judgment seat, is clearly revealed to be the subject set forth in Revelation chapter one.

And this, in turn, introduces the material which follows.

Chapters two and three then continue with that introduced in chapter one, providing information concerning each of the seven Churches seen in Christ’s presence in chapter one. This information is given in seven short epistles, directed through an angel to each Church, *with ALL of the epistles structured EXACTLY the same way.*

Each epistle is introduced by a reference to Christ’s description, as *Judge*, from chapter one (either from something stated in this description or from material directly related to that seen in the description).

This is followed in each epistle by the statement, “I know thy works”; each Church is then dealt with on the basis of *works*, with a view to Christians either *overcoming or being overcome*. And the overcomer’s promises are, in turn, *millennial* in their scope of fulfillment.

Thus, insofar as the main message of the book is concerned — *judgment* — chapters two and three simply present a continuation from chapter one. That is, these two chapters (through that stated in each of these seven epistles), detail events relating to each of the seven Churches at the judgment introduced in chapter one.

Christians have been saved to “bring forth fruit.” They have been created in Christ Jesus “unto good works” (John 15:1-8; Eph. 2:8-10). And the entire matter concerns “overcoming” during the present day with a view to occupying the “throne” with Christ during the coming

day. Christians who are to ascend the throne and rule and reign with Christ *MUST be overcomers, for ONLY through realizing that which has been promised to the overcomers in chapters two and three will Christians be properly equipped to occupy this high office.*

Then, chapter four of this book begins the same way in which matters surrounding the Church are introduced in chapter one — by a reference once again to the removal of the Church from the earth. And the reference is apparently repeated to show another facet to that previously dealt with in the seven epistles to the seven Churches in Asia.

Even though John was moved forward in time, to the end of the present dispensation (over 1,900 years removed from his time), and saw the Church in heaven at the end of the dispensation, the Church was actually still back on earth near the beginning of the dispensation.

And the seven epistles to seven existing Churches in Asia, along with providing details surrounding the actual judgment of Christians at the end of the dispensation (continuing from that which had been introduced in chapter one), also provide a history of the Church during the course of the dispensation.

It is evident that the seven epistles in these two chapters have been structured in a dispensational framework of this nature, beginning with the Church in Ephesus (which left its “first love” [2:4]) and ending with the Church in Laodicea (described as “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” [3:17]).

At the beginning of the dispensation, Christendom could be seen in the state described in the message *to the Church in Ephesus*.

BUT, at the end of the dispensation, Christendom can be seen in the state described in the message *to the Church in Laodicea*.

And the repetition of John being removed from Man’s Day and placed in the Lord’s Day provides additional information pertaining to that which will occur in heaven following the removal of the Church but preceding the Tribulation on earth (seen in chs. 6-19a).

The account of John’s removal from the earth in chapter one shows that which will occur in heaven immediately following the Church’s removal at the end of the dispensation — *judgment*.

And the same account repeated in chapter four shows that which will occur in heaven immediately following the judgment of Christians (seen in chs. 2, 3) — *twenty-four elders arising from their thrones*

and relinquishing their crowns to the One Who had originally placed them in the positions which they occupied, seated on thrones, and crowned.

Crowns Cast Before the Throne

Though the same beginning point is seen in both chapters one and four (John's removal from the earth, his removal from Man's Day, his being placed in the Lord's Day, and his being moved forward in time), revelation in chapter four immediately moves forward to *a time following events of the judgment seat* (chs. 2, 3) *but still preceding the beginning of the Tribulation on earth* (ch. 6).

The first thing which John saw in heaven in chapter four, following a repetition of the same beginning point previously seen in chapter one, was a rainbow-encircled throne, surrounded by twenty-four other thrones. God was seated on the central throne, and twenty-four elders were seated on the surrounding thrones.

The twenty-four elders were clothed in "white raiment," and they "had on their heads *crowns of gold*" (vv. 2-4).

Then, following a description of the throne of God and "four beasts ['living creatures']" who resided "round about the throne" (vv. 5-9), attention was directed back to the twenty-four elders.

They removed themselves from their thrones, fell down before the throne of God, worshiped God, *cast their crowns before His throne*, and expressed adoration to the One worthy "to receive glory and honor and power" (vv. 10, 11).

Events surrounding the twenty-four elders removing themselves from their thrones and casting their crowns before God's throne have been recorded at this particular place in the book for definite and specific purposes.

These events, contrary to that which is often taught, do not at all depict the actions of Christians following issues of the judgment seat.

Christians are NOT to sit on thrones surrounding God's throne. Rather, they are to sit, at a later time, with Christ on His throne after the fashion revealed in Rev. 3:21.

NOR will Christians possess crowns at the time of the events seen in chapter four. Christians coming into the possession of crowns will *result from* issues and determinations made at the judgment seat; *BUT,*

Christians will NOT actually receive crowns UNTIL after Christ returns to the earth and overthrows Gentile world power (which rules under Satan and his angels [Dan. 10:13-20]).

When Christ returns to the earth at the conclusion of the Tribulation, He will have many crowns upon His head (Rev. 19:12); but these crowns, through comparing this section in Revelation with other Scriptures on the subject, *are NOT* crowns which Christ will wear during the Messianic Era.

Christ is destined to wear the crown which Satan presently wears; and at the time Christ returns to the earth, Satan will still be in possession of this crown. Satan's crown will have to be taken from him (by force) and given to Christ *BEFORE* Christ can actually sit upon the throne and occupy, in its fullest sense, the position depicted in Rev. 19:16: "King of kings, and Lord of lords."

1) Saul and David — Satan and Christ

Certain things concerning crowns, especially relative to the crown which Christ is to wear, can possibly best be illustrated by referring to the typology of Saul and David in the Books of I, II Samuel.

Saul had been anointed king over Israel, but Saul rebelled against the Lord and was rejected (as king) by the Lord (I Sam. 10:1ff; 15:1-23).

David was then anointed king in Saul's stead (I Sam. 16:1-13).

However, Saul *did NOT* immediately relinquish the throne; *NOR did* David make an attempt to immediately ascend the throne. Saul, even though rejected and his anointed successor on hand, was allowed to continue his reign.

Affairs continued after this fashion in the camp of Israel *UNTIL* David eventually found himself in exile, living out in the hills (e.g., in the cave of Adullam). During this time, certain individuals who were dissatisfied with existing conditions in the camp of Israel under Saul gathered themselves unto David (I Sam. 22:1, 2).

They separated themselves from affairs in the kingdom under Saul and lived out in the hills with David. He became "a captain over them"; and they were faithful to him, anticipating the day when Saul would be put down and David would take the kingdom.

The day eventually came when this occurred. Saul, following a battle and an attempted suicide, was slain by an Amalekite. His crown

was taken and given to David (I Sam. 31:1-13; II Sam. 1:1-10). *THEN*, David and his faithful men moved in and took over the government (II Sam. 2:1ff).

The entire sequence of events depicting Saul and David typifies great spiritual truths concerning Satan and Christ:

Just as Saul was anointed king over Israel, Satan was anointed king over the earth.

Just as Saul rebelled against the Lord and was rejected, Satan rebelled against the Lord and was rejected.

Just as David was anointed king while Saul continued to reign, Christ was anointed King while Satan continued to reign.

Just as David did not immediately ascend the throne, Christ did not immediately ascend the throne.

Just as David eventually found himself in a place removed from the kingdom (out in the hills), Christ eventually found Himself in a place removed from the kingdom (in heaven).

Just as David gathered certain faithful men unto himself during this time (anticipating his future reign), Christ is presently gathering certain faithful men unto Himself (anticipating His future reign).

Just as the day came when Saul was put down, the day will come when Satan will be put down.

Just as Saul's crown was taken and given to David, Satan's crown will be taken and given to Christ.

And just as David and his faithful followers *THEN moved in and took over the government*, Christ and His faithful followers *will THEN move in and take over the government*.

2) Purpose for the Present Dispensation

A principle of Divine government set forth in the type of Saul and David shows the necessity of an incumbent ruler, although rejected, continuing to reign until replaced by his successor. The government of the earth is a rule under God through delegated powers and authorities. In this respect, Satan rules directly under God (though a rebel ruler), and a great host of subordinate angels rule with him.

Even though Satan and his followers have been rejected, they

MUST continue in power (as Saul and those ruling with him) *UNTIL* replaced by Christ and His followers (as when David and his faithful followers took the kingdom).

God *will NOT, at any time*, allow conditions to exist upon the earth in which there is no Divinely administered government through delegated powers and authorities. Even though the government of the earth is in disarray today, because of Satan's rebellion, it is still under God's sovereign power and control (Dan. 4:17-34).

The present dispensation is the time during which the antitype of David's faithful followers being gathered unto him occurs. As during David's time, so during the present time — *there MUST be a period, preceding the King coming into power, during which the rulers are called out.*

David's men were the ones who occupied positions of power and authority with him after he took Saul's crown. Thus will it be when Christ takes Satan's crown. Those who are being called out during the present time are the ones who will occupy positions of power and authority with Him during that coming day.

Satan will be allowed to continue his reign *UNTIL* God's purpose for this present dispensation has been accomplished. *THEN*, he and those ruling with him will be put down, and an entirely new order of rulers will take the kingdom. Christ will enter into the position previously occupied by Satan, and Christians will enter into positions previously occupied by angels ruling under Satan.

Since Christ (replacing Satan) will wear the crown presently worn by Satan, it only naturally follows that Christians (replacing subordinate powers and authorities) will wear crowns presently worn by angels ruling under Satan. *ALL* of these are crowns which neither Christ nor Christians can come into possession of *UNTIL* Satan and his angels have been put down at the end of the Tribulation.

3) *Angelic Rule About to End*

The originally established angelic rule over the earth has continued uninterrupted since the beginning, preceding man's existence on the earth. However, with the creation of Adam, God announced that *a change was in the offing*. Man, an entirely new creation, made after the *image and likeness* of God, was brought into existence *to take the governmental reins of the earth* (Gen. 1:26-28).

But the first man (the first Adam), through sin, was disqualified, necessitating the appearance of the second Man (the last Adam) to effect redemption and the ultimate realization for man's creation. The price has been paid, but redemption includes *FAR more* than that which presently exists. Redemption includes *the complete man* (body, soul, and spirit), it includes *the earth* (presently under a curse), and *the GOAL of redemption* will be realized *ONLY* when man has been brought into the position for which he was created (ruling over a restored earth).

Scripture clearly attests to the fact that the "world ['inhabited world'] to come" *will NOT be placed* "in subjection" to angels (Heb. 2:5).

Man is the one to whom power and authority will be delegated; and the action of the twenty-four elders removing themselves from their thrones and casting their crowns before God's throne in Rev. 4:10 *can ONLY be with a view to the fact that the government of the earth, at this point, is about to change hands.*

These twenty-four elders *can ONLY be heavenly beings (angels)* who, up to the time of their action in Rev. 4:10, held positions within a sphere of governmental power and authority relative to the earth.

(Some Bible students, on the basis of the pronouns used in Rev. 5:9, 10 — "us" and "we" [KJV] — have understood the twenty-four elders to represent redeemed men, not angels. However, the majority of the better Greek manuscripts render the pronouns in v. 10 as "them" and "they" [ref. ASV, NASB, NIV, Wuest, Weymouth], giving rise to the thought that the pronoun "us" in v. 9 is probably a scribal insertion, being spurious [ref. Alford, Lenski].

But the matter is really not left to manuscript evidence alone. That the pronouns "them" and "they" are correct is evident from the context. Note that the song in vv. 9, 10 is apparently sung not only by the "twenty-four elders" but also by the "four beasts ['living creatures']" as well. Then, other angels join them in vv. 11ff, with all of the angels together voicing additional, related statements.

Aside from the preceding, it would make absolutely *NO* sense whatsoever to understand these twenty-four elders as referring to a segment of redeemed mankind. Man *COULDN'T* possibly be crowned at the time of events in Rev. 4, 5, else he would be crowned *BEFORE* Christ is crowned [note that Christ is to wear the crown which Satan presently wears, which Satan will still be wearing at this time]. Also,

man is to wear the crown he receives, *NOT* relinquish it before God's throne as seen being done by the twenty-four elders.

Also, the Greek word translated "elders" in Revelation chapter four is *presbuteroi*, the same word used for "elders" in the Church in the New Testament epistles. The word refers to *older ones* [relative to that being dealt with]. In the Church, the reference is to *older ones in the faith*; in Revelation chapter four, the reference is to *older ones in the governmental structure of the earth* [evident since they are crowned, seated on thrones, with the government of the earth being *the ONLY government which could possibly be in view*].

The preceding *ALONE* would prevent the twenty-four elders from being viewed as men, necessitating that they be viewed as *angels*. *Man, at this point in the book, HAS YET to even come into such a position; angels, on the other hand, HAVE HELD positions of this nature since time immemorial.*)

And at this point in the book, through the action of the twenty-four elders casting their crowns before God's throne, the way will be opened for God to transfer the government of the earth from the hands of angels to the hands of man.

(These crowns are cast before God's throne [cf. 4:1-4; 5:1-7] because *the Father ALONE* is the One Who places and / or removes rulers in His kingdom [Dan. 4:17-37; 5:18-21]. *He ALONE* is the One Who placed those represented by the twenty-four elders in the positions which they occupied; and *He ALONE* is the One Who will place individuals in particular positions in the kingdom of Christ [Matt. 20:20-23].

These crowns cast before God's throne, as previously seen, *can ONLY have to do with the government of the earth*. And, at this point in the book, they can be worn by *angels ALONE*, for the Son will not yet have taken the kingdom [cf. Dan. 7:13, 14; Rev. 11:15].

These crowns are relinquished to God [with a view to man, rather than angels, ruling in the kingdom] so that God can appoint those who had previously been shown qualified at events surrounding the judgment seat [chs. 1-3] to positions of power and authority; and those whom God appoints will wear these crowns in Christ's kingdom.)

The transfer of the government of the earth, from the hands of angels to the hands of man, in reality, is what the first nineteen chapters of the Book of Revelation are about; and, as well, this is what the

whole of Scripture preceding these nineteen chapters is also about.

In this respect, these twenty-four elders casting their crowns before God's throne forms *a KEY event which one MUST grasp if he would properly understand the Book of Revelation and Scripture as a whole.*

Christ and His bride, in that coming day, will rule the earth in the stead of Satan and his angels. And, in the process of ruling in this manner, they will wear *ALL the crowns worn by Satan and his angels prior to his fall.*

Thus, that which is depicted through the action of the twenty-four elders in Rev. 4:10, 11 is, contextually, self-explanatory.

This has to do with *the government of the earth*, it occurs at a time following events surrounding the judgment seat but preceding Christ breaking the seals of the seven-sealed scroll, and it occurs at a time when Satan's reign is about to be brought to a close.

After events in Revelation chapters one through three have come to pass, *for the FIRST time in man's history*, the person (the bride) who is to rule with the One to replace Satan (Christ) will have been made known and shown forth. *And events in the fourth chapter reflect this fact.*

ONLY one thing could possibly be in view at this point in the book, for the bride will NOT ONLY have been made known BUT will be ready for events surrounding the transfer of power to begin.

The twenty-four elders casting their crowns before God's throne *can ONLY* depict the angels who did not go along with Satan in his rebellion; and they *willingly* relinquish their crowns, with a view to those comprising the bride wearing these crowns during the Messianic Era.

But the crowns worn by Satan and those angels presently ruling with him are another matter. These crowns will have to be taken from Satan and his angels, *by force* when Christ returns to overthrow Gentile world power at the end of the Tribulation (a power exercised during Man's Day under Satan and his angels [Dan. 10:13-20]).

The identity of the twenty-four elders is shown NOT ONLY by their actions and the place in which this occurs in the book BUT also by their number.

Comparing Revelation chapters four and twelve (4:4, 10, 11; 12:3, 4), it appears evident that the government of the earth — originally established by God prior to Satan's fall — was representatively shown by *three sets of twelve, thirty-six crowned rulers.* "Three" is the number of *Divine perfection*, and "twelve" is the number of *governmental perfection.*

Those angels who did not follow Satan in his attempt to exalt his throne would be represented by the twenty-four elders — *two sets of twelve, showing two-thirds of the original contingent of angels ruling with Satan*. And the angels who did go along with Satan, presently ruling with him, would be represented by *a third set of twelve, showing the other one-third of the original contingent of angels ruling with Satan* (Rev. 12:3, 4).

In this respect, these three representative sets of twelve would show *Divine perfection in the earth's government*. And, also in this respect, this same perfection in the structure of the earth's government *has NOT existed since Satan's attempt to acquire a position of power and authority above that which had originally been delegated to him*.

BUT, this structured perfection WILL one day again exist in the earth's government. When Christ and His bride ascend the throne together, *crowns worn by those represented by ALL three sets of twelve will be brought together again*.

THEN, Divine perfection will once again exist in the government of the one province in God's universe where imperfection has existed for millenniums.

Two Types of Crowns

There are two words in the Greek text of the New Testament which are translated "crown" in English versions. The first and most widely used word is *stephanos* (or the verb form, *stephanoo*), referring to a "victor's crown" or a crown denoting certain types of "worth" or "valor." The other word is *diadema*, referring to "regal authority," "kingly power."

Stephanos (or the verb form, *stephanoo*) is the only word used for "crown" in the New Testament outside the Book of Revelation.

This, for example, is the word used referring to the "crown of thorns" placed upon Christ's head immediately preceding His crucifixion (Matt. 27:29; Mark 15:17; John 19:2, 5); this is also the word used throughout the Pauline epistles, referring to "crowns" awaiting faithful Christians (I Cor. 9:25; Phil. 4:1; I Thess. 2:19; II Tim. 2:5; 4:8).

James, Peter, and John also used *stephanos* in this same sense (James 1:12; I Peter 5:4; Rev. 2:10; 3:11); the writer of Hebrews used this word (the verb form, *stephanoo*) referring to positions which will ultimately be occupied by Christ and His co-heirs in "the world ['inhabited world'] to come" (2:7, 9); then John used the word six additional times in the Book of Revelation in several different senses (4:4, 10; 6:2; 9:7; 12:1; 14:14).

Diadema, the other word used for “crown” in the New Testament, appears only three times; and all three occurrences are in the latter part of the Book of Revelation (12:3; 13:1; 19:12).

The first two references (12:3; 13:1) have to do with power and authority possessed by incumbent earthly rulers immediately preceding and within the kingdom of Antichrist, and the latter reference (19:12) has to do with power and authority which Christ will possess at the time He returns and takes the kingdom.

The way in which these two words are used in the New Testament relative to the government of the earth *MUST* be borne in mind if one is to properly understand the Scriptural distinction between the use of *stephanos* and *diadema*.

Diadema (referring to the monarch’s crown) is used *ONLY* where one has actually *entered into* and is *presently exercising regal power*. *Stephanos* is *NEVER* used in this respect; it appears in *ALL other occurrences*, covering any instance where the word “crown” is used *APART FROM* the present possession of regal power.

The possession of such power at a future date (or a past date) *CAN be in view through the use of stephanos*. *THEN, diadema is used when one actually comes into possession of this power*.

In this respect, overcoming Christians have been promised a *stephanos* (victor’s crown), *NEVER a diadema* (monarch’s crown); *BUT, the promised stephanos will become a diadema at the time overcoming Christians assume positions on the throne with Christ*.

There can be *NO such thing* as either Christ or His co-heirs wearing a *stephanos* in that day. *They can ONLY wear the type crown referred to by the word diadema*.

To illustrate the matter, note how *stephanos* and *diadema* are used relative to the Antichrist and his kingdom. *Stephanos* is used of the type crown worn by the Antichrist when he is first introduced in the Book of Revelation (6:2); but later, *diadema* is used relative to his exercise of delegated power and authority (12:3; 13:1, 2).

The Antichrist is seen wearing a “crown,” as he goes forth “conquering, and to conquer” in Revelation chapter six. He is crowned and moves after the described fashion in view of ultimately attaining *regal power over the earth*; but, at this time, as shown by both the context and the word *stephanos*, he has *NOT* attained such power.

Then, in chapter twelve he is once again seen wearing a “crown” (all seven heads are crowned at this point in the book).

The Antichrist will be the seventh head [seventh ruler] in a succession of rulers), and in chapter thirteen those ruling with him (the ten horns) are also crowned.

As shown by both the context and the word *diadema*, the matter is entirely different at this point in the book. The Antichrist is seen to have attained *regal power over the earth*, and he will have subordinate rulers exercising power with him.

Thus, *diadema*, not *stephanos*, is used in these passages.

The use of *stephanos* relative to crowns in connection with Israel in Rev. 12:1 illustrates the same truth.

Israel today is NOT occupying the position for which the nation was called into existence — “a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation” (Ex. 19:6).

Israel though is to one day rule upon the earth at the head of the nations, and the nations are to be blessed through Israel; *BUT*, Israel will not occupy this position *UNTIL after the time of Rev. 12:1*.

Thus, *stephanos* is the *ONLY* word which could be used relative to crowns in connection with Israel at this point in the book. The use of *diadema* in connection with Israel in this respect awaits events of the coming age, not seen in the Book of Revelation until chapter twenty.

Then note the type crowns on Christ’s head — past and future — in Matt. 27:29; Rev. 14:14; 19:12.

Matthew 27:29 refers to that past time when Christ was arrayed as a mock King. The word used for “crown” in this verse is *stephanos*. *Diadema* could NOT be used in this instance, for this word would show Christ actually exercising regal power and authority, wearing “a crown of thorns.”

And this, of course, was something which *He did NOT do at this time*, particularly while wearing “a crown of thorns.” Rather, the opposite was shown by the “crown [*stephanos*] of thorns” — *in a place of shame and humiliation, relative to the government of the earth*.

Then, in Rev. 14:14, Christ is seen once again wearing a *stephanos* (though not “a crown of thorns” this time).

And, again, there is *NO* display of regal power, though that future time when he would wear a *diadema* is anticipated by both the time (near the end of the Tribulation) and His actions (anticipating His treading the winepress at the time of His return (cf. Isa. 63:1-6; Joel 3:9-16;

Zech. 14:1-9; Rev. 19:11-21). This is the last time in Scripture that the word *stephanos* is used relative to a crown resting upon Christ's head.

BUT, when that time arrives — anticipated by Christ seen with a *stephanos* on his head and a sharp sickle in His hand in Rev. 14:14 — Christ will come forth wearing “many crowns [‘many *diadems*’]” (Rev. 19:12). He can come forth in this manner at this time, for the Father will not only have delivered the kingdom into His hands but He will now have a consort queen and be ready to ascend the throne, wearing these “many *diadems*” (cf. Dan. 7:13, 14; Rev. 19:7-9).

And, because of this, when He comes forth, the announcement can be sounded for all to hear: “King of kings, and Lord of lords.”

He, at this future time, will have *entered into* His long-awaited *regal position*; and the first order of business following His dealings with Israel will be the putting down of the Beast, the kings of the earth, and Satan and his angels (Rev. 19:17-20:3).

They *CANNOT* be allowed to reign beyond the point Christ assumes regal power. Their crowns (*diadems*) *MUST*, at this time, be taken and given to others — those to whom they will then rightfully belong.

An understanding of the distinction between *stephanos* and *diadema* will also reveal certain things about the twenty-four elders which could not otherwise be known. They had each cast a *stephanos* before the throne, not a *diadema*. This showed that *they were NOT then occupying regal positions, though crowned and seated on thrones*.

At one time they would have occupied such positions (wearing *diadems*); but with the disarray in the governmental structure of the earth, resulting from Satan's rebellion, they ceased exercising regal power (for, not participating in his rebellion, *they NO longer retained active positions in his rule*). Their crowns could *THEN* be referred to *ONLY* through the use of the word *stephanos*; and these crowns would, of necessity, have to be retained *UNTIL* the time of Rev. 4:10.

God's system of government (an incumbent remaining in office *UNTIL* replaced by his successor) would necessitate the twenty-four elders retaining their crowns *UNTIL* their successors were on the scene and ready to ascend the throne.

And at this point in the book, for the first time in man's history, the one who is to rule with the second Man, the last Adam — Christ's bride — *will have been made known and shown forth*. This will have occurred

at events surrounding the judgment seat (chs. 1-3); *and these elders could, at THIS time, have cast their crowns before God's throne (ch. 4), for their successors were on the scene and ready to ascend the throne with Christ.*

Five Different Crowns

There are five different crowns mentioned in the New Testament which it is possible for Christians to win. Crowns worn by Christians during the coming day, it seems, will depict more than just the overcoming and reigning status of individuals. These crowns will apparently reveal certain things concerning the Christians' victory over the world, the flesh, and the Devil which qualified them to be recipients of crowns.

First, there is "the crown of life" (James 1:12; Rev. 2:10). This is a crown given for enduring the trials and testings of life, even to the point of dying, if necessary. The man "that endures ['patiently endures']" the present trials and testings of life will be awarded the crown of life after he has been "tried ['approved']." This approval will occur through a testing of one's works at the judgment seat, and the crown will be awarded at a point following this testing.

Second, there is "the crown of glory" (I Peter 5:2-4). This is a crown which will be given to those individuals faithfully exercising their calling as undershepherds of the flock. God has called certain individuals (*e.g.*, pastor-teachers) during the present day to tend, lead, and nourish the flock, "which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28); and those who have been placed in this position can earn the crown of glory through faithfulness to their calling.

Third, there is "the crown of rejoicing ['boasting']" (I Thess. 2:19, 20). This is a crown which appears to be peculiarly related to soul-winning in its true sense, *i.e.*, winning the saved to a life of faithfulness in view of the coming kingdom, rewards, etc. (*cf.* Phil. 3:20-4:1; I Thess. 2:11ff). "The crown of rejoicing ['boasting']" is closely associated with "the crown of glory" in the sense that the primary thought behind both is soul-winning.

The primary duty of a pastor-teacher, for example, lies in this realm; and he can win "the crown of glory" through faithfulness therein. This crown though is not just for pastor-teachers. Rather, it is

for *any Christian who ministers in this realm* (cf. James 5:19, 20), making the task of the pastor-teacher that much easier.

Fourth, There is “the crown of righteousness” (II Tim. 4:7, 8). This is a crown which will be given to those who “love his appearing.” The text in II Timothy has to do with Christians being victorious in the present *race of the faith* (cf. I Tim. 6:12; Jude 3), looking ahead to the promised “glorious appearing [‘appearing of the glory’] of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13).

Fifth, there is “the incorruptible crown” (I Cor. 9:24-27). This is a crown which will be given to those who run the present race of the faith in the correct fashion. It is described in the text as *a race in which one strives for the mastery over the fleshly desires and appetites of the body*.

The word in the Greek text translated “striveth” (KJV) is *agonizomai*, from which the English word “agonize” is derived. The thought is that every muscle of one’s being is to be strained, if necessary, to obtain the mastery over all fleshly desires and appetites. A Christian so running the race in which he is presently engaged has been promised this crown.

Concluding Thoughts:

Actions depicting the transference of regal power and authority first come into view in the Book of Revelation following God’s righteous dealings with the Church and preceding God’s righteous dealings with Israel and the nations.

The shift *AWAY FROM* God’s dealings with the Church *TO* His dealings with Israel and the nations is a shift *AWAY FROM* the sphere where power and authority *will lie* (with Christ and His co-heirs) *TO* that sphere where power and authority *presently lie* (with the Gentile nations ruling under Satan during the Times of the Gentiles, during Man’s Day).

Thus, once the overcomers have been revealed through issues of the judgment seat, there is then an act by the twenty-four elders showing *a transference of power which is about to occur*. This is then followed by God focusing His attention upon the earth-dwellers, *with the SAME end in view*.

Satan and his angels will be put down, the Times of the Gentiles will end, Man’s Day will end, and *those to whom the kingdom rightfully belongs will receive diadems of varying types and be elevated into their proper positions, seated on the throne with Christ*.

13

Kings of the Kingdom

Ruling Over the Earth

“And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords” (Rev. 19:16).

All Scripture, beginning with the writings of Moses, moves toward one great climactic event — that future day when the *Stone* “cut out without hands” *smites* “the image” in its final form, *becomes* “a great mountain,” and *fills* “the whole earth” (Dan. 2:34, 35, 44, 45; cf. Isa. 2:2-4).

The reference is to the coming kingdom of Christ, *the kingdom of our Lord*, succeeding *the kingdom of this world* — the present kingdom under Satan (Rev. 11:15). And the entire creation is presently *groaning* and *travailing in pain* together, awaiting that future day (Rom. 8:17-23).

Rev. 19:11-20:6 — revealing the return of Christ, the overthrow of the kings and rulers of the earth, the binding of Satan, and Christ’s millennial reign — sets forth, in very brief, concise form, *concluding events toward which the whole of Scripture moves*.

Details surrounding these events *are NOT given in Rev. 19:11ff; such is NOT ONLY unnecessary BUT it would be out of place*.

God has outlined *ALL the details* in connection with His Son’s return and subsequent events as set forth in Rev. 19:11-20:6 in *preceding sections of Scripture*, beginning with *the writings of Moses* and continuing through *the historical books, the Psalms, and the Prophets*

And when one progressively reads through the Scriptures, eventually arriving at Rev. 19:11ff, *ALL the details have already been made known*.

The hundreds and hundreds of pages leading up to Rev. 19:11ff anticipate that which is stated in these verses; and at this point in Scripture there is NO need for anything beyond brief, concise statements concerning the realization of ALL the preceding great prophecies of Scripture.

In this respect, the ever-present controversy in Christian circles concerning the literal nature of or the time of the fulfillment of portions of Rev. 19:11-20:6 is of *NO moment, for ALL such controversy invariably stems from attempts to understand this section of Scripture apart from preceding Scripture. And this is simply NOT possible, for this is NOT the way God has structured His Word.*

Should an individual, for example, want to raise questions concerning the Messianic Era seen in Rev. 20:2-7, questioning *the literality of the thousand years* mentioned six times in these six verses (as so many do), that person *MUST* go back to the writings of “Moses and all the prophets” and raise questions concerning that which is stated about the one thousand years *in these sections of Scripture FIRST.*

But not a single one of these individuals ever does this, for they *CAN'T* do this and continue to raise the negative type questions which are being asked concerning the one thousand years in Rev. 20:2-7.

Beginning at Moses, in this realm of study, would result in a correction of all false ideology on the subject and dispel any doubts concerning either the literal nature of or the time of the fulfillment of the one thousand years in Revelation chapter twenty.

The pattern which God uses to restore a ruined creation *has FOREVER been set forth in the opening verses of Genesis* (Gen. 1:2b-2:3).

God worked *six days and rested the seventh* in the original restoration (made necessary because of the ruin resulting from Satan's fall), and God will work *six more days and rest the seventh* in a restoration during Man's Day (made necessary because of the ruin resulting from man's fall).

Each day in the latter restoration is one thousand years in length (II Peter 3:8; cf. Ex. 31:12-17), providing six thousand years of work, followed by one thousand years of rest.

“But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing [*lit.*, ‘stop being ignorant of this one thing’], that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”

(The preceding verse from II Peter 3:8 appears toward the end of a book which was written in complete keeping with the septenary structure established at the beginning of Scripture. This book has a built-in septenary structure, climaxed by this explanatory verse in chapter three [II Peter 1:15-18; 3:3-8; cf. Matt. 16:28-17:5].)

The day of rest in Gen. 2:2, 3 (the seventh day) was just as literal and of the same duration as each one of the preceding six days in chapter one.

And the septenary structure of Scripture, beginning in this opening section of Scripture, *DEMANDS* a literal one-thousand-year period of rest (the seventh day [the seventh millennium]) following six one-thousand-year periods of work (six days [six millennia]).

And so it is with reference to all other consummative events in Rev. 19:11-20:6.

The critics, commenting on John's writings, *MUST* either base their arguments upon the writings of "Moses and all the prophets" *OR they MUST refrain from comment.*

Nathaniel West, in his classic book, *The Thousand Years in Both Testaments*, possibly states this parallel between the Old and New Testament Scriptures best — *a parallel which MUST be recognized:*

"We speak of the 'Last Things.' The Greek term for this is 'Eschata'... If we study the Eschatology of the Old Testament, we will find *the Eschata* there identical with *the Eschata* of the New Testament, and the Eschatology of both Testaments the same... Such is the organic and genetic character of revelation and of prophecy that if 'the thousand years' are not in Moses, the Psalms, and the Prophets, they have no right to be in John.

To understand the prophets it is necessary, however, to understand the Apocalypse, and to understand the Apocalypse it is necessary to understand the prophets. The one is light to the other, and reciprocally."

(For a fuller discussion of the septenary structure of Scripture, refer to the author's book, *The Study of Scripture*, Chapters II-IV.)

To Receive a Kingdom

According to the parable of the pounds in Luke chapter nineteen, Christ returned to heaven for one declared purpose: "to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return" (v. 12).

The time which He will spend in heaven (2,000 years [two days]), His present position in heaven (seated at His Father's right hand), and His present ministry in heaven (High Priest), ALL anticipate the Son of Man coming into possession of the kingdom, and then returning.

This is the GOAL toward which the entire program of God has been moving since man's creation almost 6,000 years ago, this is the GOAL toward

which everything MUST continue moving, and this is the GOAL which MUST ultimately be reached.

1) Time Between Departure and Reception

When Christ offered to Israel the kingdom of the heavens at His first advent, *a nation existed which could move in and take the kingdom.*

And the same had been true in prior years when the offer of the earthly segment of the kingdom was opened to Israel under Moses.

God, through "Jacob," had previously brought into existence a separate, distinct creation (Isa. 43:1); and a nation, set apart from all the other nations, had emanated from this creation.

This nation had been redeemed in Egypt, with a view to the people of God being removed from Egypt and receiving an inheritance as a "kingdom of priests" in the land of Canaan.

However, because of continued disobedience over centuries of time, Israel failed to realize the fulness of this inheritance. And the Jewish peoples' disobedience eventually resulted in their being uprooted from their land and scattered among the Gentile nations.

Then, fifteen hundred years later when the heavenly segment of the kingdom was opened to the nation, the offer was spurned.

And after Christ had turned from Israel with the offer of the kingdom of the heavens to "a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (cf. Matt. 13:1; 21:43; I Peter 2:9, 10), an interval of time had to exist before the kingdom could be established.

The nation to which Christ referred in Matt. 21:43 was not in existence at this time; and to bring about the existence of this nation, it was necessary for God to create an entirely new *entity* in the human race — one separate and distinct from either Jew or Gentile.

God brought *the one new man* "in Christ" into existence to be the recipient of the offer which Israel had rejected (Eph. 2:12-15; 3:1-6).

And, as it was with *the old creation in Jacob*, so it is with *the new creation* "in Christ."

A period of time had to elapse between the time when *the one new man* was brought into existence and the time when this *new man* would realize the reason for his existence. This was necessary in order to allow time for this separate, distinct entity to be built up and made ready for the task at hand.

This *new man* is comprised solely of Christians, taken from among both the Jews and the Gentiles. A Jew or a Gentile who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ becomes a part of this *new man*, ceasing to be a Jew or a Gentile.

Through the immersion in the Spirit, he becomes a *new creation* “in Christ” (II Cor. 5:17). And every *new creation* “in Christ” — whether removed from the Jews or from the Gentiles — becomes part of *the same body*, which God looks upon as *one new man* (Eph. 2:13-15; 3:1-6; cf. Gal. 6:15).

(For a fuller discussion of the “one new man” in the preceding respect, refer to the author’s books, *The Study of Scripture*, Chapter VI, and *Search for the Bride*, Chapters V, VI.)

Then, *the one new man* “in Christ” has been brought into existence for particular, revealed purposes; and these purposes center around the future realization of an inheritance in heavenly places.

Just as the Israelites under Moses were redeemed through the blood of the paschal lambs while in Egypt, Christians have been redeemed through the blood of the Passover Lamb while in the world; and just as the Israelites were redeemed to realize an inheritance in a land removed from Egypt (upon the earth), Christians have been redeemed to realize an inheritance in a land removed from the earth (in the heavens).

The present dispensation is the time during which God is building His Church, *the one new man*.

The coming kingdom, a worldwide kingdom, will require vast numbers of rulers to exercise power and authority in all the various offices; and *God is taking the time in which we presently live (two days, two thousand years — a separate dispensation) to assemble His rulers*.

Man is being saved today with a view to this rule, and he will appear before the judgment seat of Christ with this same end in view.

ONLY THEN will the kingdom be established.

2) Present Position of the Son

Christ today is seated at the right hand of His Father on His Father’s throne, but this is a temporary position. He is to one day sit on His Own throne.

And in a corresponding fashion, just as Christ presently sits with His Father on His Father's throne, Christians are destined to sit with Christ when He occupies His Own throne (Rev. 3:21).

Christ, by invitation, is seated on the throne with His Father; and, seated with His Father, He is awaiting the reception of a "kingdom" and the reduction of His enemies to the position of His "footstool."

During the time when He is seated with His Father, the ones in a position to inherit with the Son in the coming kingdom are being extended an invitation to sit with the Son on His throne; and things are being brought into a state of readiness for the great climactic events which will terminate this dispensation.

Within God's sovereign control of affairs and purpose for the present dispensation, there is *complete, Divine order*. Men and nations, in one sense of the word, are being moved as one would move pawns on a chessboard; and everything is moving on schedule.

Christ will vacate His present position with the Father at the time of Rev. 19:11ff, anticipating the establishment of His Own throne.

The kingdom will have been delivered into His hands by the Father, and He will come forth as the "King of kings, and Lord of lords" to strike the final blow against "the kingdom of this world," the "great image" in Daniel chapter two.

There will then come into existence "a great mountain," *the kingdom of Christ*, which will cover "the whole earth."

3) Present High Priestly Ministry of the Son

Christ is presently exercising the office of High Priest on behalf of Christians. He is ministering in the heavenly sanctuary, on the basis of His Own blood, for Christians who sin.

Christians presently reside in a body of death; they still possess the old sin nature. And Christians, falling into sin, *MUST* have a High Priest to effect cleansing from their sins.

The high priestly ministry of Christ is for *the heirs of the kingdom*. It has *NOTHING* at all to do with the issue of our presently possessed eternal salvation.

In the camp of Israel, the ministry of the Levitical priests was for those who had *ALREADY* appropriated the blood of the paschal lambs. It was for the cleansing of a people destined to become "a kingdom

of priests" (Ex. 19:6; *cf.* Heb. 9:1-7). And in Christendom, the work of Christ as High Priest, typified by the work of the high priest in the camp of Israel, is for *the SAME purpose*. It is for the cleansing of a people destined to be "kings and priests" (Rev. 5:10; *cf.* Heb. 9:11, 12, 24).

God would have His people *clean* for both present and future purposes. According to the Epistle of I John, *God desires to have a present reciprocal fellowship with a cleansed people. Cleansing makes fellowship possible*, and the entire matter is with a view to the return of Christ and attendant events (1:3-2:2; *cf.* 3:6-9; 4:16, 17).

Christians, in I John 2:28, have been instructed:

"And now, little children, abide in him [*i.e.*, live in a state of continuous, close *fellowship* 'with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ']; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming."

In this respect, Christ's high priestly ministry is *a vital present provision* for the future heirs of the kingdom.

Christ gave Himself for the Church,

"That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:26, 27).

This aspect of Christ's present ministry is possibly best illustrated by the incident in John chapter thirteen where Christ girded Himself, took a basin of water, and began to wash the disciples' feet (13:4ff).

Peter, not understanding at all the significance of that which was happening, *emphatically refused to allow Christ to wash his feet*.

Upon this refusal (*a double negative in the Gk. text*), Jesus responded:

"If I wash thee not, thou hast no part *with me*" (v. 8).

Then Peter, comprehending at least the gravity of the latter part of Christ's statement, said:

"Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head" (v. 9).

In other words, if a washing is what it would take in order to have a part *WITH* Christ, Peter didn't want the washing limited to just his feet. Rather, he wanted his entire body washed.

However, Jesus replied:

"He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit" (v. 10).

In the Greek text of John 13:8-10, there are two different words used for "wash." The word used in verse eight (in both occurrences) and in the latter part of verse ten is *nipto*, referring to "washing a part of the body"; and the word used in the first part of verse ten is *louo*, referring to "washing the complete body."

Further, the word *louo* in verse ten appears in a perfect tense, showing a past, completed action with the results of this action existing during present time in a finished state. Such an act reveals a washing which occurred in the past, with the person who was washed continuing in the present as a cleansed person on the basis of that which had occurred in the past.

Thus, any thought of the cleansed person undergoing another washing of this nature would be *completely out of place*, for he presently exists in a continuing state as *cleansed*.

Peter's entire body had already been washed; but now, in order to have a part *WITH* Christ, he *MUST* avail himself of the partial washing to which Christ referred.

The entire matter is highly symbolic of a "complete washing" which Christians received in *the past* and "partial washings" which Christians receive during *the present*. The complete washing results in eternal salvation, but the partial washings are necessary if one is to have a part "*with Christ*" in His kingdom.

The complete washing — viewed from the perfect tense usage of *louo* in John 13:10 — is a one-time, past occurrence, *which can NEVER be repeated*. But the partial washings, set forth by the word *nipto*, are something else altogether. Subsequent partial washings have to do with a present, continuing cleansing made possible because of the one-time, past cleansing.

On the basis of the past, finished work of Christ, redeemed man has been saved *by grace through faith*.

In Eph. 2:8, the words “are ye saved [*lit.*, ‘you have been saved’]” are the translation of a perfect tense in the Greek text, the same as the word *louo* in John 13:10. *Redeemed man possesses a salvation, based on a past, completed act (Christ’s work at Calvary), which presently exists in a finished state.*

EVERYTHING has already been done on his behalf. He had NOTHING whatsoever to do with the matter, simply because there was NOTHING which he could do.

He was “dead in trespasses and sins,” *completely incapable of doing anything in the spiritual realm* (Eph. 2:1ff).

He has been washed completely (*louo*) by Another, and presently stands justified before God. This is an act performed *ONCE*. It *can NEVER* be altered or nullified.

It is just as secure as the finished work of Christ on Calvary, for it is based entirely upon this work; and Christ, in John 19:30, said of His work, “It is finished [*lit.*, ‘It has been finished’ (another perfect tense usage in the Greek text)].”

Teachings in the realm of complete and partial washings, as set forth in John 13:8-10, are drawn from the experiences of the Levitical priests in the camp of Israel.

Upon their entrance into the priesthood, a washing of the entire body occurred (Ex. 29:4; *cf.* Ex. 40:12-15); then, after they had entered the priesthood, washings of parts of the body had to occur (Ex. 30:21; *cf.* Ex. 40:30-32).

The Septuagint (Greek version of the Old Testament) uses the words *louo* and *nipto* respectively in these passages, in perfect accord with John 13:8-10 and corresponding teachings throughout Scripture relative to complete and partial washings of the people of God.

The hands and feet of the Levitical priests became soiled in their ministry between the brazen altar and the Holy Place of the tabernacle, and a necessary cleansing occurred at the brazen laver in the courtyard.

This laver was located part way between the brazen altar and the Holy Place and had upper and lower basins filled with water to wash the hands and feet of the priests. Levitical priests, carrying on their ministries, had to wash these parts of their bodies before ministering at the brazen altar and before their entrance into the Holy Place.

These are the partial washings in the type and the partial washings in view in John 13:8-10.

The washing of parts of the bodies of the Old Testament Levitical priests is highly typical of the relationship which Christ, in His high priestly ministry, has to New Testament priests (Christians).

This is the teaching brought out in I John 1:6-2:2; and these verses *MUST* be understood in the light of the Old Testament type, also taking into account events occurring on the Day of Atonement when the high priest placed blood on the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies (cf. Heb. 9:1ff).

A Christian *walking "in the light"* (I John 1:7) is one *who has availed himself of the antitype of cleansing at the laver*. Cleansing occurs as we confess our sins, on the basis of Christ's blood on the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies of the heavenly tabernacle (v. 9; cf. 2:1, 2). The cleansed person is able to "walk in the light" (in the Holy Place) and have "fellowship...with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."

The Christian *walking "in darkness"* (v. 6) though is one *who has NOT availed himself of the antitype of cleansing at the laver*. He remains in the darkened courtyard outside the Holy Place. He remains on the wrong side of the laver, leaving him estranged from the experience of "fellowship."

Christians have a "great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God" (Heb. 4:14); and if Christians would have a part *WITH* Christ in that coming day, they *MUST* avail themselves of His present high priestly ministry. They *MUST* allow Christ to wash their feet; they *MUST* avail themselves of the laver; they *MUST* keep themselves clean through confession of sin.

And to Return

Christ's departure to receive a kingdom would hold little meaning apart from His return. The kingdom has to do with a rule of God's firstborn Sons, realizing the rights of primogeniture; it has to do with a rule on and over this earth; and it has to do with the personal presence of Christ and His co-heirs.

Accordingly, there is *NO such thing* as either a rule during the present day or a future rule in some far off heaven fulfilling any of the Biblical prophecies concerning the kingdom of Christ, which is to replace the kingdom of this world.

1) Christ's Termination of His present ministry

Christ's present ministry is being performed strictly on behalf of

sinning Christians.

And once Christians have been removed from the earth to appear before the judgment seat, Christ will *THEN* perform another work.

He will, *at THAT time, NO longer be the Christians' High Priest. Rather, He will be their Judge.*

The Epistle of I John begins with the high priestly ministry of Christ during the present time, but the Book of Revelation moves beyond this point and begins with judgment following Christ's present high priestly ministry.

And Christ's continuing ministry in the latter respect (as Judge) will have its basis in the former (His present ministry as High Priest).

There can be NO future judgment for Christians relative to anything which surrounds their eternal salvation, for God has already judged sin in the person of His Son at Calvary; and God is satisfied with His Son's finished work.

To ever bring anything related to man's eternal salvation into judgment (beyond Calvary) would be to judge once again that which has already been judged. Thus, the judgment seat of Christ can be operable in *one realm ALONE* — that which occurred in the life of the individual following his passing "from death unto life."

And whether or not Christians avail themselves of Christ's ministry in the sanctuary during the present dispensation — a ministry solely on behalf of sinning Christians — will have a direct bearing on issues and determinations emanating from the judgment seat.

Christ is presently providing a cleansing from the defilement of this world for those destined to be "kings and priests" during the coming age. A present washing (described by the word *nipto*) is being provided for those who have already been washed (described by the word *louo*).

And since the latter washing *is NOT* in view at all in the work of Christ as High Priest, *ONLY* the former can have any bearing on decisions and determinations after Christ assumes His role as Judge.

A washing of the entire body (effecting his eternal salvation) places one in a position where he *CAN* enter into the experiences set forth in the Epistle of I John; and it is the manner in which he enters into these experiences *ALONE* that find their association with Christ appearing as Judge in the midst of the seven Churches in Revelation chapter one.

The words, "For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged" (I Cor. 11:31), set forth truths concerning Christ as both High

Priest and Judge. The immediate context of this passage in I Corinthians refers to Christians either judging or not judging themselves relative to partaking of the Lord's supper in an unworthy manner (vv. 17-29).

Those judging themselves in Corinth had been forgiven of their actions; they had been cleansed by their High Priest.

Those, however, refusing to judge themselves remained defiled; and only judgment by Another could then occur. Many of the defiled were "weak and sickly," and many had "died" (v. 30). Judgment by Another had resulted in *loss*, and the ultimate result was a *loss of life*.

In the larger scope of the matter, this is *EXACTLY* what is in view relative to Christians either judging themselves during the present dispensation or being judged by Another at the conclusion of the dispensation.

Christians who judge themselves now will be cleansed by their High Priest. Those, however, who refuse to judge themselves now will remain defiled; and only judgment by Another awaits. Judgment by Another will result in *loss* (I Cor. 3:15), and the ultimate result will be *the loss of one's soul/life* (Matt. 16:25-27; James 5:19, 20).

2) Christ's Entrance Upon His Future Ministry

Christ's return as "King of kings, and Lord of lords" portends many *kings* and many *lords*. Christ will rule in the supreme position *over ALL* from both His Own throne in the heavenly Jerusalem and David's throne in the earthly Jerusalem.

Under Christ there will be a complete structural breakdown of powers and authorities in both spheres of the kingdom — *in the heavens* and *upon the earth*. Christ will be "King," and there will be other "kings"; Christ will be "Lord," and there will be other "lords."

Those in the heavens will evidently rule through counterparts upon the earth. This is the way God has seen fit to establish the heavenly and earthly spheres of the present kingdom under Satan, and there is *NO reason* to believe that the coming kingdom under Christ will be established after any other fashion.

God's rule in the present kingdom *begins* at His throne in the "uttermost parts of the north" (Isa. 14:13, ASV). It then *progresses* to the earth *through* the existing kingdom of the heavens under Satan.

"The heavens do rule"; and God, in His sovereignty (even with

Satan in his present fallen and rebellious state), “ruleth in the kingdom of men” after this fashion (Dan. 4:25, 26).

In Daniel chapter ten, God provides a glimpse into the way rulers have been positioned in the present heavenly and earthly spheres of the kingdom.

Daniel had been “mourning” for three full weeks when a messenger from heaven appeared. This messenger had been dispatched at the very outset of Daniel’s “mourning,” but he had been detained for twenty-one days in the heavenly sphere of the kingdom by “the prince of the kingdom of Persia.” Michael came to assist, and the messenger remained in the heavens with “the kings of Persia” until he was free to resume his journey on to the earth (vv. 2, 12, 13).

In the heavens, there was a “prince of the kingdom of Persia,” with lesser rulers under him — “the kings of Persia.” And here upon the earth, there was also a king of Persia, with lesser rulers under him.

Rulers in the heavens possessed counterparts upon the earth, and the complete rule of the heavens over the earth began at God’s throne and progressed from there through the heavenly sphere of the earth’s kingdom to the earthly sphere of the earth’s kingdom (even though progressing through rebel princes in the heavens, and continuing through fallen man on the earth).

God, in His sovereign control of all things, ruled in this manner in the past; and He continues to rule in this same manner today.

The “prince of Greece” and “Michael your prince [the prince of Israel]” are also mentioned in this same passage in Daniel (vv. 20, 21).

And this reveals a sharp difference in the existing heavenly governmental rulers placed over the Gentile nations on the one hand and Israel on the other.

The heavenly governmental rulers placed over the Gentile nations are revealed to be Satan and his angels. But the heavenly governmental ruler (or rulers) placed over Israel, a people NOT to be “reckoned among the nations [Gentile nations]” (Num. 23:9; Deut. 14:2), has been established *APART FROM the rule of Satan and his angels*.

“Michael” is *Israel’s prince (with apparently lesser princes under him, as seen among the Gentile nations’ heavenly governmental structure); and Michael (along with any lesser princes) does NOT rule in the present kingdom of the heavens under Satan*.

Thus, any existing heavenly government associated with Israel's earthly government *MUST emanate from that part of the heavens where Michael dwells, NOT from that part of the heavens where Satan dwells.*

(Note that the preceding structure of Israel's government was necessary for the existence of the Old Testament theocracy. God ruled in the midst of His people on earth, and *God could NOT have ruled in the midst of a nation which was, as well, under Satan's governmental control and sway.*)

God rules in "the kingdom of men" in this manner. And, though Satan has been allowed to continue occupying the throne for a time, and fallen man has been allowed to rule on earth (under Satan) for a time, *ALL matters pertaining to the earth's government STILL remain under God's complete sovereign control.*

In the coming kingdom of Christ, a marked distinction between Israel and the Gentile nations will continue to exist, both upon the earth and in the heavens.

Upon the earth, Israel will be placed at the head of the nations as a "kingdom of priests." Israel will bear rule over the nations, and the nations will be blessed through Israel (Gen. 12:1-3; 22:17, 18; Ex. 19:6; Deut. 15:6; 28:1).

In the heavens, it is apparent that there will be a marked distinction between rulers associated with *Israel* and rulers associated with *the Gentile nations*. Individuals during the present dispensation, with the exception of the twelve apostles, have been promised positions of power and authority *ONLY over the Gentiles, NEVER over Israel.*

According to Christ's words recorded in Matt. 19:27, 28, addressing Peter's question, the twelve disciples (Judas being replaced) are to sit upon twelve thrones judging *the twelve tribes of Israel*:

"Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?

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."

But *ALL other Christians*, according to the overcomer's promise

to the Church in Sardis, in Rev. 2:26, 27, possess a regal promise associated *ONLY with the Gentile nations*:

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

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

Note also in Rev. 15:2-4 that Tribulation martyrs will evidently bear rule *ONLY* over the Gentile nations as well, referred to by their position in relation to “the sea of glass,” with the victor’s song on the eastern banks of the Red Sea from Exodus chapter fifteen in view (with “the sea” in both instances pointing to *the Gentiles* [cf. Rev. 7:9-17; 20:4-6]).

Who then, other than the twelve, will comprise the rulers placed over Israel in the heavenly sphere of the kingdom? Scripture doesn’t say, but these positions will, in all likelihood, be occupied by Old Testament saints who qualified to rule from the heavens.

Numerous Old Testament saints sought “a better country, that is, an heavenly” (Heb. 11:16; cf. Matt. 8:11, 12; Luke 13:28, 29); and the fact that Israel spurned this offer at Christ’s first coming (resulting in the kingdom of the heavens being taken from Israel) *can have NO bearing* on the previous actions of many Israelites who, during Old Testament days, qualified to occupy positions therein.

These Old Testament saints *will NOT* be denied their promised inheritance, and will, in all probability, occupy positions in the heavens over Israel rather than over the Gentile nations.

In this respect, there will be two segments in the heavenly sphere of the kingdom under Christ, corresponding to the two segments in the earthly sphere of the kingdom under Christ, *i.e.*, one in relation to the nation of Israel and the other in relation to the Gentile nations.

A rule by man during the coming age will emanate from both Jerusalem above and Jerusalem below. Christ will have a joint-reign, seated on His Own throne in the heavenly Jerusalem and seated on David’s throne in the earthly Jerusalem.

Co-heirs with Christ though *will have NOTHING to do with David’s throne or with Christ’s rule upon the earth. They have been promised positions on Christ’s throne ALONE, and they will occupy these positions*

in the heavenly Jerusalem, exercising power and authority from this throne.

Then there is the matter of David himself being raised up to sit on his own throne in the midst of his people, Israel, along with the greater Son of David, the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Ezek. 34:23; 37:24; Luke 1:31-33; Acts 2:29, 30).

David, as Christ, may very well have a dual reign, both from the heavens and upon the earth (cf. Matt. 8:11, 12; Luke 13:28, 29).

Then note that those comprising the man-child in Revelation chapter twelve — the 144,000 of Revelation chapters seven and fourteen — are specifically said to exercise regal power over *the Gentile nations* rather than over Israel:

“And she [the woman, Israel] brought forth a man-child, who was to rule [*lit.*, ‘a son, a male, who is about to rule’] all nations with a rod of iron...” (v. 5a).

(For additional information on the man-child / the 144,000 in Rev. 7, 12, 14, refer to the author’s book, *The Time of the End*, Chapters XXI and XXVI, “A Woman, a Dragon, a Man-Child” and “The One Hundred Forty-Four Thousand.”)

There will be numerous positions of power and authority in the kingdom under Christ, both in the heavens and upon the earth. And the whole of the kingdom will be perfect in its God-designed order and structure.

Concluding Thoughts:

The day is near at hand when “he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.”

Christians, as they exercise “patience [‘patient endurance’ in the trials and testings of life during the present time],” performing “the will of God,” are to retain their “confidence” in “the promise” of a “great recompense of reward” (Heb. 10:35-37). Rewards for *faithful* Christians will issue from findings and determinations at the judgment seat, and these rewards will be realized in their fullness during that coming day.

Many sons will be brought “unto glory” (Heb. 2:10), and these *sons* will reign as “kings” with the “King of kings.” They will occupy the throne with Christ and, with Him, realize the rights of the firstborn, the rights of primogeniture.

14

A Rod of Iron

Manner of Christ and His Co-Heir's Rule

"Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?

The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying,

Let us break their bands asunder, and cast their cords from us.

He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.

Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.

Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.

Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.

Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel" (Ps. 2:1-9).

The scene in the second Psalm depicts the final thrust and end of Gentile world power, followed by Christ's rule over the earth.

Events in Ps. 2:1ff parallel events in Rev. 19:11ff.

There is, however, a near and a far fulfillment of Ps. 2:1-3. The near fulfillment occurred at Christ's first coming, in connection with *His sufferings and humiliation* (Acts 4:23-28); and the far fulfillment will occur at Christ's second coming, in connection with *His glory and exaltation* (Rev. 2:26, 27; 19:15).

The final thrust of Gentile world power under Satan will be against the “King of kings, and Lord of lords” Himself.

And at THAT TIME, Gentile world power will be reduced to naught, the sceptre will change hands, and God’s Son will THEN reign supreme and rule the earth in righteousness with a rod of iron.

Times...Fulness of the Gentiles

The day in which we presently live is known in Scripture as “the times of the Gentiles.” This expression simply refers to that period during which Gentile nations hold the sceptre.

This period *BEGAN* with the conquest of Jerusalem under Nebuchadnezzar about twenty-six hundred years ago (605 B.C.), and it will *END* following a future conquest of Jerusalem under the Antichrist. And Jerusalem, in that future day, is to be “trodden down of the Gentiles, *UNTIL* the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled” (Luke 21:24).

This action by the Gentile nations has to do with a final treading under foot during the rule of Antichrist; and according to Matt. 24:15-26 (which parallels Luke 21:20-24) and Rev. 11:2, this will occur during the last three and one-half years of the Tribulation.

Christ will *THEN* return and bring an end to Gentile world supremacy.

“The fulness of the Gentiles” (Rom. 11:25), on the other hand, is an expression referring to a work of God among *the Gentiles* during a part of the period known as “the times of the Gentiles.” This activity involves God turning His attention to the Gentiles “to take out of them a people for his name” (Acts 15:14).

Contextually in Romans chapter eleven, the time during which God brings this to pass is following Israel’s unbelief and rejection at Christ’s first coming — over six hundred years after the beginning of “the times of the Gentiles.”

And by comparing the same context with related Scripture, it is clear that “the fulness of the Gentiles” covers the complete period extending from the time of Israel’s unbelief and rejection at Christ’s first coming to the time of Israel’s belief and acceptance at His second coming, which would cover time throughout both *the present dispensation* and *the future Tribulation*.

God brings "the fulness of the Gentiles" to pass during the present dispensation through placing believing Gentiles together in the same body with believing Jews, forming *the one new man* "in Christ" (vv. 5, 11, 20; cf. Eph. 2:12-15; 3:1-6).

During the present dispensation, the Spirit of God is in the world searching for a bride for God's Son who will reign as consort queen with Him during the Messianic Era. And the bride is being taken from *the one new man* "in Christ," made up mainly of individuals removed from the Gentiles rather than from the Jews (though individuals removed from the Jews are included).

Then, following *the one new man's* removal from the earth at the end of the dispensation (the resurrection and rapture of Christians), numerous Gentiles will be saved during the Tribulation. And, though they will not form part of the bride of Christ, many from this group will hold regal positions in the kingdom as well (cf. Matt. 25:31-46; Rev. 2:26, 27; 6:9-11; 7:9-17; 20:4-6).

The vast multitude of Gentiles saved during the Tribulation — mainly through the ministry of 144,000 Jewish evangelists during the last three and one-half years — will complete "the fulness of the Gentiles"; and the armies under Antichrist will constitute the final thrust of Gentile supremacy during "the times of the Gentiles."

The period during which God removes from the Gentiles "a people for his name" (effecting "the fulness of the Gentiles"), and the period known as "the times of the Gentiles" (during which Gentiles, because of Israel's disobedience, hold the sceptre), will both end at the same time — with Christ's return.

Christ's return will immediately follow "the fulness of the Gentiles" being realized (Rom. 11:26; Acts 15:16); and His return, as well, through the destruction of Gentile world power, will bring an end to "the times of the Gentiles."

God's removal of "a people for his name," from among the Gentiles, is for purposes involving *the government of the earth*, to be realized following "the times of the Gentiles."

That is, during the concluding two millenniums of Gentile supremacy under Satan, God has been removing from the Gentiles "a people for his name" to exercise supremacy over the nations during the coming age.

The reason for man's very existence upon the earth involves *dominion over the earth*. Adam was brought into existence for this purpose (Gen. 1:26-28), Israel was brought into existence for this purpose (Ex. 4:22, 23), and *the Church* was brought into existence for this same purpose (Heb. 2:10).

Because of Israel's disobedience and unbelief, "the times of the Gentiles" and "the fulness of the Gentiles" were both made necessary.

Israel's disobedience during the days of the Old Testament theocracy led to the nation being uprooted and dispersed among the Gentile nations, beginning "the times of the Gentiles."

And Israel's subsequent rejection and unbelief surrounding their Messiah and the offer of the kingdom of the heavens at Christ's first coming led to the setting aside of the nation, anticipating God's removal of "a people for his name" from among the Gentiles.

The present exercise of Gentile supremacy ("the times of the Gentiles") is simply a rule by fallen man under Satan which can last *ONLY UNTIL God has accomplished His purpose for Man's Day* (in which "the fulness of the Gentiles" will occur).

The length of the period during which Gentiles will be allowed to exercise supremacy is shown by Nebuchadnezzar's image in Daniel chapter two. Gentile power, depicted by the image, came into existence during the days of Nebuchadnezzar; and it will pass out of existence during the days of Antichrist (Dan. 2:31-45; cf. Dan. 7:1-14; 8:1-25).

That depicted by the image in Daniel chapter two came into existence because of *the disobedience* of God's firstborn son, Israel; and that depicted by this image will one day pass out of existence, at the time of Israel's repentance, through *the action* of God's firstborn Son, Jesus.

The image is seen smitten in its final form by Christ at the time of His return, bringing an end to Gentile supremacy and opening the way for God's firstborn Sons (*three firstborn Sons* in that day — Jesus, the Church, and Israel) to exercise the rights of primogeniture.

With this in mind, it should be noted that *there is possibly NOTHING more out of place in the world today than Christians becoming involved with the present Gentile governmental system under Satan*.

Christians comprise *a separate, distinct creation*; they comprise *the one new man*, called into existence to participate in a government under Christ during the coming age, after the present system under Satan

has been destroyed. And they are to FIX their attention on THAT future day, following "the times of the Gentiles."

Christians ARE to pray for and be subject to incumbent rulers (Rom. 13:1-7; I Tim. 2:1-3; I Peter 2:13-17), BUT they ARE NOT themselves to hold the sceptre during the present day and time (I Cor. 4:2-5; II Tim. 2:4, 5).

Removed from, Positioned in

The Gentile nations, although they have been allowed to rule the earth under Satan throughout "the times of the Gentiles," *are, in one sense of the word, NOT in a position to rule.*

Christ's future rule, Israel's future rule, and the future rule of the Church all center around exercising *the rights belonging to the firstborn; and Gentile nations are in NO position to exercise these rights.* The Gentiles are "aliens from the commonwealth [Gk., *politeia*, 'citizenship,' 'political activity'] of Israel" (Eph. 2:12).

The Gentile nations possess NO birthright.

(The Greek word *politeia* in Eph. 2:12 is a cognate form of the word *politikos*, from which the English word "politics" is derived. Note the use of *politeuma*, another cognate form of the same word, with the same basic meaning, in Phil. 3:20:

"For our conversation [*politeuma*, 'political sphere of activity'] is in heaven ['heavens']; from whence we also look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.")

The rights of the firstborn, the "birthright," has to do with *firstborn sons*. Israel's standing as "firstborn" while still in Egypt during the days of Moses (Ex. 4:22) placed this nation in an entirely different standing to that held by any Gentile nation. Israel had been adopted, and no Gentile nation has ever entered or will ever enter into this experience (Rom. 9:4; cf. Ps. 147:19, 20).

Gentile nations were to be ruled by *the one nation* in possession of the rights of primogeniture. Gentile nations themselves *were NOT to rule, for they did NOT possess primogenital rights.* And their present rule, although allowed by God, is something *which MUST end, if for NO other reason than the alienated position occupied by the nations.*

The sceptre *MUST* ultimately be delivered into the hands of those in a position to exercise the rights of primogeniture. *ONLY THEN* will God bestow His full blessings upon mankind in accordance with Gen. 12:2, 3; 22:17, 18.

This is the reason for the existence of *the nation of Israel* and the bringing into existence of *the one new man* "in Christ." Israel awaits her blindness being lifted *after* God completes His work with respect to "the fulness of the Gentiles" (Rom. 11:26); and God taking out of the Gentiles "a people for his name" will bring into existence, following the adoption (Rom. 8:23), a second segment of mankind placed in a position to exercise the rights of primogeniture.

Israel, still retaining her standing as *firstborn*, will exercise these rights upon earth (following the nation's repentance and conversion); and the Church, coming into the position of *firstborn* (following the adoption), will exercise these rights from the heavens over the earth.

God is presently in the process of accomplishing a work which will result in "many sons" being brought "unto glory" (Heb. 2:10; cf. Rom. 8:18, 19). These "sons" are mainly individuals being removed from the nations presently holding the sceptre, with a view to these sons one day holding the sceptre.

The immersion in the Spirit of those believing on the Lord Jesus Christ places them "in Christ," a part of *the one new man*. And because they are positionally "in Christ" (Who is Abraham's Seed), this allows God to recognize them as "Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (cf. Rom. 4:13; Gal. 3:26-29).

Then there is also the "remnant according to the election of grace" (Rom. 11:5), consisting of believing Jews who avail themselves of the redemption which is "in Christ." And, through this same immersion in the Spirit, believing Jews find themselves in *EXACTLY* the same position as believing Gentiles — *a part of the one new man, becoming "fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel"* (Eph. 3:1-6).

Believing Gentiles are being removed from the nations of the earth, and believing Jews are being removed from the nation of Israel. Individuals from both groups relinquish their national identities, becoming *new creations* "in Christ," *part of the one new man* (II Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:11-15).

Believing Gentiles come into possession of a calling, *a heavenly calling*; and believing Jews relinquish their *earthly calling* and come into possession of a higher calling, *a heavenly calling*.

These individuals are being removed from the nations of the earth and from the nation of Israel respectively, with a view to being positioned *in heavenly places during the coming age*. And those occupying such positions will sit with Christ on His throne and, in this capacity, *rule the nations with a rod of iron, as co-heirs with Christ* (cf. Rom. 8:17; Rev. 3:21).

The Birthright, The Throne

In Jewish history, the birthright belonged to the firstborn son in a family, simply by right of birth, and consisted of three things:

- 1) *Ruler* of the household under and for the father.
- 2) *Priest* of the family.
- 3) The reception of *a double portion* of all the father's goods.

Although a firstborn son did nothing whatsoever to come into possession of the birthright, he could conduct his life in such a manner so as to forfeit the birthright. He could not forfeit *his position as firstborn* in the family, but he could forfeit *the rights of the firstborn*.

There are two classic examples in the Old Testament of firstborn sons relinquishing the rights of primogeniture. One is *Esau, the firstborn son of Isaac*; and the other is *Reuben, the firstborn son of Jacob*.

Esau considered the birthright of little value and sold his rights as firstborn to his younger brother, Jacob, to satisfy a fleshly gratification (Gen. 25:27-34).

Reuben, on the other hand, forfeited his birthright through sexual promiscuity (Gen. 35:22; 49:3, 4).

In Esau's case, the entire birthright was given to Jacob; but in Reuben's case, the birthright was divided among three of his brothers.

On the latter forfeiture, *the regal portion* was given to Judah, *the priestly portion* was given to Levi, and *the double portion of the father's goods* was given to Joseph (to be realized through his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh), *a forfeiture lasting throughout ALL future time*.

ALL historic events recorded in the Old Testament occurred *within* God's sovereign control of all things "for ensamples ['types']: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world ['ages'] are come" (cf. Luke 24:25-27; I Cor. 10:6, 11).

That is, God, *within His sovereign control of ALL things*, brought these things to pass so that He might have the experiences of various individuals to draw upon in order to teach Christians the deep things of God.

NOTHING occurred haphazardly, for God does NOT draw spiritual lessons from haphazard experiences.

The recorded accounts of Esau and Reuben constitute types of firstborn sons forfeiting their birthright; and further, the forfeiture by Esau constitutes the final warning in the Book of Hebrews, a warning directed to Christians concerning the possibility that they too can forfeit their birthright.

Every Christian is an heir, as Esau and Reuben; but also, as Esau and Reuben, not every Christian will inherit the rights of the firstborn.

Every Christian is in line to one day, following the adoption, realize the rights belonging to the firstborn. *BUT*, the fact remains that *ANY Christian* can, as Esau and Reuben, forfeit these rights. *ANY Christian* can be overcome during the present dispensation, resulting in his being denied a position on the throne as co-heir with Christ during the coming dispensation.

Co-heirs with Christ are to be "kings and priests" (Rev. 5:10); and they are to realize, with Christ, *a double portion of ALL the Father's goods*.

The Father has given *ALL that He has* to the Son (Gen. 24:36; 25:5; John 16:15), and the double portion to be possessed by Christ and His co-heirs consists of both spheres of the kingdom (*heavenly* and *earthly*). And the Father's house, with respect to the birthright, has to do with a worldwide kingdom ruled *from the heavens*.

The blessings in store for Christians are *heavenly*, but these blessings will include *an earthly* "inheritance" and "possession" as well.

Christians, as co-heirs with Christ, will enter into that which has been promised to the Son in connection with His rule over the earth. And God has promised His Son "the heathen ['Gentiles']" for *His inheritance* and the "uttermost parts of the earth" for *His possession* (Ps. 2:6, 8; cf. Rev. 2:26, 27).

This earthly *inheritance* and *possession* — completely separate from Israel's earthly blessings and inheritance — is associated with "the kingdom of the world [present world kingdom under Satan]" which will become "the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ [future world kingdom under Christ]" (Rev. 11:15, ASV).

There is an interesting, often overlooked parallel between *the five warnings* in the Book of Hebrews and *the seven overcomer's promises* in the Book of Revelation.

The warnings and the overcomer's promises both have the same end in view. The last warning has to do with *the birthright* (Heb. 12:14-17), and the last overcomer's promise has to do with *the throne* (Rev. 3:21).

The successive thought in the warnings in the Book of Hebrews is that of Christians ultimately realizing their birthright — *sons exercising the rights of primogeniture*. The great burden of Hebrews, in this respect, is that of "bringing many *sons* unto glory" (Heb. 2:10).

And the successive thought in the overcomer's promises in the Book of Revelation is that of Christians ultimately ascending the throne — *as co-heirs, companions, exercising power with Christ*. And the great burden of Revelation chapters two and three, in this respect, is that of placing equipped Christians (as *sons*, seen in Hebrews) upon the throne with Christ.

Absolute Power and Authority

Christ will rule the nations with "a rod of iron," and He has promised His co-heirs that they will exercise this power and authority with Him (Ps. 2:9; Rev. 2:26, 27; 12:5; 19:15).

The words "*break* them with a rod of iron" rather than "*rule* them with a rod of iron" (as in Rev. 2:27; 12:5; 19:15) are used in Ps. 2:9. The Hebrew word translated "*break*" in this passage, contextually, refers to *absolute force* which will be used to bring and keep the nations under subjection to the "King of kings, and Lord of lords."

A cognate form of this word appears in Dan. 2:40 where, contextually, the word refers to a similar (but not absolute) force which will be used by Antichrist to bring and keep the nations under subjection to him during the Tribulation.

The words “broken to pieces” and “break in pieces” in Dan. 2:35, 44, 45 are the translations of a different word though, which, through comparing Ps. 2:1-9, has to do with *the absolute, total destruction* of the kingdom of Antichrist by Christ at the end of the Tribulation; and this will be followed by *Christ’s absolute control* over the nations during the succeeding Messianic Era, when the “great mountain” (Christ’s kingdom) *fills* “the whole earth” (Dan. 2:35).

The Greek word translated “rule” in Rev. 2:27; 12:5; 19:15 means *to shepherd*. This is the same word translated “feed [*lit.*, ‘shepherd’ (referring to *shepherding the flock of God*)]” in Acts 20:28 and I Peter 5:2.

The thought behind this word when used in the sense of “rule” can possibly best be seen by its use in Matt. 2:6:

“And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda, for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall *rule* [*‘shepherd’*] my people Israel.”

The Governor, in this respect, will be a *Shepherd* over the nations; and His co-heirs will exhibit like qualities.

However, this shepherding will be accomplished through *absolute force*. There will be no such thing as a toleration of disobedience among the Gentile nations in that day (*cf.* Ps. 101:1-8; Isa. 66:19-24; Zech. 14:16-21). The shepherding will be carried out through the use of authority described as “a rod [*sceptre*] of iron.”

A shepherd in Israel during Old Testament days possessed a *wooden staff*; but the Chief Shepherd and His co-heirs during that coming day will wield a *staff of iron*. And with this staff, the Gentile nations, as “the vessels of a potter” when struck, will be “broken to shivers.”

Note that these same words are used relative to both the rule of Christ in Ps. 2:9 and the rule of His co-heirs in Rev. 2:27. The rule by both Christ and His co-heirs will, in this respect, be identical in nature.

Duration of Power and Authority

Scripture teaches that the exercise of governmental power and authority by Christ and His co-heirs *will NOT end when the 1,000-year millennial day has run its course*. Rather, the exercise of such power and authority *will extend into and last throughout the eternal ages beyond the Millennium*.

BUT, Scripture does NOT teach that this rule will continue unchanged into these eternal ages.

To the contrary, Scripture teaches just the opposite. The rule by Christ and His co-heirs during the ages beyond the Millennium will be *quite different* than their rule during the Millennium.

First, there is the matter of Christ's throne. His throne is *eternal*, but NOT as a separate entity from the Father's throne. Conditions of this nature are *millennial ONLY* (Heb. 1:8; Rev. 3:21; 22:3).

Christ, with His co-heirs, will reign from His Own throne until He has "put down all rule and all authority and power." THEN, when "all things" have been subjected unto Christ, the kingdom will be delivered up "to God, even the Father," with all things subjected unto Christ, in order that "God may be all in all [*lit.*, 'all things in all of these things']" (I Cor. 15:24-28).

This will occur at the end of the Millennium, and Christ will then assume a position on a central throne with His Father called, "the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Rev. 22:1, 3).

Second, there is the matter of the location of Christ's throne. During the Millennium, Christ's throne will be in the new Jerusalem positioned in the heavens above the present earth.

During the eternal ages, "the throne of God and of the Lamb" will, likewise, be in the new Jerusalem; but the location of the new Jerusalem will be quite different. The present heavens and earth will be destroyed at the end of the Millennium, and a new heavens and a new earth will be brought into existence.

The new Jerusalem will rest upon the new earth, and God Himself will reside therein, sitting on a throne, with His Son alongside.

A rule from the heavens over the earth (millennial) will be a thing of the past, and "the throne of God and of the Lamb" will become the central point in the heavens of an eternal rule extending throughout the universe (*cf.* II Peter 3:10-13; Rev. 21:1ff).

Third, there is the matter of the manner in which Christ will rule. During the Millennium, Christ and His co-heirs will rule the nations with "a rod of iron"; but a rule after this fashion would be out of place during the eternal ages.

During the Millennium, absolute force will be used to bring and keep the nations under subjection; but such will be unnecessary during the eternal ages. Conditions on the new earth will be quite different than millennial conditions on the present earth. There will be no more sin, death, etc. (Rev. 21:3, 4); and this will allow for numerous changes in the manner of the administration of governmental affairs.

Satan will be bound in the abyss during the Millennium, but at the conclusion of the Millennium he will be loosed for “a little season [‘short time’].”

The rebellion evident among nations during the Millennium, necessitating the rule with “a rod of iron,” will then be brought to a head. The rebel nations will ally with Satan and under his banner march against Christ and His co-heirs in one final, vain, climactic thrust. The entire matter though will be speedily brought to an end through *fire* “from God out of heaven” (*cf.* Ezek. 28:18b, 19).

Satan will then be cast into the lake of fire, the judgment of the unsaved dead from throughout Man’s Day will occur, and the time for major changes will be at hand.

At this time the kingdom will be delivered up to the Father, the present heavens and earth will pass out of existence, the new heavens and new earth will come into existence, the new Jerusalem will descend from heaven to rest upon the new earth, and the throne of God and the throne of Christ will become *one* throne. The nations will then dwell upon the new earth, with God Himself dwelling in their midst.

(God rules from a place in the heavens over the entire universe. Then, provinces throughout His universe are governed by appointed rulers who evidently exercise their delegated power and authority from places in the heavens in relation to the province being ruled [*e.g.*, Satan and his angels presently rule from a place in the heavens in relation to the earth (*cf.* Dan. 10:13-20; Eph. 2:2; 6:11, 20)], and this structured rule would evidently be the same relative to provinces ruled by angels elsewhere in the universe [*i.e.*, ruled from places in the heavens in relation to the different provinces].

It is in this manner that “the heavens do rule” [beginning with God, the supreme Ruler over all].

During the Messianic Era, Christ and His bride will exercise delegated power and authority over the earth from the same sphere in

which Satan and His angels presently rule [cf. Job 16:15; Rev. 12:7-12]. Then, during the eternal ages, the new earth will be the place in the heavens from whence universal rule will emanate [in the heavens in relation to the entire universe, as God's present dwelling place is in the heavens in relation to the entire universe].)

1) Crowns, Rewards — Millennial or Eternal

Promises to Christians concerning crowns, rewards, etc. are to be realized during the millennial age rather than during the eternal ages. Many conditions surrounding proffered positions with Christ *will NOT exist during the eternal ages*, as noted in previous comments concerning differences in Christ's reign during the Millennium and during the ages beyond.

(Note, for example, the overcomer's promises in Revelation chapters two and three. That these promises are *millennial ONLY* in nature is made plain by several of the promises. And the inclusive nature of *ALL seven promises* [ALL realized by each individual overcomer, *NOT* just one or several] would require *that ALL be seen as millennial ONLY*.

In the overcomer's promise to the Church in Smyrna, it is evident that death will exist during the Millennium [Rev. 2:11; cf. Rom. 8:13]. *BUT. this will NOT be the case beyond the Millennium, during the eternal ages* [Rev. 21:4].

In the overcomer's promise to the Church in Thyatira, ruling with "a rod of iron" is in view [2:26-28]. *And NO such scene as this exists during the present dispensation; NOR will such a scene exist during the eternal ages*.

Then, in the overcomer's promise to the Church in Laodicea, Christ's throne is in view. *Christ is NOT seated on His Own throne today; NOR will this throne exist separate from the Father's throne beyond the Millennium* [cf. Heb. 1:13; Rev. 3:21; 22:1, 3].

Thus, it is plain that the things seen in *the overcomer's promises in these two chapters can be realized during the Millennial Era ALONE*. They can have *NOTHING* to do with the eternal ages beyond the Millennium.)

This, however, does not at all teach that the reign of Christ and Christians will end at the conclusion of the Millennium. This only shows that their reign during the eternal ages will be *outside* the scope of the overcomer's promises and *quite different* than their reign during the preceding Millennium.

God's revelation to man concerns itself with "time" — *seven thousand years of time* — from the creation of Adam to the end of the Messianic Kingdom. Very little is revealed about that which occurred before the creation of Adam, and very little is revealed about that which will occur beyond the Millennium.

Scripture does reveal though that the reign of Christ and Christians will continue, and the length of this continuing reign is specifically stated to be "forever and ever [Gk., *eis tous aionas ton aionon*, 'with respect to the ages of the ages,' *i.e.*, 'throughout the endless ages']" (Rev. 11:15; 22:3-5).

The activity of Christ and Christians in this continuing reign is not revealed in so many words, but Scripture does present enough information that several observations can be made.

A) *Extent of Christ's Rule*

Christ's rule itself, during the eternal ages, will no longer be limited to the earth. Rather, it will extend beyond the earth (the new earth), out into the universe.

Christ will be seated upon a throne from which there will be an administration of power and authority throughout the universe ("the throne of God and of the Lamb" [Rev. 22:3]); and the Christians' continuing rule "with Christ" (Rev. 22:5) would have to be of a like nature, for the power *will NO longer emanate from Christ's throne, BUT from the throne of God and of the Lamb.*

In this respect, the rule by Christ and His co-heirs *over the earth* during the Millennium *can ONLY be extended to a rule over worlds throughout the universe* following the Millennium.

B) *Millennial and Eternal Blessings*

To what extent though, if any, will rewards realized by overcoming Christians during the Millennium carry over into the eternal ages beyond? The question is really unanswerable.

The wiping away of all tears at the conclusion of the Millennium and the fact that the overcomer's promises are millennial *ONLY* in nature would clearly indicate that distinctions which existed during the millennial age between overcoming and non-overcoming Christians *will NOT exist during the eternal ages beyond the Millennium.*

BUT, to take matters beyond this point and say that *no rewards* exercised by overcoming Christians during the millennial age will extend over into the eternal ages beyond the Millennium (or have any bearing on the place which they will occupy beyond the Millennium) would be carrying matters beyond Scriptural grounds.

Scripture simply does NOT deal with the matter (note that this moves into time beyond the septenary structure of Scripture, where little data exists).

2) All Things New

The Millennium *will NOT*, as many envision, be a time of perfection. Such a state awaits *events during the first of many ages beyond the Millennium*.

The restoration of all things will occur before the Millennium, at the end of six thousand years of time; but *the making of all things new* awaits the completion of the Millennium, at the end of seven thousand years of time (cf. Acts 3:21; Rev. 21:5).

ONLY THEN will a perfect order in all of God's creation exist.

As the present age (Man's Day) *has a purpose*, so will the millennial age (the Lord's Day); and *the ultimate GOAL of ALL* will be realized in the ages beyond (the Day of God).

The rulers for the millennial age are being acquired during the present age; and during the millennial age these rulers will, as co-heirs with Christ, participate in the age-long work of bringing all things under subjection to Christ.

Such a work, brought to pass through a rule with "a rod of iron," anticipates the ages beyond the Millennium, in which a rule with "a rod of iron" *will NO longer be necessary; and the reason for man's creation will then be realized in its fullest respect.*

Man *will NOT ONLY* realize the reason for his creation during the Millennium *BUT* also during the eternal ages beyond the Millennium.

Dominion will be restricted to this earth during the Millennium, but not so during the eternal ages after the new heavens and new earth have been brought into existence.

Man's rule in that day *CAN ONLY* extend into places throughout the universe itself, and man will evidently have access to the universe (something which *WILL NOT* be the case at all during the Millennium).

This appears to be the clear teaching derived from Scriptures touching upon the subject.

Concluding Thoughts:

The emphasis on that which is taught within Christian circles today should revolve primarily around *millennial* verities rather than *eternal*. This is where Scripture places the emphasis; and this is where man should likewise place the emphasis.

A pastoral ministry, to be completely in phase with Scripture, *MUST*, during the present time, *CENTER* around *millennial verities*, though *NOT* to the exclusion of the *eternal*.

The entire program of God has, from the beginning, been moving toward the coming *Sabbath of rest*, paralleling *the seventh day* in Gen. 2:2, 3. The great prophecies of Scripture speak of this day, Christians are exhorted to fix their attention upon this day, and the judgment seat of Christ precedes and has to do with this day.

An individual minimizing or ignoring the Millennium is minimizing or ignoring the central teaching of Scripture, beginning with the Book of Genesis and ending with the Book of Revelation.

And such can ultimately lead to ONLY one thing: disaster in the Christian life.

A trained runner fixes his attention upon the GOAL; and a trained Christian, in the present race of the faith, will likewise fix his attention upon the GOAL:

"I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:

But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway ['disapproved' (which will occur at the judgment seat, with the Messianic Era in view)]" (I Cor. 9:26, 27).

15

You Can Rule and Reign *From Heavenly Places, Over the Earth*

“And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it” (Num. 13:30).

The Israelites under Moses, preceding their departure from Egypt, slew the paschal lambs and appropriated the blood of these lambs in Egypt, for a purpose; and this purpose was to be realized beyond Egypt, in the land of Canaan.

The nation of Israel constituted a redeemed, adopted people, who had been called from one land to go into another and there realize the rights of primogeniture. This nation had been removed from Egypt and was ultimately placed in a position where the people could enter the land of Canaan, conquer the inhabitants, and rule over “all the nations of the earth” as “a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.”

This is the manner in which the outworking of the promised blessings destined to flow through Abraham and his seed to the Gentile nations would be brought to pass.

Israel was to be placed at the head of the nations, as *God's firstborn son*, the nation in possession of the rights of primogeniture. Israel was to rule as “a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation”; and the Gentile nations of the earth were to be ruled by and blessed through Israel (*cf.* Gen. 12:3; 22:17, 18; Ex. 4:22, 23; 19:5, 6).

At Kadesh-Barnea, when the Israelites were ready to enter the land of Canaan, Moses first sent spies into the land to obtain information concerning both the land and the inhabitants.

Twelve spies, one from each of the twelve tribes of Israel, traversed the land, “from the wilderness of Zin unto Rehob [from one end of the land to the other],” for forty days and nights. They then returned to the camp of Israel with their report, along with samples of the fruits of the land (grapes, figs, and pomegranates [Num. 13:21-25]).

All twelve spies together gave a report before Moses, Aaron, and the people, which simply had to do with facts concerning the land and its inhabitants — *a land flowing with milk and honey, inhabited by a strong people dwelling in walled cities* (Num. 13:26-29).

Then two of the spies, Caleb and Joshua — on the basis of that which they had seen, in conjunction with Israel's calling and God's power — presented *a positive report* concerning the ability of the Israelites to enter in and conquer the inhabitants. They stated that the Israelites would *be "well able to overcome it [the people in the land, with their strength and walled cities]"* (Num. 13:30).

However, the remaining ten spies presented *a negative report* concerning the matter. They stated — on the basis of that which they had seen, ignoring Israel's calling and God's power — that the Israelites *would NOT be "able to go up against the people"* (among whom were "the giants [Heb., *Nephilim*, 'fallen ones'], the sons of Anak" [Num. 13:31-33]).

And it was *at THIS point* that the Israelites made *a decision with far-reaching ramifications*.

It was *at THIS point* that the Israelites made their crucial decision relative to whether they would enter the land and allow God to fulfill His purpose for calling the nation into existence or whether they would refuse to enter the land, turning their backs upon the entire matter.

The Israelites, to their own detriment and to the detriment of the surrounding Gentile nations which were to be blessed through Israel, chose to believe the "evil report" proclaimed by the ten spies.

They turned away from God's promises, they turned their backs upon the land, and they turned against Moses and Aaron. Then, they sought to appoint a new leader, with a view to returning to Egypt (Num. 14:1-4).

As a consequence, *God pronounced judgment upon the entire unbelieving, rebellious generation, twenty years old and above*. This generation was destined to be *overthrown in the wilderness, short of the goal of their calling*.

Then, the ten spies who had brought an "evil report" before the people of Israel "died by the plague before the Lord"; and during the next thirty-eight and one-half years the "carcasses" of the remainder of the unbelieving, rebellious Israelites fell in the wilderness (Num. 14:5ff; cf. Heb. 3:8-19).

Caleb and Joshua though, because they believed that God would bring to completion His plans and purposes which He had for Israel at the time He led the nation out of Egypt, doing *EXACTLY* what He had promised, were *NOT* numbered among those overthrown in the wilderness. They, rather, were numbered among those of the succeeding generation which would be allowed to enter the land.

In fact, the Lord appointed Joshua to lead the people into the land following the death of Moses.

Then, once the nation had become securely established in the land, Caleb and Joshua *BOTH* realized their inheritance (Num. 14:24-38; Joshua 14:7-15; 19:49, 50).

Type — Antitype

The experiences of the Israelites under Moses establishes the basic, fundamental type which God uses concerning the experiences of Christians under Christ (I Cor. 9:24-10:11). The One Who is greater than Moses is today leading another group out of this world to a calling removed from the world (as in the type, out of Egypt [a type of the world] to a place removed from Egypt).

In the antitype though, the calling is *heavenly* rather than *earthly*. Christians under Christ have a calling associated with *the heavens*, as the Israelites under Moses had a calling associated with *the earth*.

Christians have appropriated the blood of the Passover Lamb (as the Israelites appropriated the blood of the paschal lambs in Egypt) and presently constitute *a redeemed people called into existence for definite and specific purposes*.

Christians are being called FROM one land to go INTO another and there realize the rights of primogeniture.

And they, as the Israelites under Moses, *are to engage the present occupants of the land in battle*, with a view to both a conquest of the land and the realization of an ultimate inheritance in the land.

Scripture specifically states that our warfare is “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 [‘against the spirit forces of wickedness in the heavenlies’]” (Eph. 6:12).

Satan and his angels occupy this heavenly realm, as the corrupted nations of Canaan occupied the earthly realm to which Israel had been called; and Christians — within the scope of their calling, drawn from the type — are to enter in, engage, and overcome “the spirit forces of wickedness.”

And this is all with *a view to Christians one day realizing an inheritance as co-heirs with Christ in this heavenly land.*

The report and fruit brought back to the camp of Israel by the twelve spies during Moses’ day has its counterpart in the report and fruit which Christians presently have available in the revealed Word of God. Christians are told about the inhabitants of the land (Eph. 6:11ff); and, as in Heb. 6:5, Christians can *taste* “the good word of God, and the powers of the world [‘age’] to come.”

Christians who have progressed into a mature understanding of the things concerning the land and its inhabitants then find themselves *in EXACTLY the same position as the Israelites at Kadesh-Barnea under Moses.*

Such Christians can, under God, enter the land, engage the enemy, and be victorious over the enemy; OR, they can refuse to enter the land, resulting in their being overcome by the enemy apart from ever engaging the enemy in combat.

They can follow in the steps of *Caleb and Joshua*, or they can follow in the steps of *the remainder of the nation*, which heeded the false report of the other ten spies. The decision is left entirely up to those Christians who have been brought to the antitype of Israel’s Kadesh-Barnea experience following the report of all twelve spies.

Ruin Produced by Unbelief

Unbelief manifested by Israel at Kadesh-Barnea was not something which occurred overnight. Such unbelief had been building from the very time God began to manifest His “wonders in Egypt” through Moses.

The people did not understand His mighty works then, and they were quick to forget His mighty works following the Red Sea passage (Ps. 106:7ff):

They “...lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert... They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the molten image... They forgot God their saviour, which had done great things in Egypt...”

The climax of the entire matter though was the fact that “they despised the pleasant land, they believed not his word” (v. 24).

At this time, at Kadesh-Barnea, God had allowed them to come up to the very goal of their calling. *BUT*, once they had “despised the pleasant land” and “believed not his word” — refusing to enter the land and realize the goal of their calling — *THAT was the end of the matter*.

God *will NOT* countenance sin of any type. *BUT*, the nature, time, and place of this sin necessitated God’s immediate intervention into the affairs of His people, resulting in His actions.

And the Israelites, because of *the nature of their unbelief at this particular time and place*, were left *WITHOUT* recourse. They could now do *ONLY one thing*. They could now *ONLY* turn back into the wilderness, where the entire accountable generation would die, short of the goal of their calling.

At Mt. Sinai, following the forming and the worship of the molten calf, God set about to do away with the present nation and begin anew through Moses, making of him “a great nation”; and this same thing also occurred following the manifested unbelief of the people at Kadesh-Barnea (Ex. 32:9, 10; Num. 14:11, 12).

But Moses’ intercession on behalf of Israel, on both occasions, stayed God’s hand of judgment after this fashion (Ex. 32:11-14; Num. 14:13-20).

Events at Kadesh-Barnea though occurred at *a terminal point* in God’s plans and purposes rather than at *a preparatory point*, as those at Mt. Sinai; and, consequently, following God’s pronouncement at Kadesh-Barnea that the nation itself would be spared, circumstances were *quite different* than those existing at the time that this same announcement was heard at Mt. Sinai.

Following the events at Mt. Sinai, Moses was instructed to “lead the people unto the place of which I have spoken unto thee...the land which I swear unto Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob” (Ex. 32:34-33:1).

But following similar events at Kadesh-Barnea, ending the same way as at Mt. Sinai — which followed the people’s refusal to enter the land — there was then *NO place for Moses to lead them*.

They were at the END of the line; and, although the nation itself would be spared, there was NOTHING left for God to do but set the entire accountable generation aside.

Immediately after God announced at Kadesh-Barnea that the nation would be spared, He then turned and pronounced judgment upon those who had seen His glory and miracles but had now tempted Him “these ten times” (Num. 14:22ff).

The number “ten” is an apparent allusion to both *the ten faithless spies* and *the fulness in God’s sight of Israel’s unfaithfulness*, dating all the way back to the time when He had first begun to deal with the nation in Egypt.

“Ten” is the number of *ordinal completion*, pointing in Num. 14:22 to *the FULL extent* which the nation would be allowed to go in their unfaithfulness before judgment fell.

As God had dealt with the Amorites in Gen. 15:16, so would he deal with the Israelites at Kadesh-Barnea. Judgment was withheld upon the Amorites until their iniquity had become *full*, and judgment was withheld upon the Israelites until they had reached this same point at Kadesh-Barnea.

After Israel’s unfaithfulness had been manifested in all its fulness, judgment fell. And God, during the next thirty-eight and one-half years, overthrew the entire accountable generation in the wilderness.

Not a single Israelite numbered among this unfaithful generation was spared to subsequently enter the land under Joshua.

Reward Awaiting Belief

Obedience to THAT which God has said is the crucial matter.

A seeming impossibility surrounding the issue at hand, as with the Israelites at Kadesh-Barnea, is of *NO moment*. *God has spoken, the matter is in His hands, and His people are to exhibit faithfulness therein.*

1) Natural or Supernatural Means

The Israelites at Kadesh-Barnea viewed entrance into the land from two perspectives — *naturalistic*, and *supernaturalistic*.

From a *naturalistic* perspective, there was *NO question* concerning the inability of the Israelites to go in and take the land. The inhabitants of the land were stronger, and *the Israelites were NO match* for them.

This was plainly exhibited when the Israelites subsequently sought to enter the land apart from the presence, power, and leadership of the Lord (Num. 13:28, 29; 14:40-45).

However, viewing entrance into the land from a *supernaturalistic* perspective, the strength possessed by the inhabitants of the land *was of NO moment*. Strength to defeat the enemy did not lie within the ability of the Israelites themselves (that would have been *naturalistic*), but outside their ability (*supernaturalistic*).

The battle belonged to the Lord (II Chron. 20:15); and NO obedient Israelite, exercising faithfulness after the order of Caleb and Joshua, could fail in battle. Failure within the realm of faithfulness was NOT possible, for such would reflect upon the very faithfulness of God itself.

Failure could come ONLY through "unfaithfulness."

2) Possessing the Land

The earthly land inhabited by the nations of Canaan has its counterpart in that heavenly land inhabited by Satan and his angels. There were supernatural beings (the "giants [Heb., *Nephilim*, 'fallen ones']") contesting the right of the Israelites to enter into and take possession of the earthly land, and there are supernatural beings (Satan and his angels) contesting the right of Christians to enter into and take possession of the heavenly land.

The *Nephilim* (the offspring resulting from the co-habitation of the "sons of God [angels within Satan's kingdom]" with the "daughters of men [female offspring from the lineage of Adam; cf. Gen. 6:2-4; Num. 13:32, 33]") had infiltrated the nations of Canaan, opposing the Israelites' entrance into and conquest of the land; and many of the very ones responsible for this past condition of the land of Canaan presently inhabit the heavenly land, opposing the Christians' entrance into and conquest of that land.

The Israelites had been redeemed in Egypt and prepared in the wilderness for that time when God would open the way for them to go in and take the land. The law had been given to Israel at Mt. Sinai, along with instructions for the tabernacle and its associated priestly ministry and worship.

The law with its rules and regulations was to be Israel's constitution — the magna charta for the kingdom — given to govern the nation's affairs in the kingdom; and the tabernacle, with God dwelling in the Holy of Holies in the midst of His people, was to be the central place of worship for the "kingdom of priests," through whom

God would bless all the nations. Israel, God's firstborn son, was to enter the land, conquer the inhabitants, and bear rule in a worldwide theocracy after this fashion.

Not only were the Israelites prepared in the wilderness for the task ahead, but at Kadesh-Barnea they had been brought into an intimate knowledge of things concerning the land itself.

They heard the report of the spies who had traversed the land, along with seeing and tasting the actual fruits of the land. In essence, they had moved in one and one-half years from a simple knowledge concerning things relative to the death of the paschal lambs in Egypt to a mature knowledge concerning the land and entrance therein.

They had moved from what is called in the Greek text *gnosis* (knowledge) to *epignosis* (mature knowledge); *and God had brought them into such a knowledge for ONE central purpose:*

Entrance into and conquest of the land, along with all which would be involved in the theocracy once they were in the land.

The entire matter is the same in Christendom today. God *does NOT* immediately move newborn Christians onto the front lines against the enemy in the land. Rather, He first trains and prepares them.

Within this preparation, there is a progression in teaching which leads Christians from a rudimentary knowledge concerning *the death of the Passover Lamb* to a mature knowledge concerning *the land and entrance therein*.

In other words, the preparation of Christians involves leading them from *gnosis* (knowledge) to *epignosis* (mature knowledge); *and God brings Christians into such a knowledge for one central purpose:*

Entrance into and conquest of the land, along with all which will be involved in the theocracy once they are in the land.

There is a land to be possessed; but as in the earthly, so in the heavenly — Christians *MUST* enter in and engage the enemy.

There can be *NO such thing* as a Christian being victorious in this realm who has never gone forth to battle. *The victors ALONE* (overcomers during the present dispensation) will ultimately *possess the land and rule within the theocracy*.

Ability

There was no question in the minds of Caleb and Joshua concerning the ability of the Israelites, under God, to enter in and possess the land.

Their attitude, voiced in Caleb's words, was, "*Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.*"

And this **MUST** be the attitude expressed by Christians today, for therein **ALONE** can victory be achieved.

The Israelites would have been *well able* to take the land. Their ability lay completely within God's power and provision. That which God *had begun* in Egypt and *continued* in the wilderness was to be *carried through to completion* in the land of Canaan.

God, through His power, *had removed* them from Egypt and *sustained* them during their wilderness journey; and, beyond Kadesh-Barnea, *He would have provided victory over the enemy* and *would have subsequently established them in the land*.

But the Israelites *refused* to enter the land. Their *unbelief*, which had been building from the time God began to perform His mighty works in Egypt, caused them to look to their own inadequate ability.

This then led them *to turn from* the land of Canaan and *longingly look back* to the land which they had left, the land of Egypt (Num. 14:2-4; cf. Luke 9:62). *They suffered defeat before ever engaging the enemy in combat.*

And things are **NO** different in Christendom today. Christians are *well able* to take the land set before them. Their provision *lies completely within God's power and control of the matter*.

That which God *began* in the life of a Christian at the point of his salvation is to be *carried through to completion* in the land set before him. God, through His power, has *redeemed* the individual, is presently *sustaining* him during his pilgrim journey, and desires to *establish* him in the land to which he has been called.

Should the Christian fail in his calling relative to the land (in the antitype of Israel's failure at Kadesh-Barnea), *he, as the faithless Israelites, places himself in a position of unbelief concerning entrance into the land.*

The goal of his calling involves entrance into and conquest of the land; and once this goal has been set aside, as occurred with Israel at Kadesh-Barnea, *there is NOTHING left.*

Such a Christian has rejected his calling; the purpose for his very existence has been discarded. And this is the point in the antitype where unfaithfulness reaches *the FULL extent which God will allow*.

This is the point where the number “ten” from Num. 14:22 comes into view.

And, as with the Israelites, so with Christians:

God withholds terminal judgment in one's life relative to the land and the things of the land up to this point, BUT NOT BEYOND!

(In order to understand why judgment *MUST* fall at this point in God's dealings with His people — whether in His dealings with Israel [the type] or in His dealings with Christians [the antitype] — study Heb. 6:4-6 in the light of its context [chs. 3-5]. Understanding this type-antitype structure will reveal *the WHY* of the word “impossible” in Heb. 6:4.)

Just as *there was NO reason* for the Israelites under Moses to have failed to realize the goal of their calling in the type, *there is NO reason* for Christians under Christ to fail to realize the goal of their calling in the antitype.

The One Who has “begun a good work in you [at the point of one's eternal salvation] will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ [that time beyond the present dispensation when all Christians appear before the judgment seat of Christ]” (Phil. 1:6). God will continue His work in the lives of Christians in order to bring them victoriously into the land.

This is the GOAL! But Christians *MUST* patiently endure in the present race of the faith. They *MUST* keep their eyes fixed upon Jesus, “the author and finisher of our faith” (Heb. 12:1, 2; cf. James 1:2-4, 12; I Peter 1:7; II Peter 1:5-11).

It is through the supernatural power of God *ALONE* — the power presently performing a work in the lives of Christians, with one main goal in view — *that Christians can overcome the supernatural power of the enemy*.

The Battle for the Land

From the point of the Israelites' appropriation of the blood of the paschal lambs in Egypt, everything was directed toward *one GOAL* — *entrance into and occupation of an earthly land, with the theocracy in view*.

And it is the same in the lives of Christians today. From the point of their appropriation of the blood of the Passover Lamb, everything is likewise directed toward *one GOAL* — *entrance into and occupation of a heavenly land, with a theocracy in view.*

Christians have *a heavenly calling, a heavenly hope, a heavenly inheritance, a heavenly citizenship, heavenly blessings, and they are confronted with an ever-present heavenly battle* against the present rulers who occupy the heavenly land to which they have been called (Eph. 1:3; 6:11-18; Phil. 3:20; Col. 1:5; Heb. 3:1; I Peter 1:4).

The one book in the New Testament which, in its overall structure, possibly sets forth that facet of truth dealing with the Christians' relationship to *the heavenly land* better than any other is Paul's epistle to the Ephesians.

Paul used the expression "in heavenly places [*lit., 'in the heavenlies'*]" five different times in the six chapters of this epistle. Two of these times, *the Christians' position in the heavenlies* is in view (1:3; 2:6); two other times, *the position of Satan and his angels in the heavenlies* comes into view (3:10; 6:12); and the other time, *the position of Christ at the right hand of God, also in a heavenly place, is in view* (1:20).

1) In the Heavenlies

Revelation in Paul's letter to the Ephesians begins by revealing *blessings* awaiting Christians "in heavenly places [*in the heavenlies'*] in Christ," and terminates by revealing *a warfare* confronting Christians against "spiritual wickedness in high places [*the spirit forces of wickedness in the heavenlies'*]" (1:3; 6:12).

The heavenlies, wherein blessings are to be realized in chapter one, and *the heavenlies* in which the enemy presently resides in chapters three and six, must be looked upon as one and the same.

The Christians' positional standing is "in Christ" in the heavenlies where God Himself dwells; but, contextually, the spiritual blessings in view are to be realized by Christians as they move in, conquer, and dwell in the heavenly land held by the enemy in chapter six.

In this respect, there are heavenly blessings for present victorious engagements of the enemy, and there are heavenly blessings awaiting victorious Christians in that coming day when the enemy will finally be dislodged from the land.

Contextually, *the blessings* in chapter one are associated with the “adoption” (v. 5), the “dispensation of the fulness of times” (v. 10), the “inheritance” (vv. 11, 14, 18), and the “wisdom and revelation in the knowledge [Gk., *epignosis*, ‘mature knowledge’] of him” (v. 17). Such blessings to be realized by Christians are, thus, intimately associated with *the heavenly land* to which they have been called; and the entire matter is projected out into the coming age, *but* not to the exclusion of the present dispensation.

The present spiritual warfare in the heavenlies is with a view to *the coming age*, but spiritual blessings await the victors during both *present* and *future* time. There can be *NO* future occupation of the land apart from a present warfare against the enemy; and the blessings extend throughout both eras.

Ephesians moves progressively from chapter one into things relative to eternal salvation and the revelation of the mystery in chapters two and three. Believing Gentiles have been placed together in the same body with believing Jews. God has broken down the “middle wall of partition” by creating *one new man*, where there is neither “Jew nor Greek” (2:8-16; cf. Gal. 3:28).

Believing Jews and believing Gentiles, together in one body, forming *the one new man*, then become “fellowheirs” of *the heavenly* promises and blessings in view (Eph. 3:6; cf. Gal. 3:29).

And the very purpose for an individual’s salvation is to be realized through the reception of the inheritance introduced in chapter one and continued in chapters two and three.

The Christians’ association with the heavenlies is presently being made known to the “principalities and powers in heavenly places [‘in the heavenlies’]” “by [‘through’] the church” (3:9, 10).

God is making known to the incumbent rulers in the heavenlies that *they are about to be replaced*; and He is making this known through the ones who are destined to occupy these positions, *the ones presently engaging the enemy in the heavenlies*.

Ephesians then continues by exhorting Christians to walk worthy of their high calling (4:1ff) and revealing the need for pastor-teachers in the Church (4:11-16), who have been placed in the Church to lead Christians into a mature knowledge of, contextually, *their calling in relation to the heavenlies*.

Christians are to know about the blessings awaiting them in the heavenlies, the coming dispensation, the inheritance, the mystery, etc. And to make this known, in the strict Biblical sense, is *the primary task of pastor-teachers*.

The latter part of chapter four and the first part of chapter five continue with thoughts and exhortations concerning walking worthy of one's high calling; and this is followed by related material in the latter part of chapter five and the first part of chapter six concerning the relationship of husbands and wives, children and parents, and servants and masters.

Then, at the conclusion of the epistle, in the latter part of chapter six, *the CENTRAL CRUX of the entire matter comes into view*.

Beginning in 6:10, the Apostle Paul says, "*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.*"

The engagement with the enemy now comes to *the FOREFRONT* in the epistle. *The ENEMY is revealed, and the proper ARMOR with which the Christian is to clothe himself is given* (vv. 12-17).

2) The Spiritual Warfare

There is *a battle* to be fought, and there is *a victory* to be won. This battle not only requires *extensive preparation* but also *the correct armor*; and pastor-teachers in the Church are to see that Christians placed under their care become properly equipped to engage the enemy in the battle at hand (cf. 3:10, 11; 4:11-16; 6:11-18).

Going forth to battle, one's loins are to be *girded with truth* (showing truthfulness, earnestness, and sincerity in the conflict), a person is to have on *the breastplate of righteousness* (showing a righteous manner of living), his feet are to be shod with *the preparation of the gospel of peace* (showing that the messenger properly understands and is able to proclaim both present and future aspects of salvation), he is to take *the shield of faith* (showing faithfulness to act in the realm God has commanded), he is to put on *the helmet of salvation* (showing a hope relative to a future salvation [the salvation of the soul]), and he is to take *the sword of the Spirit* (showing an acquisition of the Word of God).

ONLY in this fashion can Christians stand in a victorious manner against "the wiles of the devil."

(*Ref.* Chapter IV in this book for a fuller discussion of Eph. 6:14-17.)

One's *faithfulness* in the entire realm of proper preparation is the primary prerequisite. As in Jude 3, one is to "earnestly contend for the faith [*i.e.*, 'earnestly strive for (with reference to, in the good contest of) the faith']." He, according to the parallel passage in I Tim. 6:12, is to "Fight the good fight of faith [*lit.*, 'Strive in the good contest of the faith']"; and, in this manner he is to "lay hold on eternal life [*lit.*, 'lay hold on life for the age' (a future salvation, to be realized during the Messianic Era, associated in the text with *his calling*)]."

The words translated "contend" in Jude 3 and "fight" in I Tim. 6:12 are from *epagonizomai* and *agonizomai* respectively in the Greek text. Note that the only difference in these two words is the prefix "*ep*" in Jude (this is the preposition *epi* ['upon'] prefixed to the word [the "*i*" is dropped when *epi* is prefixed to a word beginning with a vowel]). *Epi*, used in this manner, intensifies the meaning of the word, providing the translation, "earnestly contend ['earnestly strive']."

Agonizomai is the Greek word from which our English word "agonize" is derived. The word could more properly be translated "strive," as in Luke 13:24 and I Cor. 9:25. Every muscle is to be strained, every effort is to be expended, in the "good contest of the faith."

In Jude 3-5 this contest is associated with entrance into the land to which Christians have been called; and the false teachers in these verses are seeking, through that which they are teaching, to mislead and thus prevent Christians from entering this land (*ref.* the ten unfaithful spies and the results of their message).

However, Christians following the admonition in Jude 3 need not fear the false teachers in Jude 4, nor fear being numbered among the unfaithful in Jude 5. Such Christians will experience victory after victory in the battle and partake of rich spiritual blessings which the Lord has reserved for His conquerors, both now and in the coming age.

Concluding Thoughts:

Dare to be a Caleb! Dare to be a Joshua!

Rewards for those who so govern their lives will be the same as Caleb and Joshua's — *present victory, and the ultimate possession of one's inheritance* (Joshua 13:7-14; 19:48-50).

16

When He Is Approved

Through a Testing of Works, by Fire

“Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried [approved], he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him” (James 1:12).

The Epistle of James — as all epistles in the New Testament — centers its teaching around different facets of *the salvation of the soul* (1:21; 5:19, 20), which is with a view to *an inheritance in Christ’s coming kingdom* (2:5).

This epistle opens by pointing to the fact that the various trials, testings in one’s life (the trying of one’s faith) result in “patience [‘patient endurance’]”; and a Christian is to patiently endure under these trials and testings, allowing the Lord to progressively lead him from immaturity to maturity in the faith.

He is to let “patience have her perfect work [‘patient endurance have her end-time work’]” in order that he might be “perfect and entire, wanting nothing [‘mature and complete, lacking nothing’]” (James 1:2-4).

Christians are not brought from immaturity to maturity in the faith overnight. Maturity in the faith is *a lifelong process*.

When God called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees, Abraham had numerous things to learn about how the Lord works patient endurance and brings about maturity in one’s life.

Abraham failed many times (*e.g.*, not leaving his kindred behind in Ur, going down to Egypt for help, seeking to help God fulfill His promise concerning a son, etc. [Gen. 12:1-3, 10; 16:1ff]); *but God CONTINUED to work in Abraham’s life UNTIL he had been brought to the place of unquestioned obedience, to the place where there was complete reliance upon the Lord.*

It was not until some sixty years beyond the time Abraham had left Ur that he is seen being brought into a state where he was ready to undergo *the supreme trial, the supreme test, in his life*.

God, at this time, instructed Abraham to offer his son “for a burnt offering,” at a particular place (Gen. 22:1ff); and Abraham *simply set about to do EXACTLY what God had told him to do*.

There was NO remonstrance, NO delay, and NO questions were asked; instead, there was perfect obedience and complete reliance upon the Lord to bring matters to pass (cf. Ps. 37:5).

Abraham had been brought into this mature state in the true sense of James 1:2-4. He had learned *patient endurance* through his faith being tested. He had *patiently endured* under various trials and testings over a period of about six decades (though failure had occurred at times); and the Lord had, through this process, brought him into that mature state where he was “complete, lacking nothing.”

And Christians today are to be brought into a mature state through this same process (though failure, as it did with Abraham, may occur at times). Abraham’s faith (a belief in that which God had said) was tested, and a Christian’s faith (a belief in that which God has said) is to be tested.

(Note that there is an inseparable connection between a person being led from immaturity to maturity and that person receiving the Word of God into his saved human spirit. There can be no growth from immaturity to maturity apart from a reception of the Word, for *faith* — believing God, the one thing pervading the whole of the matter — “cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” [Rom. 10:17].

In James, Christians are to “receive with meekness the engrafted [‘implanted’] word” [1:21]. *They are to study the Word, meditate upon the Word, allow the Word to flow into their saved human spirits.*

The indwelling Holy Spirit then takes this Word and leads Christians “into all truth” [John 16:13-15]. Thus, it is this “implanted word” which lies at the heart of all activity surrounding *the testing of one’s faith, which brings about patient endurance*.

The continued reception of the Word CAN ONLY be that seen as central in the entire process. There can be NO testing of one’s faith apart from “the implanted word,” and there can be NO patient endurance and progressive growth toward maturity in the faith apart from such testings.)

Approval

In James 1:3, the trials and testings of one's faith bring about patient endurance. Then, in verse four, as in verse twelve, the individual is to continue to patiently endure under continued trials and testings which the Lord brings to pass in his life.

And a continued refining process after this fashion, progressively working *maturity*, is for a *revealed purpose*.

According to verse twelve, the man who patiently endures temptation in the manner set forth in these verses will be "*blessed*" of the Lord, he will be "*tried* ['*approved*']" by the Lord, and he will then "*receive the crown of life*" from the Lord.

Thus, the entire matter is with an ultimate view to issues of the judgment seat of Christ and the Messianic Era to follow. "Approval" or "disapproval" in connection with *blessings* and *crowns* will occur at the judgment seat; and the reason for approval, blessings, and crowns will be realized in the era beyond the present, during the Messianic Era.

In this respect, the revealed purpose for the present patient endurance of Christians, leading to maturity, is in order that *they might one day realize the purpose for their calling*. And this maturing process, for those allowing it to occur in their lives, will result in their one day being *approved* for positions as co-heirs with Christ in the kingdom.

(The word translated "tried" in verse twelve is from *dokimos* in the Greek text, meaning "approved [through testing]." This same word, with the prefix "*a*," appears in I Cor. 9:27 [*adokimos*]. The letter "*a*" negates the word, making it mean exactly the opposite.

The context of I Cor. 9:27 has to do with running the present race of the faith, with a crown in view [vv. 24-26], which is the identical thought in James 1:12. Paul sought to always keep his body under subjection (in reality, a patient endurance under trials and testings), lest after instructing others concerning this very thing, he himself could be "a castaway ['be disapproved' (or, 'be rejected')]."

Dokimos in its verb form [*dokimazo*], with the preposition *apo* prefixed to the word [*apodokimazo*], appears in Heb. 12:17, where Esau was *rejected* for inherited blessings associated with the birthright. The preposition *apo* means "from"; and, prefixed to *dokimazo*, the word, for all practical purposes, means the same as *dokimos* with an "*a*" prefixed, as in I Cor. 9:27.)

In relation to the preceding, an object is in view — *the birthright*. Esau, although he was the firstborn, had sold his birthright; and, relative to *the inheritance*, he was now “rejected” (*apodokimazo*).

Esau was rejected immediately after his younger brother, Jacob, had received the blessing belonging to the firstborn. Prior to this time, Esau had *made light of* his birthright, considering it to be of *little value* (“Esau despised his birthright” [Gen. 25:34]).

The Hebrew word translated “despised” means *to hold in contempt, to make light of*. The Septuagint Version of the Old Testament uses a word which means *to consider of little value*.

Esau did not come into a realization of the true value of the birthright *UNTIL after* Isaac had bestowed the blessing belonging to the firstborn upon Jacob. It was *ONLY THEN* that Esau realized what he had forfeited and sought to retrieve the rights belonging to the firstborn.

Esau, at this time, “cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father, Bless me, even me also, O my father.” But it was *too late*.

The birthright had been forfeited, the blessing belonging to the firstborn had been bestowed upon another, and no reversal of the forfeiture and blessing could occur.

The birthright, with its attendant blessing, was NOW beyond Esau's grasp FOREVER.

Esau, after realizing that the birthright was no longer his and was beyond his grasp forever, referred to the forfeited rights of the firstborn after this manner:

“Hast thou but one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father” (Gen. 27:38; cf. vv. 34-37).

And it is recorded that Esau then “lifted up his voice, and wept.”

This is seen within another frame of reference in Matthew's gospel where individuals are seen *weeping and gnashing their teeth* (Matt. 13:42; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30).

This is an Eastern expression showing *deep grief*; and the contexts of these passages *clearly show that things relating to the rights of the firstborn, NOT eternal life, are in view.*

The rejection experienced by Esau is the last of five major warnings in the Book of Hebrews, and this rejection constitutes an Old Testament type of that rejection which Paul referred to in I Cor. 9:27. The reference is to Christians who will have forfeited the rights of primogeniture, appearing in Christ's presence at His judgment seat.

Many Christians are presently following the same path which Esau took (considering the birthright to be of little value), and such Christians will one day come to the end of the matter in exactly the same way as seen in Esau's life. They, although presently in line to be blessed as the firstborn — Christians are presently being dealt with as "sons," with a view to one day being adopted as *firstborn sons* (Heb. 12:5-8) — will have forfeited this right; and they will be rejected for the blessing.

The rights of the firstborn *MUST* be retained or there can be NO blessing belonging to the firstborn. The "spiritual blessings" associated with *the heavenly* in Eph. 1:3 *CANNOT* be appropriated by Christians who forfeit the rights of primogeniture, for these blessings are inseparably connected with *the inheritance belonging to the firstborn* (1:10-18).

These blessings are reserved for those who overcome the inhabitants of that heavenly land *during the present age*, who will be shown qualified to enter that land as *sovereigns during the coming age*.

Christ is presently in the process of "bringing many sons unto glory" (Heb. 2:10). He, through the things which He suffered, has become the "captain" of a *salvation* associated with *sonship* — the "so great salvation" of Heb. 2:3.

In I Peter 1:9-11, suffering with respect to Christ's sufferings is connected with both *the salvation of the soul* and *the glory to be revealed* ("sufferings of Christ" [v. 11] should literally be translated, "sufferings with respect to [or 'on behalf of'] Christ").

The reference is NOT to Christ's sufferings BIT to Christians entering into these sufferings.

In I Peter 4:12, 13, such sufferings are connected with the trials and testings in James chapter one.

The trying of one's faith (working patient endurance) and *the sufferings with respect to Christ's sufferings* (suffering through trials and testings) *CANNOT* be separated one from the other. That which is in

view has to do with *patient endurance under trials and testings*, and the end of the matter in both James and I Peter is the salvation of one's soul.

Patient endurance under trials and testings has to do with being *approved* (as in James 1:12) and being *placed in the position of a son* (as in Heb. 2:10), *realizing the rights of primogeniture during the coming age*.

Sovereignty

To exercise sovereignty during the coming age, *one MUST possess a crown*; and to possess a crown *one MUST first be approved* for the crown.

Approval will occur at the judgment seat, and approval at this time will be based on *works which endure the fire* (I Cor. 3:11-15).

The "trying of one's faith," working *patient endurance*, is inseparably associated with "works" in James. Comparing Gen. 22:1ff with James 2:21 (along with the text leading into the passage in James) reveals that a servant's works emanate out of his patient endurance under trials and testings.

And viewing James 2:14-26 as a whole, works are seen to emanate out of faith. It is faithfulness under trials and testings, resulting in works. Such works are those which God would have the one being tried and tested to carry out; and these are the type works which will endure the fire at the judgment seat.

The trial of "every man's work" *in fire* at the judgment seat will be with *a view to approval or disapproval* — *approval if found worthy, disapproval if not found worthy*.

And this approval or disapproval will occur through testing, and the method of testing will be "by ['in'] fire":

"Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by ['in'] fire; and the fire shall try [test, with a view to approval] every man's work of what sort it is" (I Cor. 3:13).

Approval at the judgment seat will be for a prior revealed purpose. God's purpose in working *patient endurance* in a Christian's life through trials and testings (progressively effecting maturity) is the corresponding issuance of works in his life, *the heart* of that which this entire process leads into in the Epistle of James.

Approval follows Christians allowing the Lord to work patient endurance in their lives; and *approval* will, in turn, be followed by *sovereignty* during the coming age (Rev. 3:21).

1) To Receive a Kingdom, and to Return

During His earthly ministry, Christ delivered two companion parables to His disciples to graphically illustrate various aspects of the matter at hand — the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30), and the parable of the pounds (Luke 19:11-27).

The “man” or “nobleman” in the two parables called “his own servants,” delivered unto them “his goods,” commanded them to “occupy till I come,” and then departed “into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.”

The “man” or “nobleman” is *Christ*, the “servants” are *Christians*, “his goods” have to do with *His business*, and the “far country” is *heaven*. Christ has departed into heaven to receive a kingdom from His Father, with a view to returning for His servants (to reckon with them) following the reception of this kingdom (*cf.* Dan. 7:9-14; Rev. 11:15; 19:11ff).

During the time of the Lord’s absence, His servants are to “occupy” themselves with that entrusted to their care.

The “*ten servants*” and “*ten pounds*” in Luke’s gospel, showing *ordinal completion* in both instances, reveal that *ALL of His servants* and *ALL of His business* are in view. Christ called *ALL of His servants* and left them in charge of *ALL of His business* during the time of His absence.

While the parable of the pounds in Luke’s gospel reveals the overall scope of both the Lord’s servants and the Lord’s business (“ten servants,” “ten pounds”), the parable of the talents in Matthew’s gospel reveals the different portions of this business delivered to different servants within the overall scope of His dealings with His servants (“unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability”).

Simple teachings derived from comparing the two parables point to the fact that *EVERY servant* of the Lord has been entrusted with some facet of the Lord’s business during the time of His absence.

NO servant has been overlooked; NOR has any portion of the Lord’s business been withheld from His servants.

The one thing above all else required of servants is *faithfulness* (I Cor. 4:2; cf. Luke 12:42-46). Servants of the Lord *MUST exercise faithfulness in carrying out that portion of the Lord's business with which they have been entrusted.*

"Success" is an entirely different matter. No servant has ever been called to be successful, ONLY faithful. Success though will ALWAYS follow faithfulness, whether man so recognizes that which the Lord deems as success or not.

Placing the entire matter over into the framework of the Epistles of James and I Peter, it seems apparent that God brings about the necessary trials and testings in a Christian's life which will move that Christian into that area of work (that portion of the Lord's business) which has been outlined for his life (delivered unto him by the Lord).

The individual is to exercise faithfulness as he patiently endures trials and testings; and as he progressively matures in the faith after this fashion, the Lord brings about an outworking in his life of that facet of the Lord's business entrusted to him (cf. Phil. 1:6).

Thus, such works, in reality, are those done under the direction and leadership of the Lord as the Christian exercises faithfulness to his calling.

ALL of this occurs for a purpose.

In the parable of the talents and the parable of the pounds, the day eventually came when the "man" or "nobleman" returned to reckon with His servants — pointing to the return of Christ "in the air" for His servants and the subsequent reckoning "at the judgment seat" with His servants.

The ONLY concern at hand in this reckoning in both Matthew's and Luke's accounts was THAT which the servants had done with the Lord's possessions which had been entrusted to their care during the time of their Lord's absence, and the ONLY matter in view beyond this reckoning was THAT of occupying positions of sovereignty in the kingdom.

2) Thou Good and Faithful Servant

According to both the parable of the talents and the parable of the pounds, hearing a "Well done..." from the Lord at the time He reckons with His servants will be contingent on the servants having brought forth an increase through the use of the talents and/or pounds.

The increase not only had to come from within the scope of that which the Lord had left in charge of *ALL His servants (the ten pounds)* but it also had to come from within the scope of that which the Lord had entrusted *individually to EACH servant (the various talents)*.

In the parable of the pounds, the servants were judged strictly *on the basis of their use of the pounds during the time of their Lord's absence. NOTHING else was in view.*

The increase was wrought ONLY through the use of that which the Lord had entrusted to their care:

"Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds."

"And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds" (Luke 19:16, 18).

And the revealed reward for faithfulness therein was *completely commensurate with the increase:*

"And he said unto him [the first servant], Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities."

"And he said likewise to him [the second servant], Be thou also over five cities" (vv. 17, 19).

In the parable of the talents, a slightly different facet of the picture is presented. Judgment in this parable is based strictly on *the increase of that delivered to individual servants within the scope of their calling*, and an increase of the same proportion percentage-wise (though not necessarily in quantity) brought about identical commendations and rewards:

"And so he that had received the five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more."

He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them" (Matt. 25:20, 22).

The increase in each instance was one hundred percent, and the response of the Lord to both servants was identical:

"His Lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (vv. 21, 23).

The thought is NOT necessarily how hard or how long one works, BUT how faithful one is in carrying out the task which the Lord has delivered into his hands during the time allotted (cf. Matt. 20:1-16).

Through comparing the parable of the talents with the parable of the pounds, faithfulness among Christians to the task at hand is *NOT always the same*.

Thus, it would seem apparent that there could be increases of less than or more than one hundred percent, allowing a two-talent Christian to realize an increase above that of a five-talent Christian, or vice versa.

The number of talents is NOT really the issue. Faithfulness to the task at hand is that which God looks upon and requires.

And a person *ALWAYS* reaps that which he sows, whether faithfulness or unfaithfulness is manifested (Gal. 6:7-9).

Blessings, rewards, and crowns are for those exercising faithfulness in the proper use of the talents/pounds entrusted to them. A commendation of "Well done..." from the Lord awaits Christians exhibiting faithfulness after this fashion.

But, a task "well done" is just that — *one well done*.

"Jesus will never say 'Well done' to anyone *unless it has been well done*."

— G. Campbell Morgan

3) *Thou Wicked and Slothful Servant*

In both the parable of the talents and the parable of the pounds, *unfaithfulness* on the part of the Lord's servants and *the end result of unfaithfulness* are shown in the latter part of each parable. Such unfaithfulness resulted in rebuke and loss in each instance; and also in each instance, the unfaithful servant was not associated in any manner whatsoever with positions of power and authority in the kingdom.

These things can be clearly seen through the Lord's actions in both parables. That which the unfaithful servants possessed (the talents and pounds) was taken from them; and in the parable of the talents, the unfaithful servant was cast into "outer darkness."

In the parable of the talents, one talent had been delivered to the servant who proved unfaithful.

He was just as much a servant of the Lord and just as much in a position to bring forth an increase as the servants to whom five and two talents had been delivered; and, had this unfaithful servant brought forth an additional talent, which would have been an increase of one hundred percent, it is apparent that he would have received *the identical commendation* which the others received.

However, he hid his talent; it remained unused. He *did NOT* exercise faithfulness in that realm of service which the Lord had entrusted to him; and at the time when the Lord called all His servants before Him to ascertain how much each had gained through trading and trafficking in the Lord's business (through each servant exercising faithfulness to that entrusted to his care), the unfaithful servant experienced *rebuke* and *loss*.

The case of the unfaithful servant in the parable of the pounds is very similar.

He, as the other servants, *could have received authority over one or more cities had he brought forth an increase; BUT, he kept the pound "laid up in a napkin"* (v. 20). He didn't use the pound. He didn't involve himself in the Lord's business during the time of his Lord's absence. He proved unfaithful concerning that which the Lord had left in his care, during His time of absence.

And, following the Lord's return, at the time when the Lord called His servants before Him to ascertain how much each had gained through trading and trafficking (through each servant exercising faithfulness to that entrusted to his care), the unfaithful servant — as the unfaithful servant in the parable of the talents — experienced *rebuke* and *loss*.

The Kingdom

Two great mountain peaks dominate the whole of Scripture — *Calvary*, and *the Kingdom*.

Events depicted by the parable of the talents and the parable of the pounds *both pick up at a point beyond the events of Calvary*. It was at this

time that the “man” or “nobleman” — Christ — called “his own servants [ALL of His servants],” delivered unto them “his goods [ALL of His goods],” commanded them to “occupy until I come,” and then departed “into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.”

Then the matter at hand, as is evident in both parables, has one GOAL in view — *the kingdom, necessitating His return to take the kingdom.*

And the focal point in both centers around *the present activity of the Lord’s servants, in view of the coming kingdom of Christ.*

(Note that “the kingdom” is NOT the main thing in view toward which everything moves in these parables; rather, it is the ONLY thing in view toward which everything moves in these parables. And the present activity of the Lord’s servants, in view of the coming kingdom of Christ, is NOT the main activity, with a view to a particular, revealed goal; rather, it is the ONLY activity, with a view to a particular, revealed goal.

Attempting to read eternal verities [eternal salvation or eternal damnation] into these parables is to completely misunderstand, misinterpret, and misrepresent that which the Lord has set forth. And, beyond that, it completely hides the truth of the matter taught in these parables. It does away with that taught in these parables. And, beyond that, such a teaching can only present the salvation message to be carried to unsaved man in a corrupted respect, bringing works into a realm where works CANNOT exist.

It is plain that the servants in these two parables are those who had already availed themselves of the free gift of eternal salvation, wrought through Christ’s sacrificial death at Calvary. Such is evident from several observations:

First, these were the Lord’s “own servants.”

Second, they were the ones left in possession of the Lord’s “goods” during His time of absence.

Third, at the time of the Lord’s return, ALL of the servants were called together at the SAME time and place to give an account.

If the unfaithful servants represent the unsaved, as some contend, these two parables teach a general judgment of saved and unsaved — something completely foreign to Scripture.

Also, the fact that ALL of the Lord’s servants were called to an accounting at the SAME time and place leaves NO possible room for that which is widely taught in many circles today — a selective resurrection and rapture of Christians at the end of the present dispensation.

Fourth, the issue at hand in the reckoning was “faithfulness,” resulting in “fruit-bearing,” with a view to occupying or being denied positions as co-heirs with Christ in the kingdom [and NO unsaved person CAN EVER enter into such a judgment].)

The present activity of the Lord’s servants is made possible *ONLY* because of the finished work of Christ on Calvary’s Cross at His first coming; but, as is evident in both parables, this work of Christ — providing a propitiatory, vicarious sacrifice, effecting man’s redemption — *was an essential part of a much broader purpose.*

In His Own words, Christ revealed that His first coming involved two central issues: *His sufferings*, to be followed by *His glory* (cf. John 3:14-16; 18:37; Luke 24:25, 26).

Christ was born “King of the Jews”; and the turmoil caused by His birth (emanating from Satan through Herod) involved *His Kingship*, *NOT* things having to do with His also being “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (cf. Matt. 2:1ff; John 1:29).

Simeon at the temple in Jerusalem, shortly after the birth of Jesus, saw “the Lord’s Christ,” the One Who would effect “the consolation of Israel.”

Simeon’s words, “...mine eyes have seen thy salvation...A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel,” refer to national blessings wrought through Israel’s Messiah — redeemed Israel occupying the nation’s proper place with respect to all of the surrounding Gentile nations (Luke 2:25-32; cf. vv. 36-38).

And these things *CANNOT* exist apart from a restoration of the theocracy to Israel and God’s Son exercising His position as “King of the Jews” within this theocracy.

Before Christ began His public ministry, He met Satan face to face in the wilderness.

The first man, the first Adam, through Satan’s confrontation with Eve, had been defeated; and it was necessary that the second Man, the last Adam, experience a similar confrontation Himself to show that He was fully qualified to redeem that which the first Adam forfeited in the fall.

The first Adam had been created to rule the earth in the stead of Satan, who had previously disqualified himself. However, through

sin, the first Adam was also disqualified, allowing Satan to continue as ruler over the earth.

And the confrontation between Satan and the last Adam was with the same objective in view — *rulership over the earth, preceded by Calvary* (cf. Gen. 1:26-28; Luke 4:5, 6; 24:21-27).

Christ's appearance in the presence of Satan, showing that He was fully qualified to redeem that which the first Adam had forfeited in the fall, *anticipated NOT ONLY Calvary BUT also events beyond Calvary.*

It was at Calvary that Christ paid the price for man's redemption, making it possible for man to ultimately be brought back into the position for which he had been created — *a regal position.*

The entire earthly ministry of Christ centered around *His coming kingdom*, and His present ministry in the sanctuary centers around *the kingdom* as well.

THEN, when Christ comes forth from the sanctuary, *ALL activity will continue to be with a view to the kingdom, which will ultimately be realized.*

Christ's message to Israel during His earthly ministry had to do with *the kingdom*. His ministry centered around *an offer of the kingdom of the heavens to Israel*. There was a call for national repentance, *for the kingdom of the heavens was at hand* (Matt. 3:1-12; 4:17-25).

However, Israel spurned the offer, *the proffered kingdom* (that facet of the kingdom proclaimed, *the kingdom of the heavens, NOT the kingdom covenanted to David*) was taken from Israel, and a new nation — *the one new man "in Christ," the Church* — was called into existence to be the recipient of that which Israel had rejected.

Thus, the Church, as Israel, was called into existence *for purposes surrounding this kingdom* (Matt. 21:43; Eph. 2:11-15; I Peter 2:9, 10).

But Christ, following His first coming, didn't immediately ascend the throne (His Own throne and David's throne, not His Father's throne where He is presently seated, awaiting that coming day).

An entire dispensation has been set aside, during which the Spirit of God has been sent into the world to procure a bride for God's Son (to reign as consort queen with the Son in His kingdom). And while the Spirit is in the world searching for the bride throughout the present dispensation, Christ is ministering on the Christians' behalf in the Holy of Holies in the heavenly tabernacle (on the basis of His shed blood, shed at Calvary), *with the kingdom in view* (Heb. 4:11-16; 9:11, 12; 10:19ff).

The birth from above, imparting spiritual life, is made possible through Christ's finished work at Calvary. And the same One Who died at Calvary is presently ministering, as High Priest, in the heavenly sanctuary.

Christ is presently ministering after this fashion in order to provide a present cleansing (from defilement through contact with the world) for those having availed themselves of His past work at Calvary — *those destined to be "kings and priests," the new order of "sons" about to be brought forth to rule in the coming kingdom* (cf. John 13:8; Heb. 2:10; I John 1:6-2:2; Rev. 5:10).

Thus, EVERYTHING in Scripture moves toward that coming day when the kingdom will be realized. This teaching begins in the first chapter of Genesis and pervades all Scripture.

Man's creation had to do with *the kingdom*.

Man's fall had to do with *the kingdom*.

Man's redemption had / has to do with *the kingdom*.

Christ's past work had to do with *the kingdom*.

Christ's present work is occurring with *the same goal in view*.

And matters are the same with the Spirit's past and present work.

It is ALL about a kingdom to be realized on the seventh day, the seventh millennium, dating from Adam's creation.

This is the way Scripture opens in Genesis, this is the way Scripture continues from that point forward, and this is the way God will bring matters to pass after everything has been said and done.

1) *Salvation, with respect to the Kingdom*

Redeemed man is presently being called to *the throne in a heavenly realm*.

There is *a salvation* out ahead, the salvation of the soul, which is *the greatest thing God has ever designed for the one whom He created and has redeemed*.

This is a salvation which even the angels "desire to look into" (I Peter 1:12), for it includes *joint-heirship with God's Son over ALL things*.

The trials and testings of life — effecting patient endurance, ma-

turity in the faith — are with a view to approval at the judgment seat and subsequent positions of power and authority in the kingdom; and the instructed Christian knows that he is to “count it all joy” (James 1:2) when subjected to all the multifaceted trials and testings which the Lord, for a purpose, brings to pass in his life.

“If we suffer [‘patiently endure’], we shall also reign with him: if we deny him [not deny Christ per se but refuse to patiently endure], he also will deny us [refuse us a position with Him in the kingdom]” (II Tim. 2:12).

(The word translated “deny” in II Tim. 2:12 is *arneomai* in the Greek text, which could, as well, be understood and translated in the sense of “refuse,” which would be more in keeping with the overall thought in this verse.

That set forth in the verse has *NOTHING* to do with eternal salvation. Rather, the subject, both textually and contextually, has to do with *patiently enduring under trials and testings, with a view to reigning with Christ*.

The thought in the latter part of the verse is *NOT refusing or denying Christ*, for the word “him” is not in the Greek text. *It is refusing or denying that previously seen in the text*.

Following the thought, “If we patiently endure, we shall reign with him,” *the remainder of the verse parallels the first part of the verse*. The continued text, as previously seen, reads, “if we refuse,” *NOT “if we refuse him.”*

Refusing, contextually, *can ONLY have to do with refusing to patiently endure*. And as well, by the same token, Christ refusing the one who does not patiently endure *can ONLY have to do with refusing that person for a regal position with Him in His kingdom*.)

1) In That Coming Day

There is a day coming when every Christian will *render an account to his Lord*, and the present day is *the time of preparation for that coming day*.

The present day is the time when the Lord’s servants are in possession of the various talents; and the present day is the time when a work is being performed in the lives of Christians which is connected with maturity in the faith, the proper use of the talents entrusted to them, etc.

This day though will last *ONLY* as long as God's Son remains in the "far country."

One day Christ will receive the kingdom from His Father and then return to reckon with His servants.

This will be *an individual reckoning* — "...we must all appear... that every one may receive..."

This reckoning will be based strictly on *each servant's use of the talent/talents entrusted to his care during the time of his Lord's absence.*

And this reckoning with, in turn, have to do with co-heirship in the kingdom which Christ has gone away to receive.

This is *EXACTLY* what the Apostle Paul had in mind when he sought to warn "every man," and teach "every man in all wisdom," in order that he might present "every man perfect ['mature,' 'complete'] in Christ Jesus" (Col. 1:28).

The *warning* which Paul sounded had to do with the coming time of evaluation at the judgment seat.

His message along this line was really threefold:

- 1) *A present preparation.*
- 2) *A preparation with a view to a coming evaluation.*
- 3) *And a preparation and evaluation with a view to the kingdom to follow.*

The reference to "the hope of glory" in Col. 1:27, leading into Paul's ministry in verse twenty-eight, has to do with that hope which Christians possess of one day occupying positions as co-heirs with Christ in the kingdom.

This is referred to elsewhere in Scripture different ways, *e.g.*, as "that blessed hope" (Titus 2:13), "the hope set before us...as an anchor of the soul" (Heb. 6:18, 19), or "the hope that is in you" (I Peter 3:15).

Paul, above everything else, did not want any Christian within the scope of his ministry to experience rejection/disapproval when he appeared in Christ's presence at His judgment seat (Col. 1:28, 29).

Issues of the judgment seat, *in every instance*, will result in a *just recompense*.

EVERY Christian will receive EXACTLY what he deserves — reward, or chastisement — in complete accordance with revealed faithfulness or unfaithfulness in carrying out or failing to carry out that portion of the Lord's business which had been entrusted to him.

And this will be with a view to occupying or being denied positions of power and authority in the kingdom which will follow.

Appendix

The Outer Darkness

Relative to Israel, Then Christians

“And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: and there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 25:30).

The nature of the treatment awaiting the unfaithful servant at the hands of his Lord in the parable of the talents has been completely misunderstood by numerous Christians, leading them to conclude that the Lord was dealing with an unsaved person at this point in the parable.

The Lord sharply rebuked the unfaithful servant, commanded that the talent be removed from his possession, and then commanded that he be cast into the darkness outside.

The main problem which most Christians have with the latter part of this parable is the ultimate outcome of the Lord’s dealings with His unfaithful servant — the fact that he was cast into *outer darkness*.

“Outer darkness,” within their way of thinking, is to be equated with *Hell* (the final abode of the unsaved in *the lake of fire*). And knowing that a Christian can never be cast into *Hell* — for the one in whom the Spirit has breathed life possesses a life which can never be taken from him — those equating “outer darkness” with *Hell* are left with *NO recourse other than to look upon the Lord’s dealings with the unfaithful servant and the Lord’s dealings with the unsaved as synonymous*.

It probably goes without saying that had the Lord treated the unfaithful servant in a somewhat less severe fashion, very few Christians reading this account would ever think about questioning the individual’s salvation, for the response of the unfaithful servant would be perfectly in line with verses such as I Cor. 3:13, 15 and would have presented no indication, in their way of viewing matters, of the status of his salvation.

BUT, the Lord's sharp rebuke, the removal of the talent from his possession, and his being cast into outer darkness constitute what many view as *a sequence of events which could NOT possibly befall a Christian*.

Such an outlook on this passage though is *COMPLETELY CONTRARY to ANY Biblical teaching on salvation by grace through faith* (seeing the possession or non-possession of this salvation through man's works, actions).

Or, such an outlook on the passage, as well, ignores both the text and the context, resulting in an interpretation which, contextually, is completely contrary to that seen in this passage or in any other similar passage in Scripture.

And by forcing erroneous interpretations of the preceding nature on this passage, the door will have been opened for all types of erroneous interpretations in related passages of Scripture.

Just to name a few, the door will have been opened for the introduction of:

- 1) Erroneous views pertaining to salvation by grace through faith.
- 2) Erroneous views of the purpose for the present dispensation.
- 3) Erroneous views of the coming judgment of Christians.
- 4) Erroneous views of the perfect justice and righteousness of God.

Then, if introducing erroneous views of the preceding nature in different realms of Biblical doctrine through a forced, non-contextual interpretation is not enough in and of itself, something else should be noted.

Such an outlook on the parable of the talents in Matt. 25:14-30 will, as well, close the door to the correct interpretation of this complete, overall passage, the one which the Lord had in mind when He related this parable in the presence of His disciples.

Error will have fostered error and closed doors, leaving the student of Scripture adhering to erroneous systems of thought and in a position *where he CANNOT possibly understand aright the Lord's present and future dealings with His household servants*.

A Darkness on the Outside

The expression “outer darkness” only appears three times in Scripture, and all three are found in Matthew’s gospel (8:12; 22:13; 25:30). Luke, in his gospel, alludes to outer darkness in a parallel reference to Matt. 8:11, 12 (Luke 13:28, 29) but does not use the words. He simply reduces the expression to “without” (ASV).

In the Greek text, both Matthew and Luke use the compound word *ekballo*, which means to “cast out” (*ek*, “out”; *ballo*, “to cast”). Following the use of this word, the place into which individuals in these passages are cast is given in both gospels.

In Matthew’s gospel, the place where individuals are cast is described as “into outer darkness [*lit.*, from the Greek text, ‘into the darkness, the outer,’ or as we would normally say in an English translation, ‘into the outer darkness’].”

(In the Greek text there are definite articles before both the noun and adjective, with the adjective following the noun — “the darkness, the outer.”

In a construction of this nature, through a repetition of the article, there is an emphasis placed on the adjective, “outer.” It is not just any darkness, but a particular darkness. It is a particular place of darkness outside and contiguous to a particular place of light.)

Then, in Luke’s gospel the place where individuals are cast is described as “without,” or “on the outside.”

That is, through comparing Matthew’s and Luke’s accounts, they are cast “without,” or “on the outside” of a place of light; and this place, in Matthew’s gospel, is described as a place of darkness.

Accordingly, many Christians in that day will find themselves in the darkness outside the lighted banqueting hall (Matt. 22:9-13); and these same Christians will, as well, subsequently find themselves outside the scope of the rule and reign of the One Who said, “I am the light of the world” (Matt. 8:11, 12; 25:19-30; John 9:5).

And the expressed thoughts by both Matthew and Luke locate this place immediately outside and contiguous to the region from which those in view are cast. Both passages refer to the same place — *a particular region of darkness outside a particular region of light.*

The place from which these individuals are cast is one of light. This is possibly illustrated best in Matthew chapter twenty-two.

In this chapter, "outer darkness" is used to describe conditions in an area immediately outside the festivities attendant a royal wedding. And such festivities in the East would normally be held at night, inside a lighted banqueting hall.

On the outside there would be a darkened courtyard; and the proximity of this darkened courtyard to the lighted banqueting hall would correspond perfectly to the expression, "the outer darkness," or "the darkness on the outside."

A person in the banqueting hall, cast into the courtyard, would be cast out of the light into the darkness. This is the picture, and this is *EXACTLY* what will occur in relation to that which is being dealt with in Matt. 8:11, 12; 22:1-14; 25:14-30 — *i.e., cast out of the marriage festivities and out of the kingdom which follows.*

"Outer darkness" is simply one realm immediately outside of another realm, called "outer darkness" by way of contrast to the "inner light." Those cast out *are removed FROM a sphere associated with light and placed outside IN a sphere associated with darkness.*

Following events of the judgment seat of Christ, servants having been shown *faithful* and servants having been shown *unfaithful* will find themselves in two entirely different realms.

Servants having been shown *faithful* will find themselves among those forming the bride of Christ and in a position to attend the marriage festivities. And these individuals will subsequently be positioned on the throne as co-heirs with Christ, forming the consort queen who will reign with the "King of kings, and Lord of lords."

Servants having been shown *unfaithful* though *will NOT* form part of the bride; *NOR* will they be allowed to attend the marriage festivities; *NOR* will they be allowed to ascend the throne with Christ.

Rather, they will find themselves in a place outside the realm where these activities occur.

They will *be removed from the inner light* (be removed from a place associated with events surrounding the marriage supper of the Lamb and the reign of Christ which follows) and *be cast into the darkness outside* (be cast into a place separated from events surrounding the marriage supper of the Lamb and the reign of Christ which follows).

This is *the* WAY “outer darkness” is used in Scripture; and this is *the* ONLY WAY the expression is used.

Any teaching concerning “outer darkness,” remaining true to the text, *MUST approach the subject ONLY from a textual and contextual fashion of this nature, recognizing the subject matter at hand.*

Contextual Considerations

The Gospel of Matthew outlines a sequence of events pertaining to Israel and the kingdom, which anticipate the existence of the Church, after a manner not seen in the other three gospels.

The central message in Matthew’s gospel, leading up to the events surrounding Calvary, pertains to:

The offer of the kingdom of the heavens to Israel.

The rejection of the kingdom by Israel.

The removal of the kingdom from Israel.

These things, in turn, anticipate the Church subsequently being called into existence *to be the recipient of that which Israel rejected.*

Matthew presents God dealings with *the house of Israel* in relation to the kingdom of the heavens, with *the house* ultimately being left “desolate” because of the nation’s rejection (Matt. 23:2, 13, 38); and Matthew also anticipates God dealings with *a house* separate and distinct from Israel in relation to the kingdom of the heavens (Matt. 16:18, 19; 21:33-43; 24:40-25:30).

That previously applicable to Israel in relation to the proffered kingdom *NOW* becomes applicable to the Church in relation to the proffered kingdom.

It is within this framework, along with individual contextual settings, that Christ’s three references to “outer darkness” are to be understood in Matthew’s gospel.

1) Matthew 8:11, 12

The first appearance of “outer darkness” in Matthew’s gospel is in Matt. 8:11, 12, and the text and context both have to do with *the message of the kingdom.* Jesus had just finished a lengthy discourse to

His disciples, commonly called “The Sermon on the Mount” (chs. 5-7), which is a connected discourse dealing with *entrance into or exclusion from the kingdom of the heavens* (cf. Matt. 5:1-12; 6:33; 7:13-27).

Preceding the Sermon on the Mount, the subject matter concludes in chapter four with the message concerning the kingdom.

Then, the subject matter continues in chapter eight, following the Sermon on the Mount, with this same message concerning the kingdom.

The message at this point actually picks up where chapter four left off — with supernatural, physical healings, and later with supernatural provision.

These supernatural, physical healings appear before, in conjunction with, and after the text concerning the kingdom of the heavens and outer darkness in chapter eight. Then accounts of supernatural material provisions for the people follow (e.g., Mark 6:32-44; John 2:1-11).

These miraculous works of Christ among the Jewish people were *signs* having to do with “the kingdom” (cf. Isa. 35:1ff; Matt. 4:23-25; 10:5-8; 11:2-5). They constituted the credentials of the messengers of the gospel of the kingdom and pointed to that which Israel could have — *supernatural healing* (for both the people and the land [cf. II Chron. 7:14; Isa. 1:4-9]), *supernatural provision*, and *the restoration of the theocracy* — *IF the nation would repent*.

It is within a contextual setting such as this that “outer darkness” first appears in Matthew’s gospel.

Actually, the subject arose after a Roman centurion expressed faith that Christ could heal his servant (who was sick at home) by just speaking the word. Christ then used the faith exhibited by this Gentile to illustrate a contrasting lack of faith exhibited by those in Israel. Christ said that He had “not found so great faith, no, not in Israel” (v. 10).

And, immediately following this, Christ spoke of a day when *many* would come “from the east and the west” and “sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of the heavens.”

That is, a separate and distinct group of individuals, taken mainly from the Gentiles, would exhibit faith on the same order as this centurion and enter into the heavenly sphere of the kingdom. *BUT*, those to whom this heavenly sphere of the kingdom naturally belonged, because of their lack of faith, would be excluded. The “sons of the kingdom [those forming the nation of Israel]” would be “cast out” (vv. 11, 12).

The entire scene anticipated Matt. 21:43 where the heavenly portion of the kingdom was taken from Israel in view of a separate and distinct group ultimately *occupying that which did NOT naturally belong to them*.

This group would be comprised of those who, at that time, were *aliens, without hope, and without God (i.e., Gentiles)*. But “in Christ Jesus” these conditions would change. They would be “made nigh by the blood of Christ.”

And, through the immersion in the Spirit, those having been “made nigh by the blood of Christ” would become *new creations* “in Christ,” part of *the one new man*, who is “neither Jew nor Greek [‘Gentile’].”

Then, through being “in Christ” (Who is Abraham’s Seed), they, through this positional standing, would become “Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise [the heavenly portion of the promise given to Abraham and his progeny, which was taken from Israel]” (II Cor. 5:17; Gal. 3:17, 18, 26-29; Eph. 2:12-15; cf. Gen. 22:17, 18).

2) Matthew 22:1-14

The second appearance of “outer darkness” in Matthew’s gospel is in the parable of the marriage festival in chapter twenty-two. The contextual usage in this passage is in association with *the kingdom of the heavens and the activities attendant a royal wedding*.

Contextually, the “King” and His “Son” (v.2) can only be identified as *God the Father* and *God the Son*. The “servants” and “other servants” (vv. 3, 4) sent “to call them that were bidden [Israel]” would refer to the ministries of *the prophets*.

This offer, however, was spurned, and the messengers were ill-treated.

Then, last of all, God sent His Son — with John as His forerunner — saying, “They will reverence my Son” (*ref. previous parable [21:33-39]*). *BUT*, although God had stated that they would reverence His Son, all things which the Jewish people would do were known to Him from the beginning; and this, as foretold, was not to happen.

Jesus, near the conclusion of His earthly ministry, rode into Jerusalem astride an ass, presenting Himself as Israel’s King in fulfillment of the prophecy in Zech. 9:9 (Matt. 21:1-11).

And He, too, was rejected, culminating in His crucifixion and death (*cf. Matt. 21:37-39; 22:1-6; 23:1-36*).

The rejection and impending crucifixion of God's Son was *the FINAL blow*.

The kingdom was *THEN* taken from Israel and extended to a separate and distinct nation (*cf.* Matt. 21:40-46; 22:8-10; I Peter 2:9, 10). And, though God used this new nation — *the one new man* "in Christ" — to re-offer the kingdom to Israel (seen in the Book of Acts), rejection on Israel's part continued (with the re-offer of the kingdom being withdrawn about 62 A.D., at the time of Paul's announcement in Acts 28:28).

Individuals comprising this new nation are synonymous with those from "the east and the west" in Matt. 8:11 and those out in "the highways" in Matt. 22:10. And *unbelief on Israel's part*, followed by *others being brought in to be the recipients of that which naturally belonged to Israel*, leads up to the mention of "outer darkness" in both passages.

At this point though there is a difference in the two passages.

Outer darkness in Matt. 8:12 is reserved for "the sons of the kingdom [a reference to Israel in this text]," but outer darkness in Matt. 22:13 is reserved for an individual appearing at the marriage festivities attendant the wedding of God's Son. This man appeared without the proper attire required for entrance into these festivities. He appeared without a wedding garment (*ref.* Chapter IX in this book).

Israel had previously been mentioned in verses three through seven, with the man appearing without a wedding garment being identified with those called *after* the kingdom had been taken from Israel (*cf.* vv. 8-10, 14). This man would, thus, be among those from "the east and the west" in Matt. 8:11 or those found in "the highways" in Matt. 22:10.

To reconcile that which is taught in these two passages, bear in mind that at the time of Matt. 8:11, 12 the kingdom of the heavens had not yet been taken from Israel; but Matt. 22:1-14 was given at a time *following* the announcement concerning the removal of the heavenly portion of the kingdom from Israel, with the anticipated offer of the kingdom being extended to another group (Matt. 21:33-43).

In both passages it is *the recipients of the offer* of the kingdom of the heavens who find themselves associated with the place called "outer darkness." In Matthew chapter eight, the offer of the kingdom of the heavens was open to Israel alone, even though the allusion was made to others being brought into this kingdom. But at the time of

the events in Matthew chapter twenty-two, the announcement had previously been made concerning this part of the kingdom being taken from Israel; and now the new recipient of the proffered kingdom was in view (though this new recipient — *the one new man* “in Christ” [I Peter 2:9-11] — was yet to be brought into existence [Matt. 16:18]).

Thus, “outer darkness” is used the same way in both passages. It is used in association with those to whom the offer of the kingdom of the heavens was *THEN* being extended.

3) Matthew 25:14-30

The third appearance of “outer darkness” in Matthew’s gospel is in a tripartite, connected discourse which deals with *the Jews, the Christians, and the Gentiles* — the Olivet Discourse.

The inception of Christianity *awaited a future date* at this time; but the discourse, given *following* Christ’s statement that He would build His Church and *following* the removal of the kingdom of the heavens from Israel, anticipated *the one new man* “in Christ” being brought into existence (Matt. 16:18, 19; 21:33-43; cf. Eph. 2:12-15).

The first part of the discourse (24:4-39) deals exclusively with events pertaining to Israel during the coming Tribulation and with the return of the nation’s Messiah at the conclusion of the Tribulation. Israel had rejected the offer of the kingdom of the heavens, and now the nation must pass through the Great Tribulation and await her Messiah “in the way of thy judgments” (Isa. 26:8).

The second part of the discourse (24:40-25:30) deals with the new recipients of the offer of the kingdom of the heavens. The emphasis throughout this section is upon present faithfulness in view of a future time of reckoning, anticipating the kingdom.

The third part of the discourse (25:31-46) deals with judgment upon living, saved Gentiles following Christ’s return at the conclusion of the Tribulation. These would be Gentiles saved mainly under the ministry of the 144,000 of Rev. 7, 14 (cf. Matt. 25:31-46; Rev. 6:9-11; 7:9-17; 20:4-6), who will proclaim the “gospel of the kingdom” to the ends of the earth during the last half of the Tribulation (cf. Matt. 24:13, 14; Rev. 12:5, 17).

In this fashion, the three sections of the Olivet Discourse reveal *God's dealings with the three segments of mankind — Jew, Christian, and Gentile — either during and/or at the conclusion of the present dispensation.*

In the Jewish section of this discourse (24:4-39), God's dealings with Israel are restricted to the time during and immediately following the coming Tribulation.

Israel has been set aside during the present time while God removes from the Gentiles “a people for his name” (Acts 15:14). The time when God will deal with Israel once again awaits the completion of His purpose for the present dispensation.

This is the reason why the Jewish section of the Olivet Discourse begins with Israel in the Tribulation. This section begins at the point where God resumes His dealings with Israel once again.

In the Christian section of this discourse (24:40-25:30), unlike the Jewish section, God does deal with a people during the present time — a time preceding the Tribulation. And those with whom God is presently dealing are the recipients of the offer of the kingdom of the heavens following Israel's rejection of this offer, which is EXACTLY what is in view in this section of the Olivet Discourse.

(There is a widespread interpretation which associates Matt. 24:40-25:30 with Israel rather than with Christendom, but such CANNOT be correct. God's present dealings with a segment of mankind in relation to the kingdom of the heavens, among other things, *prohibit* this view.

God is NOT dealing with Israel today. The nation has been set aside for a dispensation. And the kingdom of the heavens, which is the matter at hand throughout this section, has been taken from Israel.

Thus, such an interpretation is NOT ONLY strained and unnatural, BUT it is NOT possible. Such an interpretation will NOT at all fit the tenor of that taught in Scripture leading into the Olivet Discourse. It is completely out of line with that which is taught in Matthew chapters twenty-one through twenty-three.)

In the Gentile section of this discourse (25:31-46), ONLY the Gentiles are in view. God, at that time in the future when these events occur, will have completed His dealings with Israel and the Church.

And “judgment must begin at the house of God” (I Peter 4:17). Christians and the nation of Israel must be judged first, in that order.

God will complete His dispensational dealings with Christians first (which includes judgment).

And this will be followed by God completing His dispensational dealings with Israel (which includes judgment).

THEN, God will deal with saved Gentiles coming out of the Tribulation, in judgment, immediately prior to His 1,000-year reign over the earth (which will be 1,000 years of judging — ruling the nations with “a rod of iron”).

The preceding groundwork has been laid in order to place the third and last mention of “outer darkness” in Matthew’s gospel in its proper perspective. And this third and last mention lies *at the end of the parable of the talents, which concludes the Christian section of the Olivet Discourse.*

However, “outer darkness” is not restricted to the parable of the talents in this section. The parables about *one taken, another left* (24:40-44), *the Householder and His servant* (24:45-51), *the ten virgins* (25:1-13), and *the talents* (25:14-30) are inseparably interrelated after such a fashion that the expression “outer darkness” *MUST be looked upon as applicable in parallel passages in all four.*

Four parables follow the parable of the fig tree and comments concerning the “days of Noah” (as previously seen, the parable of the fig tree and the days of Noah have to do with *Israel and the nations during the Tribulation, NOT today*). And the main thought throughout this entire section of Scripture (the parable of the fig tree, the days of Noah, and the four subsequent parables) centers around *the due season, watchfulness, and readiness* for the Lord’s return, introduced in the parable of the fig tree and comments concerning the days of Noah (the two passages which set the tone for the four parables which follow).

In the parable about one taken, another left, *watchfulness*, having to do with *faithfulness*, resulted in the person being *ready for the Lord’s return*; and this, in turn, resulted in *corresponding positive action by the Lord when He did return.*

But *unwatchfulness*, having to do with *unfaithfulness*, resulted in the person *NOT being ready for the Lord’s return*; and this, in turn, resulted in *corresponding negative action by the Lord when He did return.*

And though Christians *will NOT see* the days referred to by the parable of the fig tree and the days of Noah, *they CAN see* signs on every hand, having to do with both, that the world is rapidly approaching that

time referred to by the prophets and these verses in Matthew's gospel.

A remnant of Jews is back in the land (resulting from a Zionistic movement), existing as a recognized nation among nations; and sexual promiscuity, as portended by Noah's day, has become rampant in our day (though not an open participation of angels in the matter; such awaits the days of the coming Tribulation [both heterosexual and homosexual, for that which occurred during the days of Lot are to mark this time as well]).

Then in *the parable of the Householder and His servant*, the thought drawn from that which has preceded centers around *faithfulness* in dispensing "meat in due season [doctrine relating to Christ's return]."

If the servant *remains faithful*, he will be made ruler over all the Lord's goods; but if the servant *becomes unfaithful*, he will be "cut asunder" and be appointed "his portion with the hypocrites."

(Note that by comparing Matt. 24:45-51 with the parallel section in Luke 12:42-46, it is clear that *ONLY one servant* is in view throughout. *The servant either remains faithful or he becomes unfaithful.*)

The parable of the ten virgins immediately following begins with the word, "Then," pointing back to the parable of the Householder and His servant. The parable of the ten virgins covers *the SAME subject matter*, providing additional information from a different perspective; and this parable concludes in a similar fashion by *showing that which awaits BOTH those who are ready and those who are not ready at the time of the Lord's return*.

The parable of the talents, immediately following the parable of the ten virgins, is introduced in the Greek text by the words *Hosper gar* ("For just as"); and these two introductory words tell the reader that the parable about to follow is just like the parable which has preceded.

In a respect, these two words tell the reader that an explanatory parable for the parable of the ten virgins (and the two parables preceding the parable of the ten virgins as well) is about to be given.

Verse fourteen, introducing the parable of the talents, should literally read:

"For it [referring back to *the parable of the ten virgins*, and, consequently, the parables of *the Householder and His servant* and *one taken, another left*] is just as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods."

The parables, “one taken, another left,” “the Householder and His servant,” “the ten virgins,” and “the talents” *ALL center around the same basic issues. ALL present different facets of EXACTLY the same thing.*

(Note that a parable, by its own definition — from the meaning of the word itself [from the compound Greek word *parabole* (*para*, “alongside”; *bole*, “to cast”)] — is simply one truth placed alongside of a previous truth to help explain the previous truth [*i.e.*, a truth cast alongside (which would necessitate a previous truth)].

In the parable of the talents, a truth is placed alongside of a previous truth [in this case, the parable of the ten virgins, along with the two parables preceding the parable of the ten virgins (since all deal with the same basic issues)]. And the truth being placed alongside [the parable of the talents] is being given to help explain [provide additional light for] that which Christ had previously stated in the preceding three parables.)

In the parable about *one taken, another left*, the thought from the Greek text regarding the English translation, “one shall be taken, and the other left” (vv. 40, 41) should be understood in the sense of “one shall be received alongside [alongside the Lord], and the other turned away [turned away from the Lord].”

The two verbs used in the Greek text are: *paralambano* and *aphiemi*.

Paralambano is a compound word, meaning “to take alongside,” “to receive alongside” (*para*, “alongside”; *lambano*, “to take,” “to receive”); and *aphiemi* means “to send away,” “to turn away.”

The entire scene is judicial, as evident from the succeeding three parables — all dealing with different facets of the same thing.

In the parable, comparing it with the other parables, *faithfulness* resulted in a position alongside the Lord, but *unfaithfulness* resulted in the forfeiture of this position.

(The rapture is seen only indirectly in this parable or in any one of the three succeeding parables. Thoughts in these parables have to do with *events preceding the rapture and with events following the rapture, NOT with the rapture itself per se.*)

In the parable of the Householder and His servant, *faithfulness* would result in the servant being positioned as ruler over all the Lord’s goods, but *unfaithfulness* would result in the servant (the same

servant) being assigned a place with the hypocrites.

In the parable of the ten virgins, *the faithful servants* (wise virgins) were allowed to enter into the marriage festivities, but *the unfaithful servants* (foolish virgins) were excluded from these festivities.

And in the parable of the talents, *the faithful servants* were allowed to enter into “the joy” of their Lord, but *the unfaithful servant* was cast into the darkness outside (*i.e.*, cast into a place of darkness outside Christ’s “joy,” having to do with the things surrounding His reign over the earth, which would include the preceding marriage festivities [*cf.* Luke 19:16-19; Heb. 12:1, 2]).

Understanding the interrelationship between these parables and comparing them with the parable of the marriage festival in chapter twenty-two, *it becomes clear that “outer darkness” is associated with all four.*

This is the place where the unfaithful servants found themselves in all of the parables, even though the expression is used only in the parable of the talents. One parable describes the *place*, and all four describe *conditions* in this place — whether in a place outside the marriage festivities or outside Christ’s subsequent reign.

Comparing the parable of the Householder and His servant with the parable of the talents, note that positions of rulership are in view in both parables.

ONLY the faithful will be apportioned these positions. The unfaithful *will NOT ONLY* be denied positions in the kingdom *BUT* they will be apportioned their place “with the hypocrites,” where there will be “the weeping and the gnashing of teeth [an Eastern expression signifying deep grief]” (Matt. 24:51; 25:30, ASV); and this place is referred to as “the outer darkness” (ASV) in the latter parable.

(Note the same expression in Matt. 22:13 in connection with “the outer darkness” [*cf.* also Matt. 8:12]. Also note that the unfaithful among the ten virgins were excluded from the marriage festivities [25:10-12], as was the man without a wedding garment [who was bound and cast into “the outer darkness”] in Matt. 22:11-13.)

He Went Out ...

“But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest’s palace...

Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, 'Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee.'

But he denied before them all, saying, 'I know not what thou sayest'...

And again he denied with an oath, 'I do not know the man'...

Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, 'I know not the man.' And immediately the cock crew.

And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, 'Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.' And he went out and wept bitterly" (Matt. 26:58, 69-75).

"And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully...

If we suffer ['patiently endure'], we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us" (II Tim. 2:5, 12).

Possibly the best illustration given in Scripture showing the downward path which it is possible for a Christian to take, ultimately leading into the place of darkness outside the light, is the recorded actions of the Apostle Peter immediately preceding Christ's crucifixion.

Christ had informed His disciples that all of them would "be offended" during the next few hours because of Him; and from that time until the time Peter is seen weeping bitterly because of his offense, there are *seven steps* recorded in Scripture showing how Peter was brought into the condition in which he found himself at this time (Matt. 26:31-75).

(The word "offended [Gk., *skandalizo*]" in Matt. 26:31 has to do with *something causing opposition, which can result in a fall*. This is the same word used in Matt. 13:21, which, according to Luke 8:13, can result in a *falling away, apostasy*. The words "fall away" in Luke 8:13 are the translation of *aphistemi* in the Greek text. This is the verb form of the noun *apostasia*, from which we derive our English word "apostasy."

Apostasia, a compound word, simply means, "to stand away from." The word *stasis* means "to stand"; and the preposition *apo*, prefixed to the word, means, "from." Thus, *apostasia* has to do with standing away from something else [e.g., standing away from a previously held position, belief, etc.].

The disciples — and particularly Peter — in this respect, because of opposition, *apostatized*. That is, *they stood away from* the position which they had previously held with Christ, which is *EXACTLY* what Christ alluded to in Matt. 26:31ff.)

Step One: Peter *would NOT* accept Christ's statement concerning that which the disciples were about to do, as he, on a previous occasion, *had NOT* accepted Christ's statement and had to be rebuked by the Lord (Matt. 16:21-23).

Peter then made his boast that he *would NEVER* allow opposition to bring about a falling away (*cf.* James 4:13-15); and in response to Christ's subsequent statement that he would deny Him three times that very night, Peter responded, "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee"; and the other disciples responded likewise.

BUT during the next few hours, *NOT ONLY* would Peter deny Christ "three times," *BUT* "all the disciples" would forsake Him and flee (Matt. 26:33-35, 56).

Step Two: In this boast by Peter and the disciples, a double negative is used in the Greek text, both in verse thirty-three relative to not allowing opposition to bring about a falling away and in verse thirty-five relative to denying Christ.

The use of a double negative in the Greek text (quite common in the Greek New Testament) is for emphasis, making the thought of "never" or "not" very emphatic.

An English translation should be worded in a manner to show this:

"Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, *yet will I never, no not ever*, be offended...

Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, *yet will I not, no not ever*, deny thee. Likewise said all the disciples" (vv. 33, 35).

Christ then took Peter, James, and John, separate from the other disciples, into a particular place in the Garden of Gethsemane. Once in this place, He told them, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me."

However, when Jesus went aside to pray, rather than watching, the disciples fell asleep. The Lord then had to rebuke them *for NOT watching and praying* that they "enter not into temptation" (Matt. 26:36-41).

Step Three: Judas had betrayed Christ to the religious leaders of Israel; and he then led "a band of men and officers," dispatched by the religious leaders, into the garden to take Christ. Seeing them, Peter

drew his sword and resorted to the arm of flesh, to human means, to accomplish his previous boast.

Any battle in which the disciples found themselves engaged was to be *spiritual*, and it is *EXACTLY* the same for disciples today.

But Peter sought to force his will on others *through physical means* (the day when Christ will take the sceptre and “strike through kings” *was future at that time, and it remains future today* [Ps. 110:1ff; cf. Ps. 2:1ff]).

In this respect, Peter’s actions *were completely out of place, as similar actions by Christians would be today*).

(Christians can exert far more power through prayer than through any fleshly means possible.

In fact, the chasm separating the two is as far as the East is from the West. One has to do with accessing Divine, infinite power; the other has to do with accessing humanistic, finite power.)

Peter, in his vain, fleshly effort, cut off an ear of one of the high priest’s servants. But Jesus, completely rejecting his actions, told him to put up the sword; and He then healed the servant, restoring his ear (Matt. 26:47-55; Luke 22:50, 51).

Step Four: Then the actions of Peter and the other disciples continued accordingly. The man of flesh had gained the ascendancy, and *the disciples were NOW doing EXACTLY what they had previously stated would NOT occur*.

Though having previously boasted of that which they would do, *the disciples were found sleeping when they should have been watching and praying; and Peter had resorted to the arm of flesh, as he sought to carry out his previous boast*.

And this was followed by *ALL the disciples doing EXACTLY what they had previously stated would NOT occur*:

“Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled” (Matt. 26:56b; cf. v. 35).

Step Five: Peter then began to follow Christ “afar off.” He had taken the sword, and it was about to result in his ruin. He had resorted to the arm of flesh and was in the process of reaping that which he had sown (cf. Matt. 26:52; Gal. 6:7, 8).

Because of his previous actions, the closeness which had been his in Christ's inner circle, along with James and John, was now gone (*cf.* Matt. 17:1; 26:37, 58).

Step Six: When Jesus was taken into the high priest's palace for questioning by the religious leaders, Peter, following Him "afar off," remained outside in the courtyard. And rather than identifying himself with Christ on the inside, he sat down with the enemy on the outside (Matt. 26:69; Luke 22:54, 55).

Step Seven: Peter's past actions had now led him to the final point in his fall.

When accused of being one of Christ's disciples, Peter denied his Lord on three separate occasions, followed by the cock crowing a second time just as Christ had foretold.

And the Lord, being led at that moment past Peter unto "the hall of judgment" (John 18:28), turned and *looked* upon Peter, awakening him to the stark reality of that which he had done (Matt. 26:34, 69-74; Mark 14:72; Luke 22:61).

The Lord's look in this passage was far more than a brief glance. The word used in the Greek text (*emblepo*) points to Christ fixing His eyes upon Peter in an intently searching manner. Peter came under *the Lord's scrutiny* for his actions, causing him to remember that which had previously occurred. Peter then "went out, and wept bitterly" (Luke 22:62).

(The scene *can ONLY be judgmental in nature*, portraying that future day when Christ, with "eyes as a flame of fire," will judge those who are His, as they stand in His presence [*cf.* Rev. 1:14].)

Peter, because of his past actions, following Christ's intently searching look, found himself *outside, weeping bitterly*. And the whole of the matter surrounding Peter presents the whole of the matter surrounding unfaithful Christians and outer darkness.

Peter, because of his actions, following Christ's intently searching look, found himself in a place comparable to the place which Scripture describes as "the outer darkness," where there is "the weeping and the gnashing of teeth" (*cf.* Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30, ASV).

Scripture Index

Genesis

Chapters 1-4	63
1:1	174
1:1-28	175
1:1-2:3	33
1:2ff	3, 4
1:2-4	60
1:2, 26, 28	63
1:4	61
1:11, 12	77
1:12	82
1:26-28	62, 76
.....	183, 211, 252
Chapter 2	77
2:1-3	51
2:2, 3	195, 224
2:7	3
2:9, 15-17	76
2:21-23	62
3:1ff	3
3:6, 7, 17, 18	175
3:6, 22-24	76
3:21	4
3:21-24	102
Chapters 4-8	25
.....	26, 28
4:10	4
6:2-4	231
9:25-27	125
12:1-3	125, 167
.....	168, 206
12:1-3, 10	239
12:2, 3	214
12:3	167, 225
15:16	122, 230
16:1ff	239
16:1, 2	29
16:9	44
17:18-21	125
18:22	28, 101
19:1, 27, 30	100
19:17, 26	27
19:27, 30	28
Chapters 21-25	28
21:5-12	125
22:1ff	240, 244
22:2	125
22:7-13	4
22:17, 18	126, 127

.....	160, 167, 168
.....	206, 214, 225, 263
Chapters 23, 25	29
24:3, 4, 10	30
24:10, 36, 53	81, 129
24:36	216
24:36, 53, 57-59	30
25:1, 2, 5	29
25:1-6	125
25:5	216
25:27-34	129, 215
25:34	242
27:26-38	129
27:34-38	242
35:22	215
41:39-45	118
49:3, 4	215

Exodus

3:6	125
4:22	124, 213
4:22, 23	212, 225
12:1-13, 29, 30	6
12:3-13	4
12:4, 5, 12-15	5
12:14-20	164
12:15	7
Chapter 15	206
16:14-35	115
19:5, 6	167, 168, 225
19:6	125, 189, 199, 206
29:4	47, 201
29:4, 18-21	47
30:19, 21	47
30:21	201
31:12-17	194
31:13-17	5, 51
32:9, 14	229
32:34-33:1	229
40:12-15, 30-32	201
40:12-15, 32-40	47

Leviticus

1:11	99
23:1ff	5

Numbers

Chapters 13, 14	51
.....	111

Chapters 13-15	52
13:21-25	225
13:26-30	226
13:28, 29	230
13:30	66
13:32, 33	231
14:1-5	226
14:2-4	233
14:11-20	229
14:22	234
14:22, 40-45	230
14:24-38	227
15:30, 31, 32, 36	51
Chapters 22-24	109
23:8	110
23:9	126, 205
25:1-3	110
31:16	110

Deuteronomy

7:6	124
14:2	124, 205
15:6	206
28:1	206
31:6	176

Joshua

6:26	122
14:7-15	227
19:49, 50	227

Judges

9:8-15	108
--------------	-----

Ruth

Chapters 3, 4	34
3:3	43

I Samuel

10:1ff	181
15:1-23	181
16:1-13	181
22:1, 2	181
31:1-13	182

II Samuel

1:1-10	182
1:10	112
2:1ff	182

I Kings

3:5-27	80
3:28	81
4:29-34	81
7:13-21	156
10:1ff	80
10:6, 7	81
15:25, 26, 33, 34	121
16:18, 19	121
16:25, 30, 33, 34	122
18:4, 17-40	122
19:1, 2	122
19:14, 18	163
19:18	133
21:1-23	122
21:23, 25, 26	123
22:35-38	122

II Kings

9:30-37	122, 123
---------	----------

II Chronicles

1:7-17	80
7:14	262
20:15	231

Job

1:6	92, 173
1:7	64
2:1	92, 173
2:2	64
16:15	221

Psalms

2:1ff	130, 273
2:1-9	18, 209, 218
2:6, 8	216
2:8, 9	129, 156
2:9	217
37:9, 22, 28, 29, 34	7
56:8	141, 142
101:1-8	218
106:7	228
106:24	229
110:1	130
	173, 273
110:1, 2	63
119:11	68
139:16	141
147:19, 20	124, 213

Proverbs

3:13-18	77, 88
3:18	76, 78
11:30	76, 77
	78, 82, 86
13:12	76, 77, 78
	85, 86, 87
15:4	76
	77, 78, 88

Isaiah

1:4-9	262
2:2-4	27, 193
8:20	176
14:4ff	105
14:12-17	3
14:13	99, 204
14:13, 14	63, 99, 132
14:13-17	175
26:8	265
35:1ff	262
43:1	196
45:7	60
53:5	131
55:1, 2	106
63:1-6	189
64:6	140
66:19-24	218

Ezekiel

20:34-38	9, 142
28:14	105
	126, 173
28:14-16	63
28:14-19	3
28:18b, 19	220
34:23	208
37:1-10	3
37:24	208

Daniel

Chapter 2	198
2:31-45	105, 212
2:34, 35, 44, 45	157
	193
2:35, 40, 44, 45	218
2:35, 44, 45	27
4:10-12, 20-22	108
4:17, 25, 32	16
4:17-34	183
4:17-37	185
4:25, 26	205
5:18-21	185
7:1-14	212
7:9-14	130, 245
7:13, 14	16, 39
	185, 190
8:1-25	212
9:24-27	18, 19
Chapter 10	126
10:2, 12, 13	205
10:12, 13, 20	126
10:12-20	105
10:13-20	181
	186, 220
10:20, 21	204, 205
12:3	86

Joel

3:9-16	189
--------	-----

Amos

3:2	124
-----	-----

Jonah

1:17ff	29
2:9	162

Haggai

2:3	155
-----	-----

Zechariah

5:1-3	141
9:9	157, 263
14:1-9	190
14:16-21	218

Malachi

3:16	141, 142
4:2	132

Matthew

2:1ff	251
2:2	171
2:6	218
3:1-12	252
4:1-11	68
4:4	106
4:17-25	252
4:23-25	262
Chapters 5-7	262
5:1-12	262
5:5	156
5:22, 29, 30	100
6:9-13	151
6:33	262
7:13-27	262
8:10-12	262
8:11, 12	78, 128
	208, 259
	260, 261, 264
8:12	100, 264, 270, 274
10:5-8	262
10:32, 33, 38, 39	144
11:2-5	262
11:10	55
12:30	35, 166
Chapter 13	107, 176
13:1	196
13:4, 19, 31-33	108
13:19-24, 31, 33	107
13:21	271
13:33	73, 106
	114, 120, 134, 147
	149, 164, 175, 176
13:42	100, 242
16:6	164
16:18	69, 155, 265
16:18, 19	261, 265
16:21-23	272
16:24	44

16:24-27	10, 43
	86, 138, 144
16:25-27	101, 204
16:27	9
16:28-17:5	27, 194
17:1	274
19:27, 28	206
19:27-30	146
20:1-16	248
20:20-23	16, 185
20:20-28	146
20:25-28	113
21:1-11, 37-39	263
21:5	157, 171
21:33-43	261, 265
21:33-46	264
21:43	128, 160
	196, 252, 263
Chapter 22	260
22:1-14	44, 260
	263, 264
22:8-14	43
22:9-13	259
22:10-14	12, 28
22:11, 12	140, 141
22:11-13	270
22:13	100, 242
	259, 269, 274
23:1-36	263
23:2, 13, 38	261
23:15, 33	100
24:4-39	266
24:4-25:46	265
24:15ff	27
24:15-26	210
24:40, 41	269
24:40-51	266
24:40-25:30	44
	261, 266, 267
24:45-47	13
24:45-51	10, 84
	154, 268
24:48-51	14
24:51	242, 270, 274
25:1-30	266
25:10-12	269
25:10-13, 24-30	154
25:14	268
25:14-30	10, 37
	85, 138, 245
	258, 260, 265
25:15-30	138
25:19ff	16
25:19-23	13
25:19, 24-30	14
25:19-30	35, 259
25:20, 22	247
25:21, 23	248
25:30	242, 257
	270, 274

25:30, 41	100
25:31-46	211, 265
25:34-40	142
26:29	117
26:31-75	271
26:33-41, 56	272
26:34, 47, 56, 58	274
26:37, 69-74	274
26:52	273
26:58, 69-75	271
27:19	40
27:27ff	172
27:27-31	157
27:29	189
27:37	171
28:19, 20	175

Mark

1:2	55
6:32-44	262
10:35-45	146
12:27	33
14:38	151
14:72	273
15:17	187

Luke

1:31-33	169, 208
2:25-32, 36-38	251
3:38	92
4:1-13	68
4:5, 6	63, 105, 252
7:24, 27	55
8:13	271
9:52	55
9:62	27, 233
11:23	166
12:8, 9	144
12:42-46	154, 246, 267
12:46	92
13:24	39, 146, 238
13:24-30	154
13:28, 29	128
	208, 259
17:26, 28, 30, 31	26
17:26, 31-33	27
18:8	134, 147
	164, 165, 175, 176
19:11-27	85, 138
	245
19:12	195
19:12-27	10, 37
19:15ff	16
19:15-19	13, 138
19:15, 20-26	14, 138
19:15-26	35
19:16-19	247, 269
19:20	249
19:20-26	154
21:20-24	210

22:50, 51	273
22:54, 55	274
22:61, 62	274
24:21-27	252
24:25-27	216
24:26	157
24:41-43	117

John

1:4	83
1:11	171
1:13	58
1:29	6, 251
2:1-11	262
3:3, 7	58
3:6	41
3:14-16	251
3:18	143
3:19	61
4:14	83
5:22	39
5:24	111
6:35	83
6:48-54	115
6:48-56	81
6:48-58	82
7:37	83
8:12	83
8:53	33
10:10	83
11:6ff	29
11:25	83
13:2-5	18
13:4, 8-10	199
13:8	253
13:8-10	47
	199, 200, 201
14:2, 3	160
15:1-5	83
15:1-8	178
15:6	100
16:13-15	45, 81
	129, 176, 240
16:15	216
17:14	176
18:28	274
18:37	251
19:2, 5	187
19:13	40
19:16-30	6
19:30	2, 201
20:22	83
21:5-14	117

Acts

2:29, 30	208
3:21	175, 223
4:23-28	210
5:41	91
6:7	62

12:15.....	53
12:21.....	40
13:8.....	62
14:23.....	54
15:6, 23.....	54
15:14.....	56, 210, 266
15:16.....	211
16:31.....	85, 136
18:12, 16, 17.....	40
20:17.....	54
20:28.....	191, 218
25:6, 10, 17.....	40
28:28.....	264

Romans

1:5.....	62
1:7, 8.....	75
1:17.....	42
4:13.....	214
5:1.....	66, 67
5:12.....	102
5:16, 18.....	9, 42
5:17.....	140
6:23.....	76
7:24.....	60, 61
8:12, 13.....	99
8:13.....	97, 100, 123, 221
8:13, 14.....	59
8:13, 17.....	129
8:13, 23.....	61
8:14-21.....	169
8:17.....	94, 158
8:17, 23.....	215
8:18, 19.....	92
8:18, 19, 23.....	214
9:4.....	213
9:4, 5.....	124
10:15.....	67
10:17.....	240
Chapter 11.....	210
11:5, 11, 20.....	211
11:5, 26.....	214
11:6.....	10, 162
11:25.....	210
13:1-7.....	213
13:12.....	61
14:1.....	54
14:10.....	39, 44
15:7.....	54
16:2.....	81

I Corinthians

1:30.....	82
2:1, 2.....	85
2:6-10.....	82
2:10.....	124
2:14.....	45
3:5-7.....	149
3:11-15.....	8, 35, 44, 101
.....	130, 142, 244

3:12.....	136
3:12, 13.....	36
3:12-15.....	9
3:13-15.....	257
3:15.....	11, 39, 204
3:15, 17, 18.....	12
3:16, 17.....	155
4:2.....	246
4:2-5.....	213
4:5.....	12, 61
5:7.....	6, 164
5:8.....	7
6:8-10.....	94
6:19.....	155
7:5.....	151
9:24.....	68
9:24-27.....	39, 62
.....	91, 101, 112
.....	146, 192, 241
9:24-10:11.....	227
9:25.....	187, 238
9:26, 27.....	224
9:27.....	74, 243
10:1-5.....	169
10:6, 11.....	216
11:17-30.....	204
11:31.....	8, 203
15:3.....	6, 85
15:24-28.....	173, 219
15:26.....	97
15:45.....	63
15:52.....	21, 153
16:10, 11.....	54
16:13.....	62
16:15, 16.....	113

II Corinthians

4:3, 4.....	128
4:4.....	126
4:6.....	60
4:16.....	176
5:9-11.....	9, 35
5:10.....	14, 38, 39
5:10, 11.....	35, 44, 52
5:17.....	197, 214, 263
8:1.....	54
8:9.....	157

Galatians

1:2.....	54
1:23.....	62
3:16-18, 26-29.....	160
3:17, 18, 26-29.....	263
3:17, 18, 29.....	168
3:26-29.....	214
3:28, 29.....	236
4:21-31.....	44
5:16ff.....	59
6:7, 8.....	272
6:7-9.....	248

6:15.....	197
-----------	-----

Ephesians

1:3.....	235
1:3, 10-18.....	243
1:5-14.....	75
1:5, 11, 14, 17, 18.....	236
1:8.....	82
1:14, 18.....	92
1:17, 18.....	146
2:1.....	1, 104, 111, 201
2:2.....	220
2:6.....	235
2:8.....	136, 209
2:8, 9.....	2, 66, 162
2:8-10.....	41, 178
2:8-16.....	236
2:10.....	13, 136
2:11-15.....	214, 252
2:12.....	125, 213
2:12-15.....	196, 211
.....	263, 265
2:13-15.....	197
3:1-6.....	197, 211, 214
3:6, 9, 10.....	236
3:9-11.....	127
3:10.....	235
3:10, 11.....	237
4:11ff.....	65
4:11-16.....	236, 237
5:5.....	92
5:11.....	61
5:25-32.....	74
5:26, 27.....	199
6:10-18.....	65, 112
6:11.....	62, 127, 228
6:11, 12.....	128
6:11, 13-16.....	66
6:11-18.....	235, 237
6:11, 20.....	220
6:12.....	63, 117, 227
6:14-17.....	238
6:15, 16.....	67
6:17, 18.....	68

Philippians

1:1.....	54
1:6.....	176, 234, 246
3:20.....	213, 235
3:20-4:1.....	191
4:1.....	187
4:5-7.....	67

Colossians

1:5.....	235
1:5, 6, 23.....	152
1:5, 27.....	68
1:9, 28.....	82
1:23.....	62
1:27-29.....	255

2:3.....	82
2:13.....	104
3:5.....	59
3:10.....	176
3:24.....	92

I Thessalonians

1:5-10.....	75
2:11, 19, 20.....	191
2:19.....	187
4:13-18.....	33
4:13-5:10.....	32
4:16-5:9.....	21
5:1-9.....	75, 153
5:2-4.....	33
5:6, 10.....	62
5:8.....	67

II Thessalonians

1:1.....	54
1:9, 10.....	104

I Timothy

2:1-3.....	213
2:3, 4.....	109
4:1ff.....	176
5:6.....	136
6:11, 12.....	91, 146
6:12.....	62, 165
.....	192, 238

II Timothy

2:4, 5.....	112, 213
2:5.....	187
2:5, 12.....	271
2:10-13.....	144
2:12.....	145, 158, 254
3:8.....	62, 74
4:7.....	62, 112
4:7, 8.....	91, 101
.....	146, 192
4:8.....	72, 187

Titus

1:2.....	68
1:5.....	54
1:16.....	74
2:12, 13.....	68, 146
2:13.....	87, 191, 255
3:5.....	2, 162
3:7.....	68

Philemon

18.....	9
---------	---

Hebrews

1:2.....	95
1:8.....	219
1:13.....	221
1:14.....	53

Chapter 2.....49

2:3, 10.....	243
2:5.....	65, 175, 184
2:5, 10.....	129
2:7, 9.....	187
2:10.....	208, 212, 214
.....	217, 244, 253

Chapters 3, 4.....45, 49

Chapters 3-5.....234

3:1.....	128, 235
3:4, 6.....	52
3:6.....	68
3:8-19.....	226
4:4-9.....	4, 51
4:11-16.....	252
4:12.....	68
4:14.....	202
6:2-4.....	50
6:4.....	45
6:4-6.....	234
6:5.....	228
6:8.....	74, 100
6:18.....	68
6:18, 19.....	255
9:1-7, 11, 12, 24.....	199
9:4.....	115
9:11, 12.....	252
9:11, 12, 24.....	198
9:27.....	6
10:19ff.....	252
10:19-22.....	48
10:19-26.....	46
10:19-27.....	45
10:22.....	4, 47
10:23-25.....	50
10:23-26.....	49
10:26, 27, 29.....	52
10:26-31.....	44
10:32.....	45
10:35ff.....	25
10:35-37.....	208
10:38, 39.....	86
Chapters 11, 12.....	68
11:4-7.....	25
11:8-16.....	127, 128
11:16.....	160, 207
Chapter 12.....	49
12:1, 2.....	170, 234, 269
12:2.....	157
12:14-17.....	129
.....	217, 244
12:17.....	241
12:23.....	73, 75, 84
12:24.....	4
13:5.....	176

James

1:2.....	254
1:2-4.....	91
1:2-4, 12.....	234

1:2-4, 12-15.....	151
1:2-4, 12, 21.....	239
1:2-4, 21.....	90, 240
1:3, 5-8.....	86
1:3, 12.....	241
1:12.....	187, 191, 244
1:12, 21, 22.....	137
1:18.....	58
1:21.....	86, 101
1:26, 27.....	88
2:5.....	239
2:14-26.....	10, 41, 42, 43
.....	117, 136, 137
.....	140, 148, 151, 244
2:22.....	138
2:25.....	55
3:1, 5-8, 13-18.....	88
4:7.....	61
4:13-15.....	272
5:5.....	136
5:14.....	54
5:19, 20.....	86, 101
.....	137, 192, 204, 239
5:20.....	102

I Peter

1:3-5.....	87
1:3-11.....	167
1:4.....	92, 129, 235
1:4-9.....	43
1:5-11.....	10
1:7.....	234
1:9.....	42, 90, 138
1:9-11.....	81, 86, 243
1:12.....	253
2:5.....	155
2:9, 10.....	128, 160
.....	196, 252, 264
2:9-11.....	265
2:13-17.....	213
2:21-23.....	170
3:13.....	157
3:15.....	255
4:12, 13.....	81, 158
.....	170, 243
4:17.....	266
4:17, 18.....	19
5:1.....	54
5:2.....	218
5:2-4.....	191
5:4.....	187
5:8.....	64
5:8, 9.....	61

II Peter

1:5-11.....	234
1:10, 11.....	146
1:15-18.....	194
1:16-18.....	5
2:9.....	151

2:15.....	109
2:15-28.....	92
3:3-8.....	5, 194
3:10, 11.....	33
3:10-13.....	219

I John

1:3-2:2.....	199
1:6.....	202
1:6, 8.....	61
1:6-2:2.....	46, 202, 253
1:7.....	47
1:7, 9.....	48
1:9-2:2.....	8
1:13.....	58
2:1, 2.....	48
2:15-18.....	59
2:28.....	199
2:29.....	58
3:1.....	59
3:2.....	61
3:6-9.....	199
3:9.....	58
4:7.....	58
4:16, 17.....	199
5:1-5.....	57
5:1-5, 18.....	58
5:1-5, 19.....	59

III John

5-8.....	54
----------	----

Jude

3.....	39, 62
.....	165, 192
3-5.....	238
11.....	109

Revelation

Chapters 1-3.....	19, 20
.....	73, 178, 185, 191
Chapters 1-4.....	21, 22
.....	33, 180
Chapter 4.....	191
1:1-8.....	178
1:4-8.....	177
1:4, 10.....	21
1:10.....	18, 151
1:10-20.....	33
1:10-4:11.....	31, 32
1:11-13, 20.....	70
1:12, 19.....	20
1:12, 13, 20.....	23, 34
1:12-16, 20.....	17
1:13-18.....	18
1:13, 16, 20.....	54
1:14.....	273
1:16, 20.....	53
1:19.....	19
1:20.....	55

Chapter 2.....	77
Chapters 2, 3.....	22, 23
.....	53, 55, 72, 166
Chapters 2-4.....	179
2:1.....	54
2:1-7.....	73
2:2, 9, 13, 19.....	136
2:4.....	179
2:5, 7.....	74
2:5-7.....	71
2:5, 16.....	153
2:6.....	108
2:7.....	69, 76, 77, 78
.....	79, 84, 85, 87, 88
2:9-11.....	89
2:10.....	187, 191
2:10, 11.....	91
2:11.....	92, 95
.....	96, 98, 100, 221
2:11, 20-23.....	129
2:11, 26, 27.....	70
2:13, 17.....	105
2:14.....	109
2:15.....	71
2:17.....	82, 84, 115
2:20-25.....	123
2:22.....	78
2:23.....	130, 133
2:24.....	124
2:26, 27.....	16, 18, 76, 96
.....	97, 118, 156, 207
.....	209, 211, 216, 217
2:26-28.....	119, 131, 221
2:27.....	218
Chapter 3.....	138
3:1, 4.....	135
3:1, 4, 5.....	133
3:1-4, 8, 15.....	136
3:3, 5.....	140
3:5.....	139, 141, 142
.....	143, 144, 145
3:5, 21.....	70
3:8, 10, 12.....	151
3:10.....	149, 150
3:10, 11.....	152, 153
3:10, 15-18.....	148
3:11.....	91, 113, 187
3:11, 12.....	154
3:12.....	147, 155
.....	156, 158, 160
3:14-18.....	74
3:14-21.....	23
3:14-22.....	161
3:15, 17, 18.....	43
3:15-18.....	162
3:16.....	170
3:17.....	120, 174
3:17, 18.....	12
3:18-20.....	163
3:21.....	97, 118, 168, 170

.....	172, 173, 180, 198
.....	215, 217, 219, 221, 245
Chapter 4.....	19, 185
Chapters 4, 5.....	184
4:1.....	20, 21
4:1, 2.....	32, 33, 151
4:1-4.....	185
4:1-4, 10, 11.....	177
4:2-4, 10, 11.....	180
4:4, 10.....	187
4:4, 10, 11.....	186
4:10.....	184, 190
4:11.....	81
Chapter 5.....	19, 32
Chapters 5, 6.....	21, 34
5:1, 2.....	141
5:1-7.....	185
5:1-19:21.....	32
5:9, 10.....	184
5:10.....	129, 168
.....	198, 216, 253
5:12.....	81
Chapters 6-19a.....	151
.....	179
6:2.....	188
6:9-11.....	95, 211, 265
Chapters 7, 12, 14.....	208
Chapters 7, 14.....	265
7:9-17.....	207, 211, 265
9:7.....	187
11:2.....	210
11:3ff.....	163
11:15.....	129, 185, 193
.....	217, 221, 245
Chapter 12.....	185, 188
12:1.....	189
12:1, 3, 4.....	187
12:1-17.....	21
12:3.....	188
12:3, 4.....	186
12:5.....	208, 217, 218
12:5, 17.....	265
12:7.....	167
12:7-9.....	63
12:7-12.....	105, 221
Chapter 13.....	188
Chapters 13, 14.....	21
13:1, 2.....	105, 188
13:1-18.....	21
13:7-15.....	95
13:8.....	141
14:14.....	187, 189, 190
15:2.....	95
15:2-4.....	207
15:6.....	18
17:1-18.....	21
19:7, 8.....	12, 43, 148
19:7-9.....	74, 84, 190
19:8.....	42, 66, 140
19:8, 9.....	141

19:11ff	39, 95, 157	20:12	40	21:9-22:21	159
.....198, 209, 245		20:14	94, 95	21:22	155
19:11-20:6	193, 195	20:14, 15	104	21:24-27	98
19:12	181, 187, 188	Chapters 21, 22	159	21:27	141
19:12, 16	158	21:1	219	22:1, 2	159
19:15	209, 217, 218	21:1, 3, 5	96	22:1, 3	173
19:16	171	21:1-6	97219, 221	
19:11-20:3	190	21:3, 4	220	22:2	76, 77, 81, 84
20:1-3	167	21:4	221	22:2, 5	96
20:2-7	194	21:5	223	22:3	220
20:4-6	78, 91	21:5-8	98	22:3-5	222
.....92, 94, 95, 96		21:5, 25	60	22:7, 12, 20	153
.....142, 207, 211, 265		21:7, 8	91, 93	22:14, 15	99
20:11-15	9, 36, 9194, 96		22:16	131
.....92, 96, 142		21:9-22:5	98	22:18, 19	97

