

《Commentary on Revelation》

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PREFACE

Prior to 1928 Brother Watchman Nee conducted a study with a few saints on the book of Revelation. The longhand notes of a brother who attended those meetings are published in this book. They have been briefly edited for the sake of clarity. The portion covering Revelation 2:19—3:22 is missing in the original manuscript.

In spite of the fact that a small portion is missing, this book forms a rather complete study of the book of Revelation by the author and is a valuable supply and contribution to the church in this, the end time.

CHAPTER ONE

**THE VISION
OF THE GLORIOUS CHRIST
(Revelation 1:1-20)**

I. INTRODUCTION

(REVELATION 1:1-3)

There are several things which we need to pay attention to in this section of the book of Revelation: (1) the meaning of the revelation, (2) the procedure through which the revelation came, and (3) the importance of the revelation.

**A. The Meaning
of the Revelation**

"The revelation of Jesus Christ." Revelation is different from inspiration. A revelation is an unveiling for man to see, whereas an inspiration is a leading within him. The words, "the revelation of Jesus Christ," have two meanings:

- (1) It is Jesus Christ Himself who removes the veils for us to see the things which are to be fulfilled in the future, the things which are spoken of in this book.
- (2) This book also reveals Jesus Christ Himself, that is, it reveals how He Himself will triumph, obtain glory, and be enthroned as King.

**B. The Procedure
through Which the Revelation Came**

(1) "Which God gave to Him." Here we can see the order in the universe. God is the highest: "But all things are out from God" (2 Cor. 5:18). Revelation 1:1 also shows us that, even though the Lord has ascended to the heavens, He still holds the position of a slave. As He was on the earth (John 5:19-20; 12:49-50; Mark 13:32), so He is in the heavens. He has not abandoned His position just because He has obtained glory. How very different He is from the archangel Satan! (Ezek. 28:2).

(2) "Sending it by His angel." More than half of the writings in the Bible were given through the hands of angels (Acts 7:53; Heb. 2:2) because the angels are ministering spirits (Heb. 1:14).

(3) "Made it known by signs, sending it by His angel to His slave John." To make known here has the sense of "to demonstrate" in the original language.

(4) "Who testified the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, even all that he saw." John recorded the revelation he received and has shown it to us. He received the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.

C. The Importance of the Revelation

(1) "The things that must quickly take place." "Must" here means unchangeable, and "quickly take place" means that it cannot be delayed; yet we are too careless and too slow to respond to these matters.

(2) "To show to His slaves." This revelation does not concern only a few people; it concerns many slaves. We are all the Lord's slaves because He has purchased us with His blood (1 Cor. 6:20).

(3) "Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy and keep the things written in it." The revelation is a promise. In Revelation 22:7 the same promise is reiterated. There, the two words "reads" and "hear" do not appear again because by the time of chapter twenty-two, all have read and heard. The most crucial thing then becomes to "keep the things written in it."

"For the time is near." "The time" is the day when the Lord comes again. When that day arrives, many things will be involved (11:15-18), yet the main thing referred to here is the blessing of the believers. Since "the time is near," why do we still not see its coming? It is because the Lord is long-suffering toward men (2 Pet. 3:8-9) and, at the same time, the believers are not yet ready. Therefore, the time has not yet come. Nevertheless, the condition of the church and of the world today tell us afresh that the time is at hand.

II. GREETING AND BLESSING

(REVELATION 1:4-5a)

"John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is coming, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful Witness, the Firstborn of the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth."

A. "John to the Seven Churches

Which Are in Asia"

(Verse 4)

Although the individual epistles were written to seven individual churches, John sent the entire book to each of the seven churches in Asia at the same time. Seven is the number of completion. The seven churches represent all of the churches. Therefore, this epistle is related to us also.

B. "Grace to You and Peace"

(Verse 4)

The word of greeting here is the same as that used by Paul (1 Cor. 1:3), but the name of the Triune God here is quite different from that used in other epistles.

(1) "From Him who is and who was and who is coming." Here the name of God is mentioned. He is the One who is, who was, and who is coming. He never changes. Everything in the world is changing, and the world itself is changing, but God never changes. Therefore, grace and peace will never change either.

(2) "And from the seven Spirits who are before His throne." "The seven Spirits" does not mean that there are seven Holy Spirits (Eph. 4:4); it only implies that the Holy Spirit has various kinds of work (Rev. 4:5; 5:6).

(3) "And from Jesus Christ, the faithful Witness, the Firstborn of the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth." This speaks of the Lord's work and victory on earth as well as of the glory He will obtain in the future. Such a Triune God is well able to bestow grace and peace upon us.

III. EXALTATION

(REVELATION 1:5b-7)

"To Him who loves us and has released us from our sins by His blood and made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father, to Him be the glory and the might forever and ever. Amen. Behold, He comes with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the land will mourn over Him. Yes, amen."

When John came to this point in his writing, he could not help but begin praising. He praised because of "Him who loves us." The love of Christ has two aspects: (1) that which is in the past—He "has released us from our sins by His blood," and (2) that which is experienced now and will be completely fulfilled in the future—"and made us a kingdom [or, kings], priests to His God and Father." When we consider this, we truly have to say with John, "To Him be the glory and the might forever and ever. Amen."

When John recalled the love he had received, he could not help but begin to praise. Yet at the same time, when he thought of the condition of the worldly people at the time of Christ's second coming, he uttered a word of warning in verse 7. "Behold" means that we need to pay attention. "He comes with the clouds." Just as the Lord ascended to the heavens in the clouds, so also shall He come again with the clouds. This exactly matches what is spoken in Acts 1:9-11. "And every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the land will mourn over Him. Yes, amen" (Rev. 1:7). This word matches that of Matthew 24:30.

IV. THE TESTIMONY OF GOD

(REVELATION 1:8)

"I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, He who is and who was and who is coming, the Almighty."

Here God testifies concerning Himself as: (1) the One who never changes and (2) the almighty One. The purpose of this testimony is to cause us to depend entirely on Him in the midst of tribulations.

V. JOHN'S DESCRIPTION OF HIS OWN CONDITION

(REVELATION 1:9-10a)

"I John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and endurance in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. I was in spirit on the Lord's Day."

A. Concerning Himself

"I John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and endurance in Jesus." Although John had seen such great visions, he still called himself our brother. What humility this is! At that time he was in the midst of tribulation, yet he did not mention his tribulation only. He also mentioned the kingdom because to enter the kingdom, one must pass through tribulation (Acts 14:22). Since we have the hope of the kingdom, we need endurance. This is the endurance of one patiently waiting for the kingdom. "Fellow partaker" indicates that we all have a share in this kingdom. Since we have a share in the kingdom, we should have a share in the tribulation and endurance as well.

B. Concerning His Environment

"I...was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus." John was being persecuted for the sake of the word and had been exiled to the island of Patmos. He was lonely with nowhere to go, yet the Lord was with him. The gate of heaven was opened wide to him, and he received new revelation. By this we see that tribulations are a great blessing to us.

C. When He Saw the Vision

"On the Lord's Day." This is the first day of the week. Some have said that this is "the day of the Lord," that is, "the great day of Jehovah."

D. The Heart and Spirit of the One Receiving the Vision

"I was in spirit." Although John was suffering in the body, his spirit was strong and living.

VI. THE VISION OF THE GLORIOUS CHRIST

(REVELATION 1:10b-16)

"And [I] heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, saying, What you see write in a scroll and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamos and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea. And I turned to see the voice that spoke with me; and when I turned, I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment reaching to the feet, and girded about at the breasts with a golden girdle. And His head and hair were as white as white wool, as snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire; and His feet were like shining bronze, as having been fired in a furnace; and His voice was like the sound of many waters. And He had in His right hand seven stars; and out of His mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword; and His face shone as the sun shines in its power."

A. What Was Heard

"A loud voice like a trumpet." A trumpet was used to gather the people together. The Lord specifically called John and charged him to write to the seven churches. Although these seven churches were actual churches at that time, the Lord specifically chose them to typify the churches throughout the ages. The different conditions of the church from the time of the apostles to the second coming of Christ are represented by these seven churches.

B. What Was Seen

1. "Seven Golden Lampstands"

(Verse 12)

The seven golden lampstands are the seven churches (v. 20). The lampstands represent God's view of the churches and what their spiritual reality should be. The church should shine for the Lord to illuminate this dark world. But the lampstands cannot shine on their own; they must be filled with oil. Therefore, the church must be filled with the Holy Spirit.

2. "One like the Son of Man"

(Verse 13)

The Son of Man was in the midst of the lampstands, watching over the churches (2:1). What was the appearance of this Son of Man? He was "like the Son of Man." This implies that His appearance was different from what it had been on earth because He only looked like the Son of Man. His appearance was recorded as follows:

(a) "Clothed with a garment reaching to the feet." This denotes the Lord's glory, the glory which He had before He was born on the earth (Isa. 6:1). The Lord has now been restored to His former glory. This garment not only denotes that the

Lord has obtained His former glory; it also denotes that He is a priest. The Lord is now our High Priest (Heb. 8:1).

(b) "Girded about at the breasts with a golden girdle." This denotes that He is righteous and faithful (Isa. 11:5).

(c) "His head and hair were as white as white wool." This means that He is full of glory (Prov. 16:31; 20:29) and holiness (Dan. 7:9).

(d) "His eyes were like a flame of fire." Fire is used for testing (1 Pet. 1:7); it exposes the good as well as the evil. With His eyes as a flame of fire, whatever the Lord looks at will immediately be exposed as either good or evil. The fire in 1 Corinthians 3:13 is this fire of the Lord's eyes. When we stand before the judgment seat of Christ, He will test each one's work. The meaning of 1 Corinthians 4:5 also corresponds with what is said here in Revelation 1:14. There it says, "So then do not judge anything before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and make manifest the counsels of the hearts, and then there will be praise to each from God."

(e) "And His feet were like shining bronze, as having been fired in a furnace." Feet are for walking, and in the Bible bronze signifies judgment. Wherever these bronze feet go, judgment follows. Here the Lord's feet are in the church; thus, the Lord must judge the church first (1 Pet. 4:17).

(f) "And His voice was like the sound of many waters." This means that His voice is full of majesty and power (Psa. 29:4) and that no man can withstand it.

(g) "And He had in His right hand seven stars." The seven stars are the messengers of the seven churches (v. 20). That the messengers are in the Lord's hand means that they are used, controlled, and protected by the Lord.

(h) "And out of His mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword." This sword is used to deal with the church (2:16) and the worldly people (19:15, 21).

(i) "And His face shone as the sun shines in its power." The Lord appeared in the same way on the mount of transfiguration (Matt. 17:2). The mount of transfiguration typifies the kingdom because in the kingdom the Lord is very glorious.

VII. THE LORD'S COMMISSION

(REVELATION 1:17-20)

"And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead; and He placed His right hand on me, saying, Do not fear; I am the First and the Last and the living One; and I became dead, and behold, I am living forever and ever; and I have the keys of

death and of Hades. Write therefore the things which you have seen and the things which are and the things which are about to take place after these things. The mystery of the seven stars which you saw upon My right hand and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the messengers of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches."

Whenever the Lord appears to someone, He has a commission for them, and His appearance here was no exception.

A. Revelation 1:17a

"And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead." Because John saw the glory of Christ, he was as a dead man. This was not only true of John, but Isaiah (Isa. 6:1-5), Job (Job 42:5-6), and Daniel (Dan. 10:8-9), all reacted in the same way. Not only was John saved, but he was very intimate with the Lord. Yet when he saw the Lord's glory, even he fell as dead. If an unsaved person or a saved yet fleshly person were to see the Lord, I really do not know what would happen. This is why the Bible says that fleshly persons cannot inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19-21) nor can the unregenerated see the kingdom of God (John 3:3). This is very meaningful! A filthy, fleshly person is truly unworthy to see the glorious Lord. When Christ comes again, His glory will be even greater than it is today. No wonder men will be so frightened that they will lose heart and cry out to the mountains to cover them (Rev. 6:16).

B. Revelation 1:17b

"And He placed His right hand on me, saying, Do not fear." Oh, how loving this is! Although He is in glory, His love has not diminished. If the glory in the future is not mingled with love, it is hard to see how that glory will be of any great benefit to us. When He was on the earth, He laid His hands on many sick ones, and with His words He comforted many brokenhearted ones. He is still doing the same today. His hand and His word not only comforted John, but they also strengthened him. This meaning can be realized by referring to Daniel 8:17-18 and 10:9-10, 18-19. The hand was to strengthen him, and the word was to cause him to realize the strength. When John realized that the Lord's love was the same as before, spontaneously, the fear was removed and strength was brought forth.

C. Revelation 1:17c-18

"I am the First and the Last and the living One; and I became dead, and behold, I am living forever and ever; and I have the keys of death and of Hades." Here we see that the Lord used two ways to reveal Himself. First, He revealed Himself

through His glory. John recognized this immediately. Second, He revealed Himself through His word. This was something inward which John could not see with his eyes. The Lord had to use words to reveal Himself. From this passage we can see that the Lord revealed Himself in three aspects:

(1) In His position: "I am the First and the Last." This is the Old Testament way of addressing Jehovah (Isa. 41:4; 44:6; 48:12), indicating that He is the eternally unchanging God.

(2) In His life: "And the living One; and I became dead, and behold, I am living forever and ever." This indicates that He has eternal life. Although He died for man's sins, He is now resurrected. Moreover, He will never die again since He is living forever and ever.

(3) In His authority: "And I have the keys of death and of Hades." We have to look at this point in detail. "Death" concerns the body. "Hades" concerns the soul. Once a man dies, his soul enters Hades, which means the world below, that is, the center of the globe (Matt. 12:40; Num. 16:30-33). Hades is divided into two sections. One is the place of suffering, where the unbelievers go; the other is the place of rest, where the saved ones go (Luke 16:19-31). However, this is only temporary; the eternal separation is between the new heaven and the new earth on one side and the lake of fire on the other. "Keys" are for opening doors. This shows that both death and Hades have doors which may be locked (Matt. 16:19; Acts 2:24). Whoever holds these keys in his hand has the authority. This authority over death and Hades was originally in the hand of Satan (Heb. 2:14), but ever since the Lord was resurrected from the dead, death and Hades have lost their power. Moreover, the keys of death and of Hades have been put into the Lord's hand. Oh, what a victory this is! Because of this, at the coming of the millennial kingdom, the Lord will be able to release those who belong to Him.

D. Revelation 1:19

"Write therefore the things which you have seen and the things which are and the things which are about to take place after these things." The word "therefore" shows that this continues the foregoing passage. The Lord has won the victory; therefore, we should write it down. This verse lays the sections of this book clearly before us: (1) "the things which you have seen" (past), (2) "the things which are" (present), and (3) "the things which are about to take place after these things" (future). The word for "have seen" in the original language is in the perfect tense, which means that John had already seen something. This refers to the vision which John saw in chapter one. "The things which are" refer to the things

which are now occurring, that is, the things happening in the church age as recorded in chapters two and three. "The things which are about to take place after these things" are those things that will continue after the church age. Everything from chapter four through chapter nineteen is a record of the things which are about to take place.

E. Revelation 1:20

"The mystery of the seven stars which you saw upon My right hand and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the messengers of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches." Although the book of Revelation has many mysteries, these mysteries become a clear revelation once they are explained. We all have to admit that the lampstands are the churches. The seven stars, however, are said to be the seven messengers. Who then are these messengers? Some have said that these messengers refer to pastors or overseers or bishops. If this is so, that is, if the messengers refer to something else, then what do the churches refer to? Since the churches are simply the churches (and do not refer to something else), then the messengers should simply be messengers. There is one more point. We know that the messengers explain the mystery of the stars, but if the messengers themselves require further explanation, are we not trying to explain the mystery with another mystery? We know that the Lord would not do this. How then should the messengers be explained? The most accurate answer is that the messengers are messengers just as the churches are simply the churches.

The messengers are the messengers, yet what kind of messengers are they? According to the Bible, there are two kinds of messengers: the angels in heaven (Matt. 22:30) and human messengers (Hag. 1:13). The messengers here definitely do not refer to the messengers of heaven because: (1) the messengers of heaven, though they serve the church, cannot bear the responsibility of the church; (2) the messengers of heaven are spiritual, and therefore, they cannot receive a physical letter; (3) since this book is revealed to John by the Lord through His angel, it cannot be that the angel writes letters through John to other angels; and (4) the Lord asks the messenger of the church in Smyrna to be faithful unto death (Rev. 2:10). If this is an angel, how could he fulfill what is described here?

Since the messengers are not of heaven, they must be human messengers. The Bible gives examples concerning this in 2 Corinthians 8:23 and Philippians 2:25. We must pay attention to one more point concerning the position of the

messengers. In the sense that the messengers are representatives, they represent the churches, they bear substantial responsibility in the church, and they must be persons who have influence in the church. This is the position of the messengers with respect to the church. At the same time, with respect to the Lord, these messengers are represented by the stars. Stars are able to shine; this speaks of their condition in life. They are also in the hand of the Lord, which implies that they are used by the Lord and that they have authority.

CHAPTER TWO

THE SEVEN CHURCHES

(Revelation 2:1—3:22)

I. SUMMARY REMARKS ON CHAPTERS TWO AND THREE

A. The Seven Churches

The seven churches mentioned in these two chapters were actual churches at the time of the early apostles. Furthermore, the description of the conditions of these churches portrays their actual situations. Yet, at the same time, these seven churches represent the seven stages of the church, and their conditions also portray the general condition of the church in different stages. However, this should not be taken in an absolute way. We are merely saying that the church following the apostles' time was more like Ephesus and the church of the second stage was more like Smyrna. Nevertheless, the condition of the church following the apostles' time bears a resemblance to that of the other six churches as well.

B. The Seven Messengers

Every epistle is written to a messenger. We have already studied who these messengers were. I hope that the Lord will raise us up so that we may become messengers. Although every epistle is written to a messenger, it also speaks to the church. Therefore, these epistles concern every believer.

C. Seven Ways of Presenting Himself

In every epistle, our Lord says something concerning Himself. Moreover, what He speaks concerning Himself corresponds to the condition of each church. For example, Ephesus is a church which has fallen from love, so the Lord manifests Himself as the One who walks in the midst of the golden lampstands. Smyrna is a suffering church, so the Lord presents Himself as the One who resurrected from the dead so that they would be willing to be martyred. Pergamos is a worldly church; thus, the Lord appears to them as the One who has the two-edged sword which is able to cut off the world. Thyatira is a corrupt and adulterous church;

therefore, the Lord manifests Himself as the One with eyes like a flame of fire and feet like shining bronze, with which He is able to search and judge. Sardis is a dead church; therefore, the Lord presents Himself as the One who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars. Philadelphia is a church that faithfully holds to the truth; thus, the Lord is seen as the One who is holy and true and who opens the door wide to them for the work. Laodicea is a church filled with human opinions; thus, the Lord presents Himself as the Head over all things.

D. The Meaning of the Names of the Seven Churches

The word "Ephesus" means "loose." This was the condition of their love. The word "Smyrna" means "myrrh," or "suffering." This was the age when the Roman Empire persecuted the church. "Pergamos" means "high tower," "marriage," or "union." During this period, the Roman emperor, Constantine, joined himself to Christianity, and the church secured a position in the world. "Thyatira" means "she sacrificed tirelessly." This was the rising up of the priesthood during the age of Roman Catholicism, in which idol worship began to take place. This may be considered as the darkest and most corrupted age of the church. The meaning of the word "Sardis" is "restoration." This is the age of the Protestant church; her spiritual condition was so weak that it was as if she were dead. "Philadelphia" means "brotherly love." A hundred years ago the church was revived. A small number of Christians left the denominations, joined together in love, and wholeheartedly kept the truths in the Bible. The word "Laodicea" means "the opinions of the people." This is the condition of the opinionated church today.

E. Seven "I Know's"

Every epistle has the words "I know." Both our conduct, whether good or bad, and our condition, whether sad or joyous, are known by the Lord. The Lord does His best to praise the good, but He also severely rebukes the bad. This is a preview of the Lord's righteous judgment.

F. Seven Warnings

Since each church is in a different situation, the Lord warns each of them accordingly. The words of warning to each church are found in chapters two and three: to Ephesus (2:4-5), to Smyrna (2:10), to Pergamos (2:14-16), to Thyatira (2:20-25), to Sardis (3:2-3), to Philadelphia (3:9-11), and to Laodicea (3:17-20).

G. Seven Promises

In order to maintain His testimony, the Lord desires to raise up overcomers in each church. Therefore, He gives special promises to them. These promises are found in the following verses: Revelation 2:7, 10-11, 17, 26-28; 3:5, 12, 21.

H. Seven Calls

Every epistle contains the words, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). These seven epistles are spoken by the Lord Himself. Why then do they say that the Spirit speaks to the churches? Because the Lord spoke directly to John, the churches could only read the epistles which John had written. Therefore, in reading, there was the need of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in order to understand. Moreover, when the Lord was on the earth, He did not speak by Himself but through the Spirit. Even today, the Lord is still speaking through the Spirit. Therefore, Revelation says that the Spirit is speaking to the churches.

Now we will consider the content of these seven epistles in detail.

II. THE CHURCH IN EPHEBUS

(REVELATION 2:1-7)

A. Revelation 2:1

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

"Write." John is the Lord's secretary, recording the words of the Lord.

"The church in Ephesus." The church has two aspects: one is the mystical church; the other is the local church. One is the Body of Christ; the other is the house of God. The churches which are mentioned in these two chapters are churches which belong to localities. "The church in Ephesus" is different from "the church of Ephesus" because the church in Ephesus merely resides in Ephesus; it does not belong to Ephesus. Therefore, the so-called Roman Church, Greek Church, and Chinese Christian Church are all unscriptural.

"To the messenger." This epistle is given to the messenger. This indicates that it is much inferior to the book to the Ephesians written by Paul, because Paul wrote to all the believers. From this we can see that many of the believers at that time had passed away or backslidden. Hence, only the messenger could receive this epistle. When we further compare the content of these two epistles, we can realize that the earlier and latter conditions of this church were very different. Ephesus had definitely become loose and desolate and had backslidden.

To this church the Lord presents Himself as "He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, He who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands." This is to make the church in Ephesus and the messenger know that He has full authority; He searches the whole church.

B. Revelation 2:2-3

"I know your works and your labor and your endurance and that you cannot bear evil men; and you have tried those who call themselves apostles and are not, and have found them to be false; and you have endurance and have borne all things because of My name and have not grown weary."

This section is the Lord's word of praise. This section of praise is divided into three aspects:

1. Concerning Them

"Your works." Their works must have been very good.

"Your labor." They must have labored diligently.

"Your endurance." This church had the heart of a father or mother in bearing others' weaknesses.

2. Concerning the Administration of the Church

"You cannot bear evil men." See 1 Corinthians 5.

"You have tried those who call themselves apostles and are not." They did not loosely receive people into the work. Even if one was an apostle, he still needed to be tried. From this we see that they had much spiritual insight.

3. Concerning the Outward Work

They endured for the Lord's name and did not grow weary.

Judging from only the items mentioned above, the church in Ephesus was indeed quite perfect.

C. Revelation 2:4

"But I have one thing against you, that you have left your first love."

Although the church in Ephesus was so good, the Lord still had something for which to rebuke her—she had left her first love. We may wonder why a church which labored so diligently would not at the same time love the Lord inwardly. However, much experience tells us that one may be laboring diligently outwardly, yet may have already left the first love inwardly. The "first love" is the best and most perfect love; it is the virgin love which saints offer to the Lord through His love.

We may ask how they could have left their first love. It may be that they emphasized work more than love for the Lord, or it may be due to their disobedience to the Lord (John 15:10). Nevertheless, what we see here is that the Lord demands our love to Him. If we have diligent labor and spiritual wisdom yet are without love, our labor and wisdom are useless (1 Thes. 1:2-3; 1 Cor. 13:2).

D. Revelation 2:5

"Remember therefore where you have fallen from and repent and do the first works; but if not, I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place, unless you repent."

Here the Lord tells them of the way of recovery:

(1) "Remember therefore where you have fallen from." This means that they should find out the cause. Every time one backslides, there must be a cause, and unless the cause is discovered, there is no way of recovery. From the Lord's point of view, the church in Ephesus was outwardly perfect, yet inwardly fallen. First she fell inwardly; then she failed outwardly.

(2) "And repent." To repent is not just something that sinners have to do; believers should also repent. Whenever there is a fall, there is the need to repent.

(3) "And do the first works." Repentance is negative, while to "do the first works" is positive. From this we know that the church in Ephesus had not been doing the first works. What were the first works? Although they are not explicitly mentioned here, we know definitely that they are not matters like labor, endurance, diligence, rejecting evil persons, and so forth. By reading the book of Ephesians carefully, we can find two points of their "first works": One, they were faithful (1:1), and two, they allowed Christ to be the Lord (3:17).

In Revelation 2:5, the Lord mentions the way of recovery on the one hand and speaks of His judgment on the other. First He exercises love; then He exercises His righteousness. "But if not, I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place." The lampstand represents the church, whose responsibility is to shine, to be a witness. Where was this place from which the lampstand might be removed? This place was before the Lord (1:12-13; 2:1). Therefore, to be removed out of its place means that it loses its position before the Lord and is rejected by Him. For the lampstand to lose its position means that it cannot receive oil (the filling of the Holy Spirit) from the Lord, and as a result, it cannot shine for the Lord. Therefore, the problem here is not a matter of

salvation, but of work and testimony. From the Lord's point of view, there are many churches today that are merely lampstands which have been removed.

E. Revelation 2:6

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

The word "Nicolaitans" in the original language means "those who subdue others." Therefore, this sect is one which, being greedy for power, assumes the position of leadership. The Lord hates this. The church in Ephesus hated what the Lord hates, sharing His feeling; thus, she was praised by Him.

F. Revelation 2:7

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

This shows that this epistle was given not only to the church in Ephesus, but also to all the churches which have the same condition as that of the church in Ephesus. Although the Lord's words are spoken to all the churches, how many are actually able to hear them? "He who has an ear" reveals that there were many in the church who did not have an ear to hear. Why did they not have an ear to hear the Lord's word? This does not refer to the physical ear but the spiritual ear. By considering Matthew 13:13-15, we can understand why some did not have a spiritual ear. It is because (1) they did not have a heart to be spiritual, and (2) they were afraid of the Lord's word.

Finally, He mentions the promise. "Him who overcomes" is singular. Although the church as a whole has failed, individuals can endeavor to overcome. The Lord's emphasis in these seven epistles is that some would overcome.

The reward to the overcomers is to eat the fruits of life in the Paradise of God. The Paradise here probably refers to the kingdom of the heavens, because the kingdom of the heavens recovers us back to the situation in Genesis 2. Just as there was a garden of Eden on earth, so also will there be a Paradise in the kingdom of the heavens. The overcomers will be with the Lord in Paradise; how joyful this will be! Not only will they be in Paradise, but they will also be able to eat the fruits of life. Since the creation of the world, no person has tasted the fruits of life, but at that time, the overcomers will enjoy them first.

III. THE CHURCH IN SMYRNA (REVELATION 2:8-11)

The church in Smyrna typifies the condition of the church during the time from about one hundred years after Christ to A.D. 313. The church in Ephesus was cold in her love; the church in Smyrna suffered. This has a great significance because many times the Lord causes a cold and loose believer to suffer in order to revive him.

A. Revelation 2:8

"And to the messenger of the church in Smyrna write: These things says the First and the Last, who became dead and lived again."

"Smyrna" means "suffering," but it can also be taken to mean "myrrh." Myrrh is precious; thus, this suffering is a precious suffering. All sufferings for the Lord are precious. "The First and the Last" indicates that the Lord is the forever unchanging God. What a comfort this was to the church in Smyrna!

"These things says..., who became dead and lived again." Becoming dead yet living again was, of course, the Lord's experience and work when He was on the earth. However, this word could also give the believers in Smyrna the greatest comfort, encouragement, and help:

- (1) First, this leaves us a pattern to follow. If the Lord received death while on the earth, even more, should not we also?
- (2) Since He suffered unto death, He can sympathize with us (Heb. 4:15).
- (3) To accomplish God's will and overcome the enemy, the Lord had to die. We want to accomplish the same; hence, we also must die.
- (4) Although the Lord died, He resurrected. Hence, if we suffer or forsake our life for the Lord, we will have the hope of resurrection; our suffering will not be in vain.

B. Revelation 2:9

"I know your tribulation and poverty (but you are rich) and the slander from those who call themselves Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan."

1. "I Know"

- (a) The Lord knows all of our sufferings! Therefore, our hearts should be content.
- (b) Since the Lord knows our sufferings yet still does not remove them, such sufferings must be profitable to us.
- (c) Since the Lord knows our sufferings, He must also know how to reward us in the future.

2. Their Sufferings

The sufferings of the church in Smyrna at that time were of three kinds: (1) tribulation, (2) poverty, and (3) slanderings.

a. Tribulation

What is tribulation? Tribulation is an outward persecution from the environment, such as opposition, attack, exile, oppression, beating, robbing, and so forth.

b. Poverty

If the monetary supply during tribulation is sufficient, you do not feel the suffering that much because, relatively speaking, being rich makes it easier for you to get by. But if you are in poverty in the midst of tribulation, the situation becomes even more hopeless. Although this was the situation, the Lord added a most precious word: "But you are rich." At that time the faith of the church in Smyrna was rich (James 2:5) and her love was full (1 Thes. 1:3). Otherwise, who would not fall when placed under such circumstances?

The church in Smyrna and the church in Laodicea stand in stark contrast to each other (Rev. 3:17); it is impossible for a person to be in Smyrna, before the Lord, yet at the same time be in Laodicea, before the world.

c. Slandering

Slander damages our reputation. Some can endure physical sufferings under tribulation and poverty, yet few can tolerate damage to their reputation.

"The slander from those who call themselves Jews." Slandering began with the Jews. When our Lord was on the earth, He was slandered by them; much more, should not we also be slandered?

What was their actual word of slander? It was slander against the truth of salvation (Acts 13:45; 18:6; 19:9; 28:22; Rom. 3:8), yet the Lord said that we are blessed if we are reviled (Matt. 5:11).

There is one more point to be noted—that is, concerning "those who call themselves Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan." Who actually were these people? Before we talk about this group of people, we should first find out who the real Jews are. From Romans 2:28-29, John 8:39-47, and Romans 4:11-12, we understand that whoever sincerely believes in the Lord Jesus is a real Jew. Since these ones were not Jews but called themselves such, they must surely refer to a group of Jews in the flesh and a group of Judaistic followers.

These people had an organization, and one might say that they were the Judaistic church. Their teachings were also Judaistic, being half of the law and half of grace, half of faith and half of works. Their system followed the law; they had a priestly order. There were a great number of these people, even at Paul's time. However, by the time of this writing, they had become more developed and

more organized. They "are a synagogue of Satan." These people were used by Satan to preach a seemingly true, but actually false, gospel.

C. Revelation 2:10

"Do not fear the things that you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison that you may be tried, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life."

"The things that you are about to suffer" were the things which they had not yet suffered. These were in addition to the three things just mentioned. This is really suffering upon suffering! But here the Lord tells us beforehand, "Do not fear," because (1) fear is the source of failure—if you do not fear, you will not fail; and (2) the Lord has already won the victory—although we may suffer, eventually we will triumph.

"The devil is about to cast some of you into prison that you may be tried." At the beginning it was merely opposition and slandering, but now it has intensified to the point of imprisonment. The purpose of this imprisonment is: (1) to stop the believers from testifying publicly, so as to bind the Lord's truth; (2) to cause them to be separated from one another, thus, reducing their strength; and 3) to cause those who are imprisoned to suffer. On the one hand, this would make the devil happy, and on the other hand, this would cause the believers to lose heart. Oh, how evil are the tactics of the devil!

"The devil is about to cast some of you." No person is mentioned here, but the devil is particularly mentioned. This is so that (1) we will not blame people but will hate the devil, and so that (2) we may accurately recognize the enemy in order to resist him.

"You will have tribulation for ten days." "Ten days" does not mean ten days and ten nights. It means that our suffering is for a specified period of time. Some say that these ten days are the ten periods of great persecution by the Romans.

"Be faithful unto death." "Unto death" implies killing. When the devil sees that imprisonment is not effective, he will take a further step, to kill them. "Be," here, is in the imperative mood. "Faithful unto death" means that even though they face death, they still do not love their soul-lives (Rev. 12:11). Oh, but Satan's attacks can reach only up to this point. If we are faithful, he cannot do anything more.

"I will give you the crown of life." Oh, how wonderful this promise is. What a blessed hope! (James 1:12). Revelation 1:10 does not say that He will give life,

but that He will give a crown of life. Life is obtained by believing, but the crown of life can only be obtained by being faithful. "Crown" indicates glory; it refers to being one of the co-kings with Christ and reigning in the millennium.

D. Revelation 2:11

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall by no means be hurt of the second death."

"He who overcomes shall by no means be hurt of the second death." Here the promise to the overcomers is spoken of very clearly. On the positive side, it is to obtain the crown of life; on the negative side, it is to be spared from being hurt of the second death. "He who overcomes shall by no means be hurt of the second death." In other words, he who fails will suffer being hurt of the second death. This is what we believe. Before we speak about being "hurt of the second death," let us first talk about the overcoming and the failing mentioned here. Since the overcoming mentioned here is to be faithful to the truth, even unto death, the failing must be the failure of being unwilling to be martyred. Therefore, one who fears death and is not willing to be martyred will have to suffer being hurt of the second death.

Now, let us ask what the second death is. By referring to Revelation 20:14-15, we see that the second death refers to the time after the death and resurrection of the body, when the spirit, soul, and body will be cast into the lake of fire. In other words, it is eternal perdition. Believers will never suffer this (John 10:28).

To be hurt of the second death is different from the second death. Just as eternal life is in contrast to the second death, in the same way, the crown of life is in contrast to being hurt of the second death. As life is different from the crown of life, so the second death is different from being hurt of the second death. Furthermore, since the crown of life is related to the kingdom, to be hurt of the second death is also related to the kingdom of the heavens. Therefore, to be hurt of the second death could never refer to eternal perdition.

Now we can speak directly about what it is to be hurt of the second death. What is the second death? The second death refers to what an unbeliever, whose soul has already suffered in Hades after his physical death, will suffer in his spirit, soul, and body eternally, after his resurrection and his judgment at the great white throne in the future. What is it to be hurt of the second death? To be hurt of the second death means that after the backslidden and unfaithful believers are resurrected, they will still have to suffer during the kingdom, though this is not eternal perdition. When speaking concerning this point, I must praise God for His

righteousness because, though the overcomers may suffer martyrdom in the world, they will be spared from being hurt of the second death during the kingdom and, instead, will obtain the crown of life. The defeated ones, who are not willing to be martyred, are spared from suffering in this world, but they will be hurt in the kingdom of heaven and will not obtain the crown of life. Who will choose to suffer in this age and obtain glory in the future?

A type in the Old Testament shows this difference. The people of Sodom were burned to death within the city (Gen. 19:24-25); this can be likened to the second death. Lot's wife was turned into a pillar of salt outside the city (v. 26; Luke 17:32); this can be likened to being hurt of the second death.

IV. THE CHURCH IN PERGAMOS (REVELATION 2:12-17)

The church in Pergamos signifies the condition of the church from the fourth century to the seventh century. The greatest persecution from the world could not annihilate the church; therefore, Satan changed his scheme of attack on the church. Here the world no longer opposed the church, instead, the greatest empire of the world, the Roman Empire, accepted Christianity as its state religion.

A. Revelation 2:12

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

According to the original language, the word "Pergamos" has two meanings: (1) united in marriage, which refers to the relationship between the church and the world; and (2) high tower, which refers to the position of the church in the world.

"These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword." The sharp sword has two functions: one is to sever the union between the church and the world, and the other is to judge the church which is united to the world.

B. Revelation 2:13

"I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name and have not denied My faith, even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells."

"I know where you dwell." The church sojourns in this world; she has the nature of a sojourner, just as our Lord was a sojourner on earth. How pitiful it is that the church has now lost her sojourning nature. Instead, she has taken up a dwelling place on this earth and has gained a position here. This is the decline of the

church into worldliness. Moreover, her dwelling place in Pergamos is a high tower; it has the greatest position, authority, and glory. Outwardly speaking, the church has greatly expanded, possessing position, power, and glory, but in reality, the church is now corrupted and defeated. The responsibility of the church in the world should be to fight against the enemy, but she now has a dwelling place which has been occupied by the throne of Satan. How pitiful it is that Satan has a position in the church!

"Even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells." In these seven epistles, no other believer's name is mentioned except that of Antipas. From this we can see that Antipas is very important. Why was Antipas killed? Because he held fast the Lord's name and refused to forsake the Lord's word. He was killed because he was faithful to the testimony. "And you hold fast My name and have not denied My faith." While Antipas was alive he faithfully stood alone, yet this caused the entire Body to stand up also. But after he was killed, the entire Body was shaken.

C. Revelation 2:14

"But I have a few things against you, that you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat idol sacrifices and to commit fornication."

Balaam was a prophet who was greedy for wealth. Today there are many people who come out to preach for the sake of money. Balaam's teaching was intended to cause the Israelites to unite with the Gentiles. Today there are also many people who advocate a union with the world. Balaam was hired by Balak, and in the same way, ever since Constantine joined Christianity, many have been "hired" by rulers. The consequences of Balaam's teaching were: (1) "to eat idol sacrifices," that is, to mingle with other religions; and (2) "to commit fornication," that is, to make friends with the world.

D. Revelation 2:15

"In the same way you also have some who hold in like manner the teaching of the Nicolaitans."

This period signifies the age when the entire Roman Empire adopted Christianity. Since most of the people did not understand the truths in Christianity, a few had to take over the spiritual affairs. Hierarchy became accepted, and as a consequence, this system also became a kind of teaching.

E. Revelation 2:16

"Repent therefore; but if not, I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war with them with the sword of My mouth."

The sword here, as in verse 12, is the Lord's word, which is for cutting off our relationship with the world. If we hear the Lord's word but do not repent and break off from the world, this word will be the sword that judges us.

F. Revelation 2:17

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

Here are two promises given to the overcomers:

(1)"To him I will give of the hidden manna." Manna typifies Christ (John 6:49-51). The open manna was possessed by all the Israelites, but the hidden manna was kept for Canaan (Exo. 16:33). All believers receive the salvation of Christ, but only the overcomers enjoy the hidden portion of Christ, a portion which the common people cannot enjoy.

(2)"To him I will give a white stone." At the apostles' time, elections were carried out by placing pieces of white stone into a jar with names written on them. Although the overcomers lose the opportunity to be elected in the world, the Lord will give them a white stone on which a new name is written, a name not known by others. This shows the Lord's approval of us.

V. THE CHURCH IN THYATIRA

(REVELATION 2:18-19)

"Thyatira" means "she sacrificed tirelessly." This means she was filled with many sacrifices. The Lord's word becomes stronger and stronger. All Bible readers recognize that this refers to the Roman Catholic Church.

A. Revelation 2:18

"And to the messenger of the church in Thyatira write: These things says the Son of God, He who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like shining bronze."

Here the Lord identifies Himself as:

(1) "He who has eyes like a flame of fire," which can penetrate and discern all things.

(2) "The Son of God," thus causing the Roman Catholic Church to realize her error of exalting Mary.

(3) He whose "feet are like shining bronze," which are able to carry out judgment. Whatever the eyes condemn, the feet trample.

B. Revelation 2:19

"I know your works and love and faith and service and your endurance and that your last works are more than the first."

We marvel and wonder at this. How is it that the corrupted Roman Catholic Church can have so many good works? We have to realize that this was spoken to a small number of messengers. Although the majority was defeated, there were still a few who were quite good. This can be proved from church history.

[Editor's note: The portion from here through the end of chapter three is missing in the original manuscript.]

CHAPTER THREE

THE VISION OF THE THRONE

(Revelation 4:1—5:14)

I. THE THINGS THAT MUST TAKE PLACE

(REVELATION 4:1)

"After these things I saw, and behold, a door opened in heaven, and the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, Come up here, and I will show you the things that must take place after these things."

Based upon the words "the things that must take place after these things" in 4:1, some say that the things in chapters four and five have not yet been fulfilled because they concern those things which will happen at the time that the church is about to be raptured, at the Lord's return. This is a very common interpretation; however, with this explanation there are clearly the following eight problems:

(1) If we say that chapters four and five refer to the things that will take place later, why is such an important matter as the rapture of the church not mentioned at all? Since the rapture is mentioned in chapters seven, twelve, fourteen, and fifteen of this book, why is it not mentioned at all in this portion? Some say that the words "Come up here" in 4:1 refer to the rapture of the church, yet verse 2 says, "Immediately I was in spirit." The church will be raptured physically, but here verse 2 speaks of being in spirit. Therefore, we can say that this does not refer to the rapture of the church. How could it be possible, when chapters two and three mention the events of the church, that there is not one clear word concerning the rapture of the church immediately thereafter?

(2) If Revelation 4:1 speaks of the rapture of the church, then where is the church in chapters four and five? Some say that the twenty-four elders in 4:4, 10, and 5:8 represent the church. Later on we shall prove that the twenty-four elders are not the representatives of the church. For now we need only to ask why it is that not even one of the twenty-four elders is mentioned from Revelation —22. Is it because the church is limited to the tribulation and to the enjoyment of the kingdom, but is no longer seen or heard in the new heaven and new earth? Can it be that she was there in the beginning but disappears later on?

(3) Chapter five shows how the Lamb receives glory in the heavens. Is it possible to say that the Lord must wait for two thousand years before He will receive glory?

(4) The praises of those "in heaven and on the earth and under the earth" (5:13) correspond with what is said in Philippians 2:10. This is such a glorious scene because the Lord has resurrected, ascended to the heavens, and received from the Father "the name which is above every name" (Phil. 2:9). How can it be said, in contrast to this, that Revelation 5:13 describes something which occurs two thousand years later?

(5) Why should the new song in Revelation 5:9 wait two thousand years to be sung? Can it be that redemption is accomplished, yet the new song still cannot be sung?

(6) "As having just been slain" (5:6) clearly indicates that it describes the scene at the time of the Lord's ascension to the heavens. Although the Lord's death is eternally fresh, the words used here are quite clear—"having just been."

(7) In Revelation 4:8, the four living creatures say, "Lord God the Almighty, who was and who is and who is coming." Compare this with Revelation 11:17: "Lord God the Almighty, He who is and who was." Here the phrase "and who is coming" is left out. From this we can see that the Lord's coming must be after 4:8; it could never be before 4:8.

(8) Revelation 5:6 says that the seven Spirits of God are "sent forth into all the earth." What will the Holy Spirit do in all the earth during the great tribulation? We know that the Holy Spirit descended only after the Lord Jesus' ascension. It is in the age of the church that the Spirit is sent forth by the Lord.

According to these eight points, we realize that chapter four unveils the normal situation before God; it is the original situation in the heavens. Chapter five speaks of the situation at the time of the Lord's ascension (because not until 5:6 do we see the Lamb standing), which is displayed purposely for John. The "door

opened in heaven" "after these things" in 4:1 does not happen after the time of the seven churches, but after the seeing of the vision in chapter one.

"Behold, a door opened in heaven." The heavens were opened to Ezekiel (Ezek. 1:1), to the Lord (Matt. 3:16), to Stephen (Acts 7:56), to Peter (Acts 10:11), and to John (Rev. 4:1; 19:11).

"And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me." Here it says "like a trumpet," but not actually a trumpet. The phrase "Come up here" was spoken to John individually; it is not a type of the rapture of the church. (Scofield said that this is a type of the rapture of the church, but it is impossible to assert this here.) "I will show you" speaks of the words that are heard. "I will show you the things that must take place after these things" is an introduction to the following words of prophecy.

II. THE THRONE

(REVELATION 4:2-3)

A. Revelation 4:2

"Immediately I was in spirit; and behold, there was a throne set in heaven, and upon the throne there was One sitting."

John's spirit was raptured, not his body. "Behold, there was a throne set in heaven." The throne is the center of this book; it is also the center of everything. Hence, the throne which is seen first is the place out from which all the following events come forth. This throne differs from the throne mentioned in the epistles. Hebrews 4 touches upon the aspect of God's grace—the throne of grace. Revelation 4:2 touches upon the aspect of God's righteousness—the throne of judgment. "And upon the throne there was One sitting." This One is God.

B. Revelation 4:3

"And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance, and there was a rainbow around the throne like an emerald in appearance."

"Jasper" is best translated as "diamond." Of all physical matter, a diamond resembles the color of light the most. No one can break it. Everyone treasures it. Its structure is the result of the transformation of coal. Its light is like the light of the gospel, which brings people from darkness into the realm of light.

"Sardius" is the most perfect red and signifies God's redemption because blood is red. The significance of these two items is their colors. One signifies the light of the gospel; the other signifies the redemption accomplished by God through the Lord Jesus.

"And there was a rainbow around the throne like an emerald in appearance." The rainbow ordinarily seen on earth is shaped like an arc, but the rainbow here surrounds the throne. The rainbow is the sign of God's covenant with Noah. From this we can see that God is a covenant-making God (Gen. 9:12-16) as well as a covenant-keeping God. God is going to execute His judgment soon; nevertheless, He continues to keep His covenant and remember His promises and grace. "Emerald" green is a grass green; it is the basic color of the earth. This means that during God's judgment, He has grace and remembrance toward the earth. After the earth has passed through judgment, the color green still remains (Gen. 8:11).

III. THE TWENTY-FOUR ELDERS (REVELATION 4:4)

"And around the throne there were twenty-four thrones, and upon the thrones twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and upon their heads golden crowns."

The common interpretation of Bible expositors is that the twenty-four elders refer to the entire glorified church, but their assertion does not have sufficient proof. Recently, some quoted Revelation 4:4 and said that these elders have thrones and, therefore, are kings. They also said that in 5:8 the elders have harps and bowls full of incense and, therefore, are also priests. Furthermore, 1 Peter 2:9 says that the believers are a royal priesthood. Since these twenty-four elders are kings and priests, Bible expositors reason that these elders represent the glorified church.

According to this kind of interpretation, however, the whole church would be raptured all at once and would not have to pass through the tribulation. Is not this against the spirit of this book? Then how about Revelation 3:10? There are still another ten major reasons that are sufficient to prove that the twenty-four elders are not the glorified church.

(1) The term elder is not the same as the term church. If the elders here refer to the church, would not that make the whole church elders? According to historical fact, God first selected the angels (Isa. 14:12; Ezek. 28:11-19); second, the Jews (Gen. 12:1-3); and third, the church (the church was established in Acts 2). The church cannot be considered as the elders, and neither can the Jews. (Ephesians 1:4 speaks of selection according to God's eternal purpose. The chosen angels in 1 Timothy 5:21, however, are another matter.)

(2) The number of the elders is not the number of the church. The number of the church is seven, or at least a multiple of seven. If the elders are the church, their number should be either seven or a multiple of seven. The number twenty-four is neither the number seven nor its multiple.

(3) The church cannot receive the throne and the crown before the Lord Jesus does. The One who sits on the throne in Revelation 4:2 is the Father God (the Lamb in 5:6 is standing). First, in 4:4 there is "the throne," and then there is the word "sitting." In the original text, "sitting" is the same word as "the throne"; therefore, it should also be translated "throne." These twenty-four elders who sit on the thrones also wear golden crowns. If we say that they are the church, why is it that the church sits, but the Lamb stands? In 5:6 the church is already crowned; hence, why does the Lord Jesus have to wait until chapter twenty to be King? How can the church receive glory sooner than the Lord? Besides, after Revelation 19:4 we cannot find any trace of the twenty-four elders. If we say that these elders represent the church, where has this glorious church gone?

(4) There is no mention that the white garments worn by the elders are washed in the precious blood; however, in other passages where the white garments are mentioned, Revelation always says that they are cleansed by the blood of the Lamb (in 7:14, for example). The white garments here indicate that the elders do not have sin.

(5) The words that the elders speak are not words of redemption. Revelation 4:11 says that they speak of God's creation. Therefore, they know only God's creation and do not realize God's redemption. Although they sing a new song in 5:9-10, they do it because the Lord has redeemed "men." "Men" does not refer to the elders, but to those out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation.

(6) All the circumstances in chapter four represent the situation of the universe. Besides the throne and the seven Spirits, there are the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders. Nothing else is mentioned. This shows that those elders are the elders of the universe. Can we say that the church is composed of the most elderly ones in the universe?

(7) To bring prayers before God, as mentioned in 5:8, is not the work of the church. Although the Bible charges the church to pray for people, God has not charged her to bring before Him others' supplication for people. The church does not have such power. Many Bible expositors agree that the angel in Revelation 8:3-4 refers to the Lord. Whether or not it is the Lord, it is the angel who brings

prayers before God. Hence, the bringing of prayers before God in 5:8 must be done by the angels.

(8) The twenty-four elders never refer to themselves as the church. "Them" in 5:10 is the elders' reference to the church. If the elders are speaking concerning themselves here, they should say, "us." It is apparent by the elders' word here that they distinguish themselves from the church. From this we can see that the twenty-four elders definitely are not the church. There are three kinds of people in Revelation 7:13-17: the elders, John, and those who wear white robes. If we say that the twenty-four elders refer to only one part of those in the church, it might still make sense for the elders to ask John, "These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they?" But how could it be possible that the whole church would ask this concerning a part of the church?

(9) In Revelation 7:13-17, John addresses one of the elders as "my lord." We can see that the elder must have a higher position than John. Otherwise, how could the elder allow John to address him as "lord"? Comparing this with Revelation 22:8-9 and 5:9-10, we see that the elders never say that they themselves are washed by the blood. Revelation 5:9 reads, "Purchased for God by Your blood men." It is "men" and not "us," as is translated in the King James Version. Furthermore, if the word "men" in 5:9 is changed to "us," how can the word "them" in 5:10 stand grammatically?

(10) The attitude of the twenty-four elders before God is most unusual. Unlike the church, they have never hungered, thirsted, or wept. They do not fear God and do not have the sense of sin or the experience of redemption. From this we know they are not the redeemed church.

Who then are these twenty-four elders? We conclude, first, that they are the kings and priests among the angels. They are the elders of the universe, governing the angels and the world and serving God. The evidence of this is as follows:

(1) They sit on thrones and wear golden crowns. Hence, they must be kings.

(2) They wear white robes which are the priestly garments (see Exo. 28; Lev. 6:10; 16:4). They have harps, songs, and golden bowls full of incense. All these prove that they are priests.

(3) The reason they are priests among the angels is that they are the elders of the universe. In chapters four and five, God is God, the Lord is the Lamb, the Holy Spirit is the seven Spirits of God, and the four living creatures represent the

animals in creation. Man is on the earth, and the devil does not count. Hence, the twenty-four elders are the oldest among all the creatures.

(4) Besides the angels, no one is able to sit on thrones and wear golden crowns before the Lord does. Originally, God appointed angels to govern the universe. Later the archangel failed and became Satan; hence, we have the kingdom of Satan. The remaining angels who did not submit to Satan are still appointed by God to govern the universe. For example, there is Michael, who is the angel for the Israelites (Dan. 10:13). As the redeemed people, we also have our angels (Acts 12:15; Matt. 18:10; Heb. 1:14). Here the twenty-four elders are sitting, while in the following chapters the angels who blow seven trumpets are standing (Rev. 8:2). The twenty-four elders are now governing the universe. When they see God saving a group of people, they are not jealous; rather, they praise God for it. When the kingdom comes, they will resign from their position and will hand over the governing authority of the universe to men (Rev. 11:16-18; Heb. 2:5-8). This is why we do not see the elders doing any more work after Revelation 19:4.

(5) The number of the twenty-four elders is the number of the priests. In David's time, the priests were divided into twenty-four courses (1 Chron. 24:7-18). The responsibility of the priests is to bring the prayers of the saints before God. The harps are for singing, and the bowls of incense are for prayers.

IV. THE SITUATION OF THE THRONE

(REVELATION 4:5-6)

A. Revelation 4:5

"And out of the throne come forth lightnings and voices and thunders. And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God."

"And out of the throne come forth lightnings and voices and thunders." We see that God will execute judgment shortly. This throne is God's throne of righteousness, His throne of judgment. "Lamps of fire" in the original text is "torches of fire." A lamp is used in the house, and a torch of fire is used outdoors. (The torch of fire used by the Greeks was in the shape of a trumpet and filled inside with linen or cotton soaked in oil. It was used outdoors where air was abundant.) There is, of course, only one Holy Spirit before God. The seven Spirits here indicate that the emphasis is on the work and effectiveness of the Holy Spirit. This perfectly corresponds with the meaning of the torches of fire (see Rev. 5:6; Isa. 11:2).

B. Revelation 4:6

"And before the throne there was as it were a glassy sea like crystal; and in the midst of the throne and around the throne, there were four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind."

A glassy sea is before the throne because the rainbow surrounds the throne. In Noah's time, God covenanted that He would never again destroy the earth by water (Gen. 9:15). Here we see that the judgment by water is over; judgment will no longer be by the sea. In Revelation 15:2 the glassy sea is mingled with fire. In the new heaven and new earth, there will be no more sea. Nevertheless, there will be hell—the lake of fire. It is a lake, but a lake of fire. For this reason, Mr. Govett said that this glassy sea later becomes the lake of fire. According to him, the judgment will not be by means of a sea of water; rather, it will be by a lake of fire. This seems quite reasonable.

There is only one throne; therefore, "the midst of the throne" cannot be taken to mean the center of the throne. It can only be explained as the midst beneath the throne, that is, the central area under the throne. "Four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind." "Eyes" represent intelligence. If the eyes are closed, one cannot see the world. The eyes are those which have the most contact with the world. "Full of eyes in front and behind." This shows us that the four living creatures are very intelligent before God.

V. THE FOUR LIVING CREATURES

(REVELATION 4:7-8)

"And the first living creature was like a lion, and the second living creature like a calf, and the third living creature had a face like that of a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle. And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings apiece, are full of eyes around and within; and they have no rest day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God the Almighty, who was and who is and who is coming."

Some have said that since the twenty-four elders signify the church, these four living creatures also signify the church. We have said previously that Revelation is not a book of signs. Anything in this book that is not used as a sign should be interpreted literally. If the twenty-four elders are the church, if they are a sign with so many numbers, how do we interpret the other numbers later on? Such an interpretation not only makes it difficult to understand, but it also makes it easy for us to lose the value of this book. Therefore, the four living creatures are not a sign, but rather are the representatives of the creatures in Revelation 5:13. (The

angels are represented in 5:11.) The twenty-four elders are representatives of the angels in heaven, and the four living creatures are representatives of the living creatures on earth.

According to Genesis, the living creatures are of six classifications: (1) aquatics, (2) birds, (3) livestock, (4) insects (creeping things), (5) beasts, and (6) man. But according to Revelation 4:7, there are only four kinds:

(1) The lion is the king of beasts (Prov. 30:30).

(2) The calf is the king of livestock. (Among the livestock the calf is the biggest.)

(3) The man represents the human beings in the world. The man does not represent the church, for in the kingdom age "the earth will be full of the knowledge of Jehovah" (Isa. 11:9). During the age of the kingdom, the church will be divided between those who are merely saved and the overcomers. But in the new heaven and new earth there will be no such distinction. During the age of the kingdom, although the human beings on the earth will also believe in God, there will be no baptism in the Holy Spirit; hence, they will not become members of the Body of Christ. They can only believe as individuals. In the new heaven and new earth they will be restored only to the condition of Adam before he committed sin. They will eat fruit, sleep, marry, and give birth to sons and daughters, but they will no longer die, be sick, or sin, because they will no longer be tempted by the devil. (More will be examined later concerning this.)

(4) The eagle is the king of birds.

No creeping things or fish are mentioned. The largest creeping thing is the serpent; therefore, it has no representative here. The fish were not judged in the age of Noah, but all the other living creatures were. Furthermore, in the new heaven and new earth there will be no more sea. By this we can see that the fish will be judged only in the future; therefore, they also have no representative here. Because of the influence of man's fall, the whole creation is far from its original condition. Consequently, Romans 8:19 through 22 says that the whole creation expects to enter into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. When the Lord comes we shall be glorified, and the creation will be freed from the slavery of corruption. Only when the Lord comes will all things be restored (Acts 3:21). The effectiveness of the Lord's death on the cross reaches not only man but all things (Col. 1:20). Hebrews 2:9 says "everything." The Lord tasted death on behalf of "everything," that is, for all created things. The preceding portion says "all things" (v. 8); the following portion says "everything" (v. 9). Hence in the

future, not only man but all created things will be redeemed. The Lord Jesus is not only a man but also the Firstborn of all creation (Col. 1:15; Rev. 3:14).

The four living creatures represent the redeemed living things before God. Among the four living creatures, the calf and man are clean, whereas the lion and the eagle are unclean. These two types of creatures stand before God with no distinction between clean and unclean because they are all redeemed. The lion and the eagle are ferocious, while the man and the calf are gentle. Yet because they are all redeemed, they can live together.

In the Old Testament there are two kinds of messengers: (1) the cherubim and (2) the seraphim. The cherubim have only four wings (Ezek. 1:6) and the seraphim have six (Isa. 6:2). The four living creatures here in Revelation resemble the four living creatures spoken of by Ezekiel—they have the faces of the cherubim (Ezek. 1:10) and the wings of the seraphim (Isa. 6:2). From this we see that the living creatures here are a combination of the cherubim and the seraphim. Cherubim are for God's glory. Exodus 37:7 says, "And he made two cherubim of gold." This signifies the glory of the cherubim. Seraphim are for God's holiness (see "holy" in Isaiah 6:3). Glory is related to God Himself. Holiness is related to God's nature. Therefore, the four living creatures here manifest God's glory and holiness. "The Almighty, who...is coming" means that He shall come. This indicates the Lord's second coming.

VI. THE PRAISES

(REVELATION 4:9-11)

"And when the four living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits upon the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders will fall before Him who sits upon the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever; and they will cast their crowns before the throne, saying, You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power, for You have created all things, and because of Your will they were, and were created."

In Revelation 4:9 "thanks" is given. The four living creatures are the representatives of the redeemed creatures. Since they have been redeemed, they give thanks. In 4:11 the twenty-four elders do not give thanks but speak of the Lord being worthy of authority. The elders do not have the experience of salvation; they only know authority. But when the twenty-four elders see the four living creatures praising, they are not jealous but rather join in: "And because of

Your will they were, and were created." According to Mr. Govett's investigation, the best manuscript reads, "According to God's will all things were not, and were created," meaning that formerly God's not creating was according to His will, and later His creating was also according to His will.

VII. WHO IS WORTHY TO OPEN THE SCROLL?

(REVELATION 5:1-4)

A. Revelation 5:1

"And I saw on the right hand of Him who sits upon the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed up with seven seals."

"Him who sits upon the throne" is God the Father. What kind of scroll is this? It is the New Testament. The New Testament speaks of how God will save the church, the Israelites, the world, and the universe. This scroll also records God's view concerning the church, the Israelites, the world, and the universe. "Sealed up with seven seals." This does not mean that with the loosing of each seal one sees a little more of the scroll. Rather, one has to loose all seven seals before he can see what has been established. This scroll is the New Testament established by the blood of the Lamb. It is the whole of God's plan in the New Testament.

B. Revelation 5:2

"And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the scroll and to break its seals?"

Because the voice has to reach heaven, the earth, and under the earth, a strong angel is needed to proclaim loudly, "Who is worthy?" This is not a matter of power, but a matter of qualification. Who is worthy to bring in God's plan? No one.

C. Revelation 5:3

"And no one in heaven nor on the earth nor under the earth was able to open the scroll or look into it."

Among the angels in heaven, the human beings on earth, and the spirits under the earth, no one is worthy to open the scroll.

D. Revelation 5:4

"And I wept much because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or look into it."

Because John saw that God's plan could not be accomplished, he wept much. Here is a heart that sympathizes with the heart on the throne.

VIII. THE LION-LAMB

(REVELATION 5:5-7)

A. Revelation 5:5

"And one of the elders said to me, Do not weep; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so that He may open the scroll and its seven seals."

"The Lion of the tribe of Judah." The Lord is from the tribe of Judah. Before God, the Lord is the Lamb, not the Lion. But to the Jews, the Lord is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, not the Lamb. The Lion has power and is the king.

"The Root of David." David was after God's heart and was the first king chosen by God. The Lord Jesus is the sprout of Jesse because He came out of Jesse (Isa. 11:1). But the Lord Jesus is not the sprout of David. Instead, He is "the Root of David" because David is out of Jesus. David became a king after the pattern of the Lord Jesus. God needs a victorious king to open the scroll so that His plan may be accomplished.

B. Revelation 5:6

"And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures and in the midst of the elders a Lamb standing as having just been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth."

"A Lamb standing." This is the scene at the time of the Lord's ascension to the heavens. "Having seven horns and seven eyes." Horns signify power because the horns of the ox and the ram are powerful. Hence, in the Bible there are such expressions as "our horn shall be exalted" (Psa. 89:17), "the horn of my salvation" (Psa. 18:2), and so forth. Eyes signify intelligence. The seven Spirits of God are not there to shine on God but are there as torches of fire sent forth into the dark places. The seven Spirits upon the Lord Jesus cause Him to have power, intelligence, and so forth (Isa. 11:2). The seven Spirits cause us to draw nearer to the Lord and to praise Him.

C. Revelation 5:7

"And He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sits upon the throne."

As soon as He took the scroll, there were praises in heaven and on the earth. The New Testament is executed through the hand of the Lamb.

IX. THE PRAISES OF THE FOUR LIVING CREATURES

AND THE TWENTY-FOUR ELDERS

(REVELATION 5:8-10)

A. Revelation 5:8-9

"And when He took the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell before the Lamb, each having a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which bowls are the prayers of the saints. And they sing a new song, saying: You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for You were slain and have purchased for God by Your blood men out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation."

The purpose for the prayers of the saints (v. 8) is the Lord's coming again. Harps are for praising and "bowls full of incense" are for presenting the prayers. "A new song." Because the Lord had died only a short time before, it is a new song. "Every tribe and tongue and people and nation." Four is the number of the earth. "Have purchased...men." These "men" are not the twenty-four elders because the verse does not say "have purchased us."

B. Revelation 5:10

"And have made them a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign on the earth."

Based upon these words, are not all believers made kings and priests? Indeed, we can say this. Our salvation is based upon the Lord's death, but the procedure of salvation is based upon man's faith. In the same way, our being kings and priests before God is based upon the accomplishments of the Lord's blood, but the procedure through which we obtain this is based upon our behavior.

X. THE PRAISES OF THE ANGELS AND THE CREATURES

(REVELATION 5:11-13)

"And I saw, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and of the living creatures and of the elders, and their number was ten thousands of ten thousands and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb who has been slain to receive the power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea and all things in them, I heard saying, To Him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb be the blessing and the honor and the glory and the might forever and ever."

Verses 11 and 12 are the praises of the angels, the twenty-four elders, and the living creatures. Verse 13 contains the praises of all the creatures in the universe and the praises of the four living creatures.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE OPENING OF THE SEVEN SEALS

(Revelation 6:1—8:5)

Concerning the first six seals in chapter six: have they already been fulfilled, are they being fulfilled, or will they be fulfilled during the tribulation? There are two supporting factors to show that they have been and are being fulfilled:

(1) In Revelation 5:2 the angel asked, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and to break its seals?" In verse 7 the Lamb has already taken the scroll. Then how could there be a lapse of two thousand years before the loosing of the seven seals?

(2) If God does not first take care of the matter of the church (filling up the number of the Gentiles) and then put the church aside, He cannot acknowledge and deal with the Jews (see Rom. 11:25-26). It is in Revelation 7:1-8 that God begins to acknowledge the Jews in choosing them as His servants. But 7:1-8 comes after the first six seals. Hence, we see that the period of time before these six seals is the age of the church.

By these two proofs we may conclude that during the past two thousand years, these six seals were and still are being fulfilled.

I. THE FIRST SEAL—THE WHITE HORSE

(REVELATION 6:1-2)

"And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying like the sound of thunder, Come. And I saw, and behold, a white horse, and he who sits on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went forth conquering and to conquer."

Four horses are declared by four living creatures. We do not as yet know the meaning of this. Perhaps they are declared by four living creatures because there are four horses.

Who does the "white horse" signify? Three different explanations have been offered:

(1) It signifies Antichrist. This school gives three reasons for its assertion: (a) Christ will not be riding on a white horse until chapter nineteen; therefore, this is not Christ here. (b) In speaking of the tribulation, Matthew 24 mentions four things, one of them being false Christs; therefore, it should be Antichrist here. (c) There is a bow but no arrow. This shows that there is no real victory.

(2) It signifies an international peace treaty. The reasons given by this school are: (a) White signifies righteousness; hence, the saints wear white garments, and the

Lord rides on a white horse. Peace comes through righteousness. (b) The bow without arrows signifies peace. By these we see that what we have here is the maintaining of international stability and peace by the power of righteousness.

(3) It signifies Christ. The reasons are: (a) Since the One who sits on the white horse in chapter nineteen is Christ, the One who sits on the white horse in chapter six must also be Christ, whom God crowns. (b) Since the other three horses are given power and authority by God, the first horse must also be given power by God and be crowned by God. Who could that be except Christ? (c) Only Christ goes forth "conquering and to conquer." (d) He carries a bow before He puts on a crown. If there is a bow, there had to be arrows. Since at this time there is only a bow, it means that the arrows have already been shot and that the devil has already been injured. Therefore, God has crowned Him and given Him glory. (e) Among the four horses, only in Revelation 6:4 is the word "another" used. We see from this that the last three horses are different from the first horse. (f) In God's plan the first thing is His Son's victory, the victory of the gospel. (The living creatures say, "Come." In an old manuscript "come" is rendered "go," because the four living creatures do not speak in an imperative tone.)

Which of the above three assertions is correct? Of course, the third one is more reasonable (the one referring to Christ). Hence, our conclusion is that the white horse signifies Christ.

II. THE SECOND SEAL—THE RED HORSE (REVELATION 6:3-4)

"And when He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, Come. And I saw, and behold, another horse, a red one, went forth; and to him who sits on it, to him authority was given to take peace from the earth, and that men should slay one another; and to him a great sword was given."

"Red" is the color of blood. "To take peace from the earth" means to cause war. The first horse conquers by the bow, so it battles at a distance. The red horse fights with a sword, so it battles face to face. "To take peace from the earth" shows that it is war for the sake of war and not for a just cause. According to the Bible, a war in which men "should slay one another" is the worst kind of war. It brings nothing but death, destruction, and devastation. (See Judg. 7:22; Zech. 8:10; Jer. 25:15-31; Lev. 26:25. All swords bring death, destruction, and devastation.)

III. THE THIRD SEAL—THE BLACK HORSE

(REVELATION 6:5-6)

"And when He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, Come. And I saw, and behold, a black horse; and he who sits on it had a balance in his hand. And I heard as it were a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying: A choenix of wheat for a denarius and three choenixes of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine."

"Black" is the color for famine (Jer. 14:1-3; Lam. 4:8-9; 5:10). In the Bible, wheat is measured and not weighed. Balances are used to weigh precious things, but here a balance is used for measuring wheat. Hence, not a single grain is missed.

"A choenix of wheat for a denarius." A denarius is a person's wages for one day's labor. It is only one person's wage because in Matthew 20:2 the pay for a laborer is a denarius a day. "Three choenixes of barley for a denarius." Normally, the ratio of the value of barley to wheat is one to two, but here it becomes a ratio of one to three (2 Kings 7:16 and 18 record a ratio of one to two). "Do not harm the oil and the wine." This shows that at other times they were not considered food and were "harmed." But now, even the oil and the wine should not be harmed. During the time of famine, even oil and wine cannot be wasted. At the same time, grape vines and olive trees are preserved by God. In the past two thousand years, wars, famine, earthquakes, and so forth have occurred more frequently as the time draws nearer. They come in greater numbers as the days go by.

IV. THE FOURTH SEAL—THE PALE HORSE

(REVELATION 6:7-8)

"And when He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, Come. And I saw, and behold, a pale horse, and he who sits upon it, his name is Death; and Hades followed with him. And authority was given to them over the fourth part of the earth to kill with the sword and with famine and with death and by the beasts of the earth."

The word "pale" here is the same as the word "green" in Mark 6:39 and Revelation 8:7 and 9:4. Green is the color of vegetables. A green complexion indicates either sickness or death. This is why the name of the one riding on the pale horse is "Death." The word "death" in the second part of the verse can be translated "pestilence." Therefore, we interpret it as "pestilence" here also. "Hades" in the original language means the unseen world. Hades here is like a trash can (the dead people are like garbage). One fourth of the people on the earth are killed by the sword of the red horse, by the famine of the black horse,

by the death of the pale horse, and by the beasts. "The beasts" indicate a very serious judgment of God (Num. 21:6; Exo. 23:28; Josh. 24:12; 2 Kings 2:24; 17:25).

V. THE FIFTH SEAL—THE CRY FROM UNDERNEATH THE ALTAR (REVELATION 6:9-11)

The Bible divides the number seven into four plus three or three plus four. Many times it is also made up of six plus one. Three is the number of God, and four is the number of man. Four followed by three means man's progression in drawing near to God. Three followed by four means a falling from a desirable condition in God into the condition of man. Since the seven churches are arranged into two groups of three and four, they are declining. But the seven seals are composed of four followed by three. Therefore, their significance is different. Six is the number of man because man was created on the sixth day. One is the number of God because God rested on the seventh day. The seven seals are divided into four and three, as well as into six and one.

Revelation 6:9-11 speaks of the persecutions of the church during the past two thousand years.

A. Revelation 6:9

"And when He opened the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and because of the testimony which they had."

"The word of God" is all of God's commands. "And because of the testimony which they had" in the original text reads "and for the testimony which they always held." "Always" means to be accustomed to; to always hold a testimony means to be accustomed to testifying. This testimony testifies of the Lord Jesus (Rev. 1:2; 6:9; 12:17). Some have said that this portion does not refer to the persecution of the church because it does not mention the testimony of Jesus. Instead, they say it refers to the saints in the Old Testament who were persecuted. But if one goes along with this, the preceding four seals would then become conditions in the tribulation. Mr. Govett said that just by the word "always" we know that this is the condition of the persecutions of the church. The purpose of this book is to testify for Jesus. Therefore, those people who testify always are the children of the Lord.

"The altar." The Bible mentions two altars: (1) the altar for sacrifices and (2) the golden incense altar. A very famous writer has said that all the altars in the book

of Revelation should be translated as incense altars, but there are not enough reasons to support this statement. The altar here must be the altar of sacrifices. The reasons are as follows:

(1) According to the type in the Old Testament, all who go up by steps unto the altar should not let their nakedness be discovered (Exo. 20:26). By this we see that all who are naked cannot see God. All those who are not resurrected are naked. One who has a soul but whose body is not resurrected is naked; he cannot go to where God is. For this reason 2 Corinthians 5:4 speaks of being "clothed upon," that is, of having a new body. (When a man dies, his soul does not go to God right away.) Without resurrection, one cannot draw close to the golden incense altar.

(2) When the Bible mentions the altar, it means the altar of sacrifice. When it refers to the golden incense altar, special adjectives such as "golden," "incense," and so forth are used to differentiate it from the altar in the outer court.

(3) All the blood of the animals that are killed is poured underneath the altar (Exo. 29:12; Lev. 4:7; 5:9).

(4) There is life in the blood. The word "life" in the original text is "soul" (Lev. 17:11, 14). To be under the altar is to be under the earth. The altar signifies the cross. Beneath the cross is the earth. Therefore, to be under the altar is to be in the Paradise of Hades in the heart of the earth (Matt. 12:40). Acts 2:27 says, "Because You will not abandon my soul to Hades." Numbers 16:31-32 says, "The ground under them split open; and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up,...all the men that belonged to Korah and all their goods." (Not only can no man see God without a body, but he cannot even go down to Hades without a body.) Hence, these martyrs are crying for avenging in Paradise in Hades.

"Had been slain." During the age of the Roman Empire, Christians were persecuted and many were slain. John, who wrote this book, was one of those who were persecuted. Even in modern times, Russia has killed innumerable Christians.

B. Revelation 6:10

"And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Master, holy and true, will You not judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"

"O Master, holy and true." Mr. Govett said that this was the way the Old Testament saints addressed the Lord, but in Revelation 3:7, the Lord Himself told

the churches that He is holy and true. Therefore, this is how the saints address the Lord throughout the ages.

"Those who dwell on the earth." Such an expression is used many times in this book (8:13; 13:8, 12, 14; 14:6; 17:2, 8). It means that the people who dwell on the earth have become settled in it. They have established themselves; everything they have is on the earth. Such men will be judged by God. Revelation 3:10 tells us that trial is about to come on the whole inhabited earth.

The prayer in Revelation 6:10 is not like Stephen's; Stephen prayed for God's grace, while the martyrs in Revelation pray for the judgment on the world. Therefore, the prayer here is the prayer of the saints against the sinners: "Avenge our blood." God does not forget the prayers of the afflicted (Psa. 9:12). When God judges those who have persecuted the saints, He is avenging His martyrs.

C. Revelation 6:11

"And to each of them was given a white robe; and it was said to them that they should rest yet a little while, until also the number of their fellow slaves and their brothers who were about to be killed, even as they were, is completed."

"A white robe" represents the righteousness which God imputes to them. God's justification of these persecuted ones is different from His justification of those who believed in the Lord for salvation. The justification here is one in which God who sits on the throne announces the verdict of their victory in their appeal. All that is left to do is wait for God's execution of this verdict. "Rest yet a little while." This phrase can be used to prove that the church will not be raptured all at the same time. The word "until" means that there is still a very long persecution. "Until also the number of their fellow slaves and their brothers who were about to be killed." This is the great massacre during the great tribulation. Revelation 7:13 through 15 speaks of political persecution, whereas 17:6 speaks of religious persecution. The way the church takes is the way of death.

The Bible shows us one thing here: in the first rapture there will be no resurrection. Moreover, the words "underneath the altar" imply that this is not the death of the sacrifice of sin offering, but that of the sacrifice of burnt offering. The Bible never speaks of an altar of the sin offering; rather, it speaks of an altar of the burnt offering (Exo. 40:6, 10, 29; Lev. 4:7, 10, 18; 1 Chron. 6:49; 16:40; 21:29; 2 Chron. 29:18). What man sees first is the sin offering, but what God sees first is the burnt offering. We have no way of receiving life unless the Lord Jesus becomes the sin offering. However, unless the Lord Jesus becomes the

burnt offering—offering everything to God, being obedient to Him, choosing His will, and even dying on the cross according to His will—there is no way to please God. Even Paul presented himself as a burnt offering (Phil. 2:17; 2 Tim. 4:6). His whole life was an offering.

All the martyrs will enter the kingdom as kings. Three kinds of people reign with Christ in Revelation 20:4:

(1) "They sat upon them [the thrones]." This refers to the overcomers in Revelation 3:21.

(2) "The souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God." These are the resurrected ones, referring to the martyrs in Revelation 6:9.

(3) "Those who had not worshipped the beast nor his image." This refers to the fellow slaves and their brothers in Revelation 6:11, who will be killed. (Revelation 20:4 shows that they will be resurrected.)

VI. THE SIXTH SEAL—

THE SHAKING OF HEAVEN AND THE EARTH

(REVELATION 6:12-17)

The Bible records that when the Lord comes again, the changes in the heavens and the shaking of the earth will occur twice, once before the day of the Lord and once after the day of the Lord. In other words, this will occur once before the great tribulation and once after the great tribulation. The verses in Joel 2:30-31 and 3:15-16 speak of what will happen before the great and terrible day, that is, what will happen before the great tribulation. Matthew 24:29 and 30 clearly describe what will happen immediately after the tribulation of those days. This is after the great tribulation. Therefore, the sixth seal is the situation before the great tribulation. Luke 21:11 also gives the situation before the great tribulation. (The first through fourth trumpets are calamities. The fifth trumpet may be the beginning of the great tribulation, while the seventh trumpet is definitely the beginning of the great tribulation.)

A. Revelation 6:12-14

"And I saw when He opened the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black like sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood; and the stars of heaven fell to the earth as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. And heaven was removed like a scroll being rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places."

I dare not say that this passage has already been fulfilled in full, nor dare I say that it has not been fulfilled at all. In the last century, something similar to this happened in Australia; it is a historical fact. Some even reported at that time that there was the appearance of what is described in Revelation 6:15-16. This seems to indicate that this passage has been fulfilled. However, the situation in 6:14 still has not occurred in history to a full extent, so it seems that this verse has not yet come to pass.

Black sackcloth describes the tents of the Jews and the Arabs which were made of black sackcloth. "The stars of heaven fell to the earth" may refer to comets. How can the stars, which are bigger than the earth, fall to the earth? Perhaps it means the direction that the stars are falling is toward the earth and does not mean that they are actually hitting the earth.

B. Revelation 6:15-16

"And the kings of the earth and their great men and the generals and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains; and they say to the mountains and to the rocks, Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits upon the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb."

This indicates that their consciences sense that God's judgment has come; it is not the Bible that tells them that the time of judgment has come. Only the blood of the Lord can give us peace in our conscience and saves us from God's wrath. This is more secure than the caves and the rocks.

C. Revelation 6:17

"For the great day of Their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

VII. VISIONS INSERTED BETWEEN

THE SIXTH AND SEVENTH SEALS

(REVELATION 7)

A. The Remnants of Israel

(Revelation 7:1-8)

God has three groups of people. One group is the Jews on the earth. One is the church, which is spiritual. Revelation 7:1 through 8 refers to the earthly Jews, among whom is one group which is protected by God. Revelation 7:9 through 17 describes the scene of the rapture of the church to the heavens.

Strictly speaking, according to the Bible the great tribulation should last only three and a half years. The other tribulations are merely calamities or trials. (The

fifth trumpet is perhaps the beginning of the great tribulation, but by the sounding of the seventh trumpet, we have no doubt that the great tribulation has begun.)

1. Revelation 7:1

"After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, so that no wind would blow on the earth nor on the sea nor on any tree."

"The four winds." In the Old Testament the wind often represent God's judgment. For instance, a great wind arose when Jonah was at sea (Jonah 1:4; Isa. 11:15; Jer. 13:24; 22:22; 49:36; 51:1). In Matthew 7:25 "the winds blew"; this is also a kind of trial. "No wind would blow on the earth nor on the sea nor on any tree"; therefore, the earth is calm, the sea has no waves, and the trees are silent. God does this in order to seal all the people He wants to protect. Once the seventh seal is opened, the seven trumpets will be sounded. When the first trumpet is sounded, the third part of the earth and the trees will be burned. When the second trumpet is sounded, the third part of the sea will become blood (Rev. 8:6-9).

2. Revelation 7:2

"And I saw another Angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God; and He cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom authority was given to harm the earth and the sea."

"Another Angel." Who is this angel? In the original, the word "Angel" is "messenger." An angel may be called a messenger. A man may also be called a messenger. This book mentions "Another angel" several times. The word "another" indicates that this one is different from the others. Revelation 8:3, 10:1-3, and 18:1 all speak of this "another Angel." Other than the Lord Jesus, who could have this authority? Who else could have this glory? Mr. Panton said the word "another" has a special meaning. It infers another class, another appearance.

In the Old Testament, the title "the angel of the Lord" has a special meaning. By reading carefully, we immediately realize that this must refer to the Lord Jesus (Gen. 16:7-14; 22:1-13; 32:24-30; Judg. 13:16-18). The Lord's name here, Angel, is a title used in the Old Testament. This title shows that the Lord is about to lay aside the church and return to His position in the Old Testament.

"Another Angel..., having the seal of the living God." This seal must be put into the hands of the One who is the closest to God. The Lord Jesus is the unique man beside God. Pharaoh put the seal into Joseph's hands (Gen. 41:42); in the

same way, God put the seal into the Lord Jesus' hands. "He cried...to the four angels to whom authority was given to harm." From this we see that all the events that will happen to the earth originate from God. If God does not give the authority, the four angels can do nothing.

3. Revelation 7:3

"Saying, Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we seal the slaves of our God upon their foreheads."

"The slaves of our God." Here God begins to acknowledge the Jews. He is returning to the position in the Old Testament. (In the church age, there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles.) In the Old Testament, all the people were servants (1 Sam. 8:17; 17:8; 1 Kings 10:5-8). In Revelation the emphasis is God's throne. Servants do not have the position of children, but of responsibility. Revelation 7:1 through 3 mentions the wind; Revelation 8:6 through 9 mentions the fire. Wind and fire are very much related. To have a fierce fire, there must be a strong wind.

4. Revelation 7:4-8

"And I heard the number of those who were sealed, a hundred and forty-four thousand, sealed out of every tribe of the sons of Israel: out of the tribe of Judah, twelve thousand sealed; out of the tribe of Reuben, twelve thousand; out of the tribe of Gad, twelve thousand; out of the tribe of Asher, twelve thousand; out of the tribe of Naphtali, twelve thousand; out of the tribe of Manasseh, twelve thousand; out of the tribe of Simeon, twelve thousand; out of the tribe of Levi, twelve thousand; out of the tribe of Issachar, twelve thousand; out of the tribe of Zebulun, twelve thousand; out of the tribe of Joseph, twelve thousand; out of the tribe of Benjamin, twelve thousand sealed."

Who are the people mentioned in 7:4-8? They are not the church but the people of Israel. The Seventh-Day Adventists assert that they are this people because they keep the law and are, therefore, the real Jews. But we have ten reasons to prove that the people in Revelation 7:4-8 are Jews in the flesh.

(1) If "the sons of Israel" in Revelation 2:14 are to be interpreted literally, then "the sons of Israel" in 7:4 should be interpreted literally also.

(2) "The tribe of Judah" in Revelation 5:5 is interpreted literally, so "the tribe of Judah" in 7:5 should be also.

(3) The names of the twelve tribes are unique to the Israelites. Of the people in the church, which denomination belongs to which tribe?

(4) Israel is divided into twelve tribes, but the church is one. How can it be split into twelve tribes?

(5) Since Revelation 7:9 speaks of "every nation," how can "the sons of Israel" in 7:4 not be a nation?

(6) The great multitude in Revelation 7:9 could be numbered by no man, but in 7:4 the sealed ones were exactly a hundred and forty-four thousand. Can we say the saved ones in the church are only a hundred and forty-four thousand? Besides, this hundred and forty-four thousand is clearly the sum of twelve twelve-thousands. How can we not interpret this literally?

(7) In Revelation 6:15 "the kings" are interpreted literally. How then can we say "the sons of Israel" in 7:4 do not refer literally to a nation?

(8) In Revelation 7:13-14 John did not know where the countless multitude in verse 9 came from. Therefore, he answered the elder, "My lord, you know." John did not ask about those people in Revelation 7:4-8. This shows that he already knew who they were.

(9) In Joel 2:12-27 God told only the Israelites the way to escape the locusts. In Revelation 9:3-4 only those who were sealed were not hurt by the locusts. This proves that the sealed ones are the children of Israel.

(10) The sheep in Matthew 25 are those who treat their little brothers well. These little brothers are the Jews and those brothers who remain on earth. Those little brothers, the Israelites, will become a test to the Gentiles on earth.

The following are the different groups of people among the Israelites.

(Before we mention these different peoples, we must take note that no mention is made in Revelation 7:4-8 of the name of Dan. In Ezekiel 40—48 the scene in the coming kingdom is described. Ezekiel 48:1 clearly says that the land of Dan is in the north during the kingdom. In the Chronicles, however, the tribe of Dan is also not mentioned among the twelve tribes. What is the reason for this? This does not mean that there is no more tribe of Dan, but that perhaps the relationship between Dan and the serpent is too close. In Genesis 49 Jacob prophesied concerning his sons. When he came to Dan, he spoke of Dan's existence in verse 16 and of his behavior in verse 17. Then in verse 18 Jacob suddenly prayed as if he saw danger in Dan's future behavior. Jacob did not pray for the other children in that way. Perhaps during the great tribulation the tribe of Dan will be especially united with the Antichrist.)

The people spoken of in Revelation 7:4-8 are:

(1) The Jews who are to reign with Christ on earth in the future. They are, however, not the kings. Since the number twelve thousand is composed of twelve times ten times ten times ten, this number is eternally complete in God's administration.

(2) The suffering Jews who are part of the least of the brothers in Matthew 25:34-40.

(3) The Jews who are part of those who endure unto the end in Matthew 24.

(4) The Jews upon whom the Spirit will descend in the future. The former rain already fell in Acts 2. The latter rain of Joel 2:23, 28, and 29 has not yet fallen. The blood and the fire in Joel 2:30 correspond to the first trumpet. The pillars of smoke correspond to the fifth trumpet. So we see that the second outpouring of the Holy Spirit occurs between the sixth seal and the fifth trumpet. The great tribulation begins with the seventh trumpet. Before the seventh trumpet there are merely calamities.

(5) The Jews who will receive the new covenant which the Lord Jesus will establish with them on earth (Jer. 31:31-34).

B. The Scene in Heaven after the Church Is Raptured (Revelation 7:9-17)

Revelation 7:9 through 17 is a description of the rapture of the church to the heavens. Who are these people? Although I dare not say definitely that they are the whole church, I do say that they are the majority of those who have been redeemed by God—the majority of the church. This includes those who are raptured first and those who are resurrected from the dead (which constitute a large number), as well as a small number who are still living on earth. No mention is made here of how the church is raptured; rather, we are given only an outline of the scene after the church has been raptured to the heavens. Hence, these verses may be considered as a description of the scene of the entire church in the heavens after the rapture. How does one know that what is spoken of here is the scene in heaven after the rapture of the church? The reasons are as follows:

(1) The number. No one could number the multitude (v. 9). There cannot be so many in the first rapture, so it must be the gathering of several raptures of the church.

(2) "Standing before the throne and before the Lamb." Revelation 4:2 says that "there was a throne set in heaven." This shows that those standing before the throne are already in heaven. This word is recorded after the sixth seal and before the seventh seal. This is an indication that there are four raptures.

(3) The word "tribulation" in Revelation 7:14 is the same as the word "tribulation" in John 16:33 [KJV]. Hence, this "great multitude which no one could number" includes the persecuted ones and the martyrs throughout the past generations. Among them are also the believers who were resurrected. (The resurrected ones must be greater in number than those who are first raptured.)

Revelation 7:9 through 17 speaks of the situation that begins with the rapture (the first rapture) and continues until eternity (the new heaven and new earth). Those "standing before the throne" must have been raptured; otherwise, how can they be standing in heaven? Verses 15 through 17 are a description of the scene in the new heaven and the new earth in Revelation 21:3-7.

This portion is not on the rapture specifically or exclusively; rather, it speaks only in a general way about the rapture. Neither does it go into detail concerning the scene of the enjoyment in eternity; it is only briefly described. We should not misunderstand, thinking that because the church is raptured to the heavens to enjoy the blessings in eternity, we can then assume that the whole church is raptured all at once. Remember that this portion does not say in detail how the rapture takes place; it presents only an outline of the raptured majority. We are given a glimpse in advance of the scene of the rapture of the church in the heavens and the consummation in eternity. Here we are shown only where they are, not how they got there.

1. Revelation 7:9-13

"After these things I saw, and behold, there was a great multitude which no one could number, out of every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes and palm branches in their hands. And they cry with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb. And all the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, saying, Amen. The blessing and the glory and the wisdom and the thanks and the honor and the power and the strength be to our God forever and ever. Amen. And one of the elders answered, saying to me, These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and where did they come from?"

"After these things..., standing before the throne and before the Lamb." Since the rapture begins here, this implies that there is a rapture before the opening of the seventh seal. These are the people redeemed by the Lord's blood throughout the past two thousand years. The positive reasons are as follows:

(1) The number. Revelation 7:9 reads "I saw, and behold, there was a great multitude which no one could number." Anything to do with the Israelites is usually numbered. Examples are: the twelve tribes, the seventy going down to Egypt, the number leaving Egypt, the numbers recorded in the book of Numbers, and the numbers at the time of David. From generation to generation, the Israelites were numbered. The Israelites who are sealed are also numbered (vv. 1-8).

In regard to the church, although there are numbers, such as the twelve disciples, the seventy sent out by the Lord, the one hundred twenty who gathered together, the three thousand and the five thousand who were saved, and so forth, sometimes the Bible only says, "The Lord added together day by day those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47). Revelation 7:9 says, "Which no one could number." By simple arithmetic we know that these people are not those from the age of tribulation since the world population is 1.7 billion [at the beginning of the twentieth century]. In Revelation 9:16 the horsemen are numbered at two hundred million. This is the largest number in this book. But 7:9 says that "no one could number" them; hence, the number must be more than the two hundred million horsemen!

(2) Where do they come from? Revelation 7:9 reads, "Out of every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues." If you refer to 5:9-10, you can see that the "men out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation" are those chosen from the Gentiles to be given to God; they are the church (Acts 15:14-19). In the church age, if the Jews are to believe in the Lord, they do so in the position of Gentiles and are saved according to the principle of the Gentiles. Therefore, the church can be considered as saved Gentiles. It can also be said that in the church there is no difference between the Gentiles and the Jews.

(3) Where do they go to? Revelation 6:17 says, "Who is able to stand?" Yet these people in 7:9-17 are able to stand before God. God gave the promise of rapture only to the church. Hence, only the church is able to stand before God.

(4) When will God return to take care of the Jews? Not until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in (Rom. 11:25-26). Revelation 7:9-17 must refer to the people in Romans 11:25. These people are the church.

(5) Regarding the twenty-four elders, the four living creatures, and the one hundred and forty-four thousand, no mention is made of being purchased by the blood. Only these people were purchased by the blood.

(6) Although to be clothed in white garments was what God promised the church in Sardis, both Sardis and Philadelphia put together could not have produced such a large number. None could have such a glorious destiny but the church. Therefore, this must be the scene of those in the church who were raptured to heaven.

(7) The angels' attitude. The first sentence which all the angels say is, "Amen" (7:12). There is great joy in heaven over one sinner who repents (Luke 15:7). When all the angels see so many people coming, they cannot help praising for joy.

(8) Their garments were cleansed by the blood (7:14). Only the church has this kind of special condition.

(9) The scene in Revelation 7:15-17 is similar to the scene of eternity in Revelation 21:3-7. The overcoming in Revelation 21:7 is an overcoming by faith (1 John 5:4), since Revelation 21:6 states, "I will give to him who thirsts from the spring of the water of life freely."

Some have argued that the whole church will be raptured before the tribulation and that the people mentioned here are those who are saved during the great tribulation. However, this argument cannot stand for the following reasons:

(1) This school proposes is that the twenty-four elders in chapters four and five represent the whole church. So the whole church should already be raptured by this time. We know that this is basically wrong. (The reasons have already been given in the discussion on chapter four concerning the twenty-four elders.)

(2) In Revelation 7:9 no one could number the great multitude. Let us ask if during the tribulation, under such great persecution, there could be so many people receiving salvation. The total population of the whole world is 1.7 billion. If we can subtract the dead ones which can be counted in this book, how many do we still have? In Revelation 6:8 the fourth part of men were killed, about four hundred million dead ones, leaving approximately 1.2 billion alive. Again, the third part of men were killed in 9:15 and 18, approximately four hundred million men, leaving eight hundred million men. In addition to that number, in Revelation

8:9 there were men who died because ships were destroyed; in 8:11 many men died because the waters became wormwood; and in 11:13 many died of earthquakes, among whom were numbered seven thousand men of renown. (Mr. Govett did some research and concluded that the original language referred to these men as men of renown.) How many more died, who were not men of renown? Furthermore, no one knows how many were killed during the final tribulations in chapters fifteen and sixteen. Since the number of the army of horsemen in Revelation 9:16 was two hundred million, if we subtract from the remaining eight hundred million men these two hundred million horsemen, we are left with only six hundred million men. If we further subtract from these six hundred million the above unaccounted-for number, what is left is much less. Therefore, even if all those who survive the great tribulation were saved, the number would not be so many that no one could number.

(3) By this time the great tribulation has not arrived. It is not until Revelation 8:1 that the seventh seal is opened. The first four trumpets which come after that are merely calamities. Only by the time of the fifth trumpet do we have the beginning of the trumpets of woes. Perhaps this is the beginning of the great tribulation. The seventh trumpet is undoubtedly in the great tribulation. How then can there be people who are saved during the tribulation, when the tribulation has not even come yet?

(4) Revelation 7:9 says, "Before the throne." If it were not for the rapture, how could anyone be in heaven? Yet during the great tribulation, no one will be raptured. The church is the only group that will be raptured.

(5) In the whole Bible, no mention is made of such a great revival during the great tribulation. A biblical prophecy never stands by itself. It is always confirmed by other books. Second Peter 1:20 is definitely a rule of interpreting prophecies. This is the principle according to which the Holy Spirit writes the Bible.

Hence, these people do not refer to the believers who are saved during the great tribulation.

The phrase "standing before the throne" in Revelation 7:9 only tells us of the fact of the rapture. It does not tell us the process of their rapture. "White robes" here refer to the purity of their conduct as a result of the cleansing by the blood (v. 14). The white garments in Revelation 3:4 are a promise which corresponds with that mentioned in Revelation 19:8. This refers to their victory on earth, that is, their purity. In the future this will be manifested in the heavens and enjoyed in the heavens. The white garments in 4:4 speak of the elders who are without sin. The

white robes in 6:11 refer to the martyrs' acceptance by the Lord. The "palm branches" in 7:9 signify victory. The feast of tabernacles in Leviticus 23:39-43 uses palm branches. The feast of tabernacles shows that God wants to live with His people temporarily on earth. This foreshadows the millennium.

2. Revelation 7:14a

"And I said to him, My lord, you know. And he said to me, These are those who come out of the great tribulation."

The "great tribulation" in 7:14 is not the three and a half years of great tribulation. The reasons are as follows:

(1) The great tribulation, at the earliest, should begin with the trumpets of woes, and the first woe is declared at the fifth trumpet (8:13). Strictly speaking, the great tribulation begins with the seventh trumpet (11:15-18), but Revelation 7:9 implies a first rapture before the seventh seal. These have already come before the throne and have not passed through the tribulation of the seventh trumpet.

(2) The great tribulation cannot begin before Satan is cast down to the earth. Verses 9 through 17 are before the opening of the seventh seal, while Satan's being cast down is after the sounding of the sixth trumpet (11:14-15). Before the context of the forty-two months (13:5), the man-child has already been raptured to the throne (12:5). Although I dare not say the man-child includes all those in mentioned 7:9, I do say that it must be a majority of these people.

(3) The conclusion of the great tribulation is at the pouring out of the seventh bowl, which immediately ushers in the kingdom. At this time we do not see the heavenly temple, only the earthly temple as spoken of in Ezekiel (the temple on earth in the kingdom age). During the great tribulation there is no time for God's people to serve Him, but Revelation 7:15 clearly says that they serve God day and night.

(4) In the great tribulation, there cannot be so many people receiving salvation, yet the "great multitude" in 7:9 has come out of the great tribulation according to 7:14. This shows the great tribulation in 7:14 must be different from the great tribulation that comes after the fifth trumpet.

(5) Revelation 11:1 makes mention of those worshipping in the heavenly temple, yet except for those in Revelation 7:9, there are none who worship God in heaven. At this time, the great tribulation spoken of in Revelation has not yet begun, yet these have passed through the great tribulation already. There is no temple in the new heaven and new earth (21:22), for God and the Lamb are the

temple to the new city. (The center of the new city is God and the Lamb. In Revelation 3:12, following the words "temple of My God" is the expression "he shall by no means go out anymore." This no doubt refers to the time of the new heaven and the new earth when God and the Lamb will be the temple.)

(6) The Bible clearly says that there are Christians who need not pass through the tribulation (Rev. 3:10; Luke 21:36).

(7) If the people spoken of in Revelation 7:9 are those who pass through the great tribulation, then they must be those who die when the nations trample the holy temple. But according to Revelation 11:2, the church should not be included there. How then could the people in 7:9 be those who come out of the three and a half years of great tribulation?

(8) The three and a half years of great tribulation are especially related to the Jews. Daniel 12:1 says, "And there will be a time of distress, such as never occurred since there came to be a nation until that time; and at that time your people, every one found written in the book, will be delivered." This passage together with Matthew 24:16-18 describes the condition of the Jews in particular. God's main goal in having the great tribulation is to deal with the Jews. In Jeremiah 30:7 the time of Jacob's trouble clearly refers to the Jews. The tribulation spoken of in Revelation in several passages points to the church (e.g., 1:9; 2:9-10, 13). John 16:33 also says that affliction is the portion of the church in the world. The time is long, and the suffering is hard. That is why it is called "great." But it is not the three and a half years of the "great tribulation." The "great tribulation" in Revelation 2:22 is different from that in 7:14 in the original text. It is also different from the great tribulation of the three and a half years elsewhere mentioned in Revelation. (In Acts 14:22 the phrase "through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God" refers to the experiences of the ones who are entering into the kingdom of God.)

3. Revelation 7:14b

"And they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

The word "robes" here is plural. Robes, plural, signify righteousnesses. But here the righteousness is the righteousness of the saints themselves; it does not refer to the Lord Jesus Christ as our righteousness. Robe, singular, refers to the righteousness (Isa. 61:10) which is Christ Himself (Jer. 23:6). Christ is our righteousness (1 Cor. 1:30). We put Him on to come before God. This righteousness does not need to be washed in the blood.

We have two robes. One robe, through which we come before God, was put on at salvation. The other robe is the righteousness of our own conduct; it is our victory through which we come before Christ. In Revelation 3:18 the white garment (the second one) requires the paying of a price, but the redemption typified in the former case does not need to be purchased. No Christian will be condemned by God to perdition (John 5:24), but neither will there be a single Christian who will not be judged before the judgment seat of Christ concerning his conduct (2 Cor. 5:10). Their robes were cleansed not because of the great tribulation, but because of the blood of the Lamb. They applied the blood of the Lamb to their robes. This shows that they were contaminated on earth; nevertheless, they practiced 1 John 1:9 all the time so that they were cleansed.

4. Revelation 7:15

"Because of this they are before the throne of God and serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits upon the throne will tabernacle over them."

"Because." According to the foregoing text, the reason that they can serve God is because they did not take the matter of sin lightly.

5. Revelation 7:16-17

"They will not hunger any more, neither will they thirst any more, neither will the sun beat upon them, nor any heat; for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and guide them to springs of waters of life; and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

Compare this with Isaiah 49:10 (cf. Isa. 49:6; Acts 13:47; Isa 49:8; 2 Cor. 6:2).

"They will not hunger any more, neither will they thirst any more" is the fulfillment of hope. "Neither will the sun beat upon them, nor any heat." In the new city, there is no need of the light of the sun or moon (Rev. 21:23; 22:5). It is not that there is no sun or moon, but there is no need to use their light. Yet there is still night on the new earth (21:25); since there is "day," there must be night. "God will wipe away every tear" because there is no need to shed tears anymore.

One thing deserves our attention. The people in Revelation 7:9-17 and the man-child in Revelation 12:1-11 have many similarities:

(1) Revelation 7:10 says that they were redeemed by the Lamb. Revelation 12:11 says that the man-child overcame because of the blood of the Lamb.

(2) Revelation 7:9 says that they are standing before the throne. Revelation 12:5 says that the man-child is caught up to God and to His throne.

(3) Revelation 7:10 says, "Salvation to our God...and to the Lamb. Revelation 12:10 says, "Salvation...of our God and...Christ."

(4) Revelation 7:4 through 8 says that twelve tribes were sealed. Revelation 12:1 says that on the woman's head was a crown of twelve stars. The crown of twelve stars does not refer to the apostles. Joseph's dream of the twelve stars clearly indicates that they refer to the twelve tribes.

(5) Revelation 7:11 says that the angels are praising. Revelation 12:10 says that a loud voice in heaven speaks.

(6) The people in Revelation 7:9 must have resurrected bodies before the throne of God. The man-child in Revelation 12:5 also has a resurrected body. The words "caught up" must be interpreted according to the rule of interpreting visions and must not be interpreted literally. According to Acts 13:33-34, we see that it refers to resurrection. In addition, if Christ did not put on the resurrected body, He could not see God and would be reckoned as naked (2 Cor. 5:2-3; Exo. 20:26; 28:42). First Corinthians 15 speaks of the fact of resurrection, while 2 Corinthians 5 speaks of the condition of resurrection. At the present time, there is no Christian before the throne; this will happen only in the future. In Revelation 4:6 the glassy sea is empty. Not until Revelation 15:2 are there people on the glassy sea. Acts 2:34 clearly says that David did not ascend into the heavens. First Samuel 28:13 clearly says that Samuel came up out of the earth. This shows that they have not yet put on resurrected bodies. Their bodies are still in Paradise (in Paradise as in Luke 23:43 and in Hades as in Acts 2:27). Only the Lord descended out of heaven and still remained in heaven (John 3:13). Even the taking up of Enoch and Elijah was perhaps to a certain place that God has put them; they have not yet received a resurrected body.

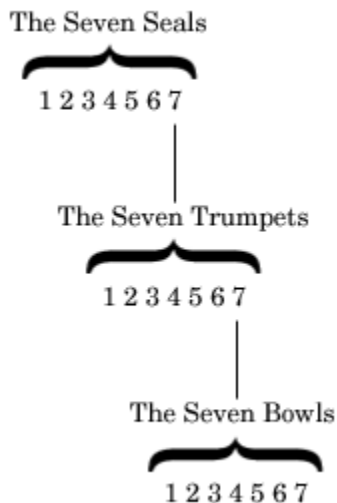
(7) Revelation 7:15 says, "He who sits upon the throne will tabernacle over them," while Revelation 12:12 says, "O heavens and those who dwell in them." "Dwell in them" in the original Greek is "tabernacle in them."

(8) The ones in Revelation 7:9 are the overcomers because: (a) the "white robes" are promised to those in Sardis who have not contaminated their robes; (b) to be spared from the hour of trial is promised to the overcomers in Philadelphia who have kept the word of endurance; and (c) the palm branches signify victory. In the same way, the man-child in Revelation 12:5 is the overcomers, who rule over the nations with an iron rod.

This is the end of the inserted visions.

VIII. A GENERAL WORD CONCERNING THE SEALS, THE TRUMPETS, AND THE BOWLS

The seals are unveiled in secret, while the trumpets are sounded in the open. In the Old Testament, the blowing of the trumpet was a solemn occasion. Hence, this book is also quite solemn. (Revelation 1:10 and 4:1 say, "like a trumpet.") The seventh seal produces the seven trumpets, while the seventh trumpet includes the seven bowls. The seven trumpets that come out of the seventh seal are sequential and extend over a period of time. For example, the fifth trumpet lasts for five months (9:5), while the sixth trumpet lasts for at least thirteen months. Furthermore, Revelation 10:7 and 11:2-3 together show that the seventh trumpet lasts for about three and a half years. According to 11:15, after the seventh trumpet is sounded, the kingdom of Christ will come. The seven bowls included in the seventh trumpet equal the seventh trumpet. The time for the pouring out of the seven bowls is the time for the blowing of the seventh trumpet. This is unlike the seven trumpets included in the seventh seal, which extend over a period of time. When the seventh trumpet is sounded, there will be very little time left. To facilitate our understanding, we have the following chart:



The opening of the seven seals takes approximately two thousand years. But one can only see what is written in the scroll after the seventh seal is opened. The seventh seal includes the seven trumpets. When the first through the sixth trumpets have sounded, one still cannot see what is written in the scroll. It is only at the time of the seventh trumpet that the scroll is opened. When the seventh trumpet is over, the kingdom will begin. By then we will see the new covenant and the blessings God has prepared on earth (Jer. 31:31-34; 33:14-15).

The seals extend over a period of time, and the trumpets also extend over a period of time. However, there is a difference between the trumpets and the seals. The seals will damage one fourth of the earth (Rev. 6:8), while the trumpets will damage one third of the earth (8:7).

The beginning of the seventh trumpet is the beginning of the first bowl. The end of the seventh trumpet is the end of the seventh bowl. Moreover, this trumpet will last for at least three and a half years. Revelation 10:7 corresponds with Romans 16:25-26, and Revelation 11:15 is at the end of the seventh trumpet, when the kingdom is about to come. In between these two verses are three and a half years. Revelation 11:3 mentions three and a half years (42 months, 1260 days). Revelation 12:6 and 14 also mention three and a half years (1260 days and "a time and times and half a time"). In Revelation 11:7 the completion of the two witnesses' testimony will come after a period of time. We can say that the seventh seal "begets" the seven trumpets, while the seventh trumpet includes the seven bowls. The seven bowls describe the condition of the seventh trumpet.

If we compare "Your wrath" in Revelation 11:15-18 with "the fury of God" in Revelation 15:1, we can see that the seven bowls are the fury of God.

The seals are opened in heaven in secret, while the trumpets are sounded on earth and are heard by everyone. The bowls are physical and are not a mere sound. The opening of the seals is the judgment in the dispensation of grace. Only the believers know where these things such as famine, earthquake, and swords originate. They are not known to the unbelievers. Hence, they are hidden. The sounding of the trumpets signifies a change of dispensation; the dispensation of the gospel has ended. Chapter seven is on the sealing of the Israelites and the rapture of the overcoming believers. Chapter eight is a declaration of war. The trumpets convey the sense of announcement, while the bowls signify wrath. In the Old Testament, there is the "cup of wrath." But here, the bowl of wrath is stronger than the cup of wrath.

From the following arguments we can see that the tribulations of the seven trumpets are real tribulations:

- (1) The book of Revelation is not a book of signs.
- (2) The sounding of the trumpets is audible and is not hidden. Whatever is sounded is what they signify. (At the sounding of the last trumpet, there is resurrection. Resurrection is miraculous. Of course, the first to the sixth trumpets are also miraculous.)
- (3) The seventh trumpet brings God's judgment to men.

(4) All the prophecies in the Old Testament, whether concerning judgment or the coming of the Lord, are to be interpreted literally. Why then should it be different in the New Testament? Since the ten plagues in Exodus were literal, why should the tribulations in Revelation not be interpreted literally?

(5) By Revelation 7 the age of the church is over, and God has returned to the position of the Old Testament. Of course, as such, all the judgments have to be interpreted literally. Micah 7:15 says that God will execute judgment like He did in Egypt, only it will be a greater judgment (Isa. 11:15-16). Moreover, Jeremiah 23:7 and 8 say that God will execute a deliverance greater than that in Egypt. It therefore follows that the tribulations will be greater than those at the time of the exodus from Egypt.

(6) The "marvels" prophesied in Exodus 34:10 will be fulfilled at the time of the sounding of the seven trumpets.

(7) The "great and persistent plagues" mentioned in Deuteronomy 28:59 are all "extraordinary." God's judgments are always carried out through miracles.

(8) The Lord said that the day of the Son of Man will be like the days of Noah and of Lot (Luke 17:26-28). At the time of Noah, God opened up the window of heaven and poured down rain. At the time of Lot, God sent fire from heaven. These were miraculous judgments.

(9) God has to show men that He is Jehovah. In men's eyes, many calamities are only changes in nature. But to turn water into blood, and to turn only one third of it, proves that it is not a common change in nature. Rather, it has to be an act of God. Man is saturated with sin, and God has to come in to judge.

The "great tribulation" in Matthew 24:21-28 concerns the Israelites. It is the persecution of Antichrist on the Israelites. The earliest this persecution will start is at the sounding of the fifth trumpet (Rev. 9:1-11). Actually, it starts at the seventh trumpet because only then do the events concerning Antichrist begin to transpire (10:7; 11:2; 12:12; 13:1-18).

The "hour of trial" in Revelation 3:10 is for the whole world, while the "great tribulation" in Matthew 24:21-28 is for the Jews. The "hour of trial" of Revelation 3:10 begins from the time of the first trumpet, while the "great tribulation" of Matthew 24:21-28 will start, at the earliest, with the sounding of the fifth trumpet. Strictly speaking, it will start with the sounding of the seventh trumpet; otherwise, the world would persecute the Israelites (those who belong to God) even more.

IX. THE SEVENTH SEAL—SILENCE IN HEAVEN

(REVELATION 8:1-2)

"And when He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them."

At the time that the seventh seal is opened, all noise stops. (The whole universe is silent; even the throne is silent.) This is because the age is about to change.

"And I saw the seven angels who stand before God." The angels are standing, while the twenty-four elders are sitting. The seven angels have instruments in front of them. Hence, some have thought that Gabriel should be one among them (cf. Luke 1:19). The trumpets are for warfare (1 Cor. 14:8; Amos 3:6; Exo. 19:16). The heavenly will is ready for the sounding of the trumpets, but God has to wait for something to be accomplished before He will issue the command. God has to wait for His sons to express their sympathy towards Him; that is, He has to wait for the prayer of Revelation 8:3-5. Mr. Gordon said, "Prayer is the tracks for God's will to run on."

X. THE SCENE IN HEAVEN

AFTER THE OPENING OF THE SEVENTH SEAL

(REVELATION 8:3-5)

A. Revelation 8:3

"And another Angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer, and much incense was given to Him to offer with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne."

The "another Angel" is the Priest; this is the Lord Jesus. The prayers of the saints are offered to God through the incense of this "another Angel." No Christian can offer up prayer by himself. There must be the incense, which is the merit of Christ's work, the fragrance of Christ. The believers' prayer must be joined to the fragrance of Christ before it can reach God.

Why does this verse call the Lord an angel and not a priest? Hebrews 2:16 says, "Assuredly it is not to angels that He gives help." Hence, the Epistles show us that, in the Lord's relationship to us, He takes the position of a man. Hebrews 2:17 says, "He should have been made like His brothers in all things." Because He is a man, He can draw near to man. His being the "Angel" implies that He is higher than man. In Genesis 18:2, 16, and 22, the Lord is described as a man who drew near to Abraham. However, in Genesis 19:1 He came to Lot as an "angel," showing that He was apart from man. Later when He was helping Lot,

He appeared as a man again (Gen. 19:10, 12, 16). Revelation 8:3 says that the Lord is "another Angel." This means that the age has changed; He is no longer the Son of Man of the age of the gospel. He has now become "another Angel," yet He is still a priest. The saints here are in the midst of tribulations.

In the Old Testament, the incense had to be lit with the fire from the altar; no strange fire could be offered up. The altar is a type of the Lord's cross. The incense is our prayer. Hence, one can only come to God through the merit and the redemption of the Lord's cross. Prayer cannot be offered up with strange fire (fire that is not from the altar). Hence, without the cross, there can be no prayer.

B. Revelation 8:4

"And the smoke of the incense went up with the prayers of the saints out of the hand of the Angel before God."

"The smoke of the incense." The incense is lit, and the smoke of the incense signifies the Lord's merit. Only smoke will ascend. Without the Lord's incense, no prayer can ascend to God.

C. Revelation 8:5

"And the Angel took the censer and filled it with the fire of the altar and cast it to the earth; and there were thunders and voices and lightnings and an earthquake."

"And there were thunders..." This is God's answer to the prayers. Although we do not know the content of the prayers, we know what the prayers are about from the fact that they are answered. The prayers of the saints here correspond with the cry from underneath the altar of the fifth seal; they are the prayers of those who ask to be avenged (Luke 18:1-8). "The Angel took the censer and filled it with the fire of the altar and cast it to the earth." It is cast back to the same place from whence it came. That which is cast to the earth is God's judgment.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE SOUNDING OF THE SEVEN TRUMPETS

(Revelation 8:6—11:19)

"And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to trumpet" (Rev. 8:6).

The seven angels are now ready to sound the trumpets.

I. THE FIRST TRUMPET

(REVELATION 8:7)

"And the first trumpeted, and there was hail and fire mingled with blood, and it was cast to the earth; and the third part of the earth was burned up, and the third part of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up."

God's judgment begins from afar. Progressively, it turns to man. God's judgment begins with the things outside of man, for God still hopes that man will repent.

This trumpet appears to cast fire on the earth, and one third of the trees on the earth are burned like wood. In the Old Testament, after the priests burned the sacrifices, the blood was poured out. Hence, both fire and blood are here. This fire will burn all the way into the abyss.

One third of the green grass and the trees are burned. This indicates that God will first destroy the beauty of nature.

II. THE SECOND TRUMPET

(REVELATION 8:8-9)

"And the second angel trumpeted, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea; and the third part of the sea became blood, and the third part of the creatures which were in the sea and had life died, and the third part of the ships were destroyed."

The calamity of this trumpet causes marine commerce to lose one third of its business. (Psalm 46:2 says, "...though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.") This trumpet damages the sea.

III. THE THIRD TRUMPET

(REVELATION 8:10-11)

"And the third angel trumpeted, and a great star fell out of heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers and upon the springs of waters. And the name of the star is called Wormwood; and the third part of the waters became wormwood, and many of the men died from the waters because they were made bitter."

The first trumpet is with fire. The second trumpet is also with fire. The third trumpet is still with fire. God remembers the covenant which He made with Noah and will not judge the earth with water. "Wormwood" means bitter (Jer. 9:13-15; 23:14-15; Lam. 3:15). This trumpet damages the fresh water.

IV. THE FOURTH TRUMPET

(REVELATION 8:12)

"And the fourth angel trumpeted, and the third part of the sun and the third part of the moon and the third part of the stars were smitten, so that the third part of

them would be darkened and the day would not appear for the third part of it, and the night likewise."

The light of the sun, the light of the moon, and the light of the stars are all dimmed. The heavenly bodies are all changed, and the world is darkened. However, God does not smite the entire sun, moon, or stars because He remembers His own word in Genesis 8:22. The calamities of the seals are general, while the calamities of the trumpets are specific and definite. Today the seals have been fulfilled or are being fulfilled, but the time of the trumpets has not yet come. Not one trumpet has sounded yet.

"And I saw, and I heard an eagle flying in mid-heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to those who dwell on the earth because of the remaining trumpet sounds of the three angels who are about to trumpet!" (Rev. 8:13).

The seven seals are divided into four and three. The seven trumpets are also divided into four and three. The first four trumpets are merely calamities. The last three trumpets are trumpets of woes (9:12; 11:14). The first four trumpets are not directed specifically at man, but only touch man indirectly. The last three trumpets, however, touch man directly. The eagle is just an eagle and is not a sign, for even Balaam's donkey was able to speak. "Those who dwell on the earth" are different from those who are sojourners on the earth.

V. THE FIFTH TRUMPET—THE FIRST WOE

(REVELATION 9:1-12)

The great tribulation may begin from the fifth trumpet because the fifth trumpet is the trumpet of woe and is close to the seventh trumpet.

A. Revelation 9:1

"And the fifth angel trumpeted, and I saw a star out of heaven fallen to the earth, and to him was given the key of the pit of the abyss."

This star cannot be interpreted literally like the star in 8:10 because the star here was given the key of the pit of the abyss. Who is this star? It is Satan himself. "A star out of heaven fallen to the earth." This corresponds with the casting down in 12:9. In the Bible, stars refer to messengers. Job 38:7 says, "When the morning stars sang together, / and all the sons of God shouted for joy." This clearly tells us that stars signify the angels in heaven. Since this star has fallen, it must not be a good star. It is he who transfigures himself into an angel of light for the purpose of deceiving others (2 Cor. 11:14).

All the three and a half years spoken of in Revelation begin at the same time and end at the same time. Revelation 11:2-3, 12:6-14, and 13:5 all happen at the same time. This star must fall before the start of the forty-two months (before the great tribulation) because it falls at the fifth trumpet. The seventh trumpet is also sounded before the start of the forty-two months.

B. Revelation 9:2

"And he opened the pit of the abyss, and smoke went up out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke of the pit."

The word "abyss" means "the depth." The abyss means the deepest pit. What is this abyss? It is the dwelling place of the devil. Luke 8:28 and 31 tell us that it is the place where the devil suffers. Because the devil is here, suffering is here. When the devil comes to the world, this world becomes the devil's world. The falling of the star here corresponds with Luke 10:18, which was the verdict of the casting down of Satan. Here in Revelation 9:1 we have the execution of the casting down of Satan. While Satan is restricted, the pit of the abyss remains closed.

The smoke indicates that there is fire. It is difficult to say how the abyss is opened. Deuteronomy 29:23 says, "And that all its land is sulphur and salt, a burning waste; that it is not sown, nor does it sprout, nor does any vegetation come up in it; that it is like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim, which Jehovah overthrew in His anger and burning wrath." The condition here is similar to the prophecy in Revelation 9:2. Concerning the "smoke," one can refer to Revelation 18:8-9, 18 and 19:3. In Revelation 8:12 the heaven lost one third of its light. Here in 9:2 it has become completely darkened. In the former case, it was caused by the diminishing of the light bearers themselves. Here it is caused by the darkening of the smoke.

C. Revelation 9:3

"And out of the smoke came forth locusts to the earth, and to them power was given, as the scorpions of the earth have power."

"Locusts." This kind of locust is not the ordinary kind of locust because:

(1) According to Revelation 9:4, these locusts do not eat the trees and the shrubs like ordinary locusts do. Moreover, ordinary locusts do not harm men, but these do.

(2) They have power like the scorpions (9:3), and their torment is like that caused by the scorpions (v. 5). From verses 7 through 10 we can tell that their appearance is very peculiar and not like the ordinary locusts.

(3) Exodus 10:14 says that there will never again be locusts like the ones that are there.

(4) Proverbs 30:27 says that the locusts have no king, but the locusts here have a king.

(5) They come out of the pit of the abyss. The abyss is not an ordinary dwelling, but the dwelling place of the devil.

These locusts are probably a kind of special creature. We can see this from the following:

(1) Revelation 9:3, 7, and 10 say that they have power like the scorpions and that they are like horses with tails like scorpions, and stings. Revelation 9:19 says that "the power of the horses are in their mouth and in their tails." Luke 10:17 through 19 says that the Lord has given the believers authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions. The Lord's cross has pronounced Satan cast down. Revelation 9:1 is the execution of the casting down of Satan.

(2) They are possessed by the demons. This is why they are so special.

The earth was originally created for man, while the abyss is reserved for the demons. The word "deep" in Genesis 1:2 is translated by the Septuagint as "the immeasurable depth," which is the same as the abyss. This is where the demons live. On the second day, when God divided the waters which were under the air from the waters which were above the air (Gen. 1:7-8), some demons drifted to the air. Hence, the air also became the dwelling place of the demons (Eph. 6:12). The sea may be the entrance to the abyss. Revelation 20:13 says that the sea will give up its dead. It is one thing for death and Hades to give up the dead, and it is another thing for the sea to give up its dead. The dead in the latter case are the ones who died before Genesis 1:2. Romans 10:7 tells us that the Lord Jesus once went into the abyss.

D. Revelation 9:4-5

"And it was said to them that they should not harm the grass of the earth or any green thing or any tree, but men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. And it was given them that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months; and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man."

From this we can see that these locusts have spiritual (supernatural) knowledge, for they can receive orders and can identify those who have been sealed by God. (The seal in Revelation 7:2-8 should be a kind of hidden sign of God.) God orders them not to harm those who are sealed, but He has not specifically ordered them to harm others. From the words "they should not kill them" in verse 5, we can see that the harming of the unsealed ones in verse 4 is something to which God only acquiesces.

The tail of a scorpion has a sting. This sting is sharp and hollow. Within the sting of these scorpions there is a poison which can torment men for five months. The "scorpion" is used in the Old Testament as an idiom (2 Chron. 10:11).

E. Revelation 9:6

"And in those days men will seek death and shall by no means find it; and they will long to die, and death flees from them."

To "long to die" is to desire to die, while to "seek death" is to try to find a way to die. Today death seeks out men, but in the future, men will seek for death. They would rather seek for death than repent.

F. Revelation 9:7-10

"And the locusts were like horses prepared for war, and on their heads there were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were like faces of men. And they had hair like the hair of women, and their teeth were like the teeth of lions. And they had breastplates like breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots of many horses rushing into war. And they have tails like scorpions, and stings; and in their tails is their power to harm men for five months."

The appearance of the locusts is like horses prepared for war. They have crowns like gold and breastplates like those of iron. These are for their own protection. This means that men will try their best to withstand them.

G. Revelation 9:11

"They have a king over them, the angel of the abyss; his name in Hebrew is Abaddon; and in Greek he has the name Apollyon."

The king in this verse is Antichrist. The star in 9:1 is Satan himself. Revelation 11:7 speaks of "the beast who comes up out of the abyss," and 13:1 speaks of "a beast coming up out of the sea." This shows that the abyss is under the sea.

"Abaddon" is the name of a place. The word "destruction" in Proverbs 15:11, 27:20, and Job 26:6 is "Abaddon" in the original language. "Apollyon" is the name of a person; it means the destroying one (Jer. 4:7; 6:26; Isa. 16:4; Dan.

8:24-25; 9:26; 11:44). The name of the messenger from the abyss comes from his place of origin and his conduct.

H. Revelation 9:12

"The first woe has passed; behold, two woes are yet coming after these things."

In reading the first woe, we have to pay attention to two things: (1) Satan is cast down from heaven, and (2) Antichrist has come out from the abyss. In the first woe he appears on the earth. The forty-two months will be the time for him to actually reign.

VI. THE SIXTH TRUMPET—THE SECOND WOE

(REVELATION 9:13-21)

A. Revelation 9:13

"And the sixth angel trumpeted, and I heard a voice out of the four horns of the golden altar which is before God."

"A voice out of the four horns of the golden altar which is before God." Some say that this is God answering the prayers of the saints, but there are errors in saying this:

(1) God's answer to prayers should start before the blowing of the first trumpet, that is, in Revelation 8:3, when the incense came with the prayers out of the golden altar. (The golden altar is the incense altar in the sanctuary.)

(2) The voice does not come out of the golden altar but out of the four horns of the golden altar. If it were an answer to prayers, the voice should come out of the golden altar itself, since incense is burned in the middle of the altar and not on the four horns. In the Old Testament, only the blood of the sin offering was put upon the four horns of the golden altar (Lev. 16:18). Hence, "a voice out of the four horns of the golden altar which is before God" means that God's judgment of man is based on the work of the Lord Jesus. God judges because man does not receive the gospel and does not believe. This is God's voice, for only God is behind the incense altar.

B. Revelation 9:14

"Saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates."

This river will become the boundary of Israel in the future (see Deut. 1:7; 11:24). Israel's future boundary will certainly reach the great river Euphrates. Historical fact shows that when Rome was prosperous, her eastern boundary reached only as far as the great river Euphrates. As soon as the fifth trumpet is sounded,

Antichrist will appear, and as soon as the sixth trumpet is sounded, war will come. Perhaps at this point the four released angels will enter the territory of Rome and war against her. Antichrist will establish his kingdom.

Although one would dare not say that Ezekiel 38:1-3, 5-6, 10-12, 15-18; 39:1-3, 11 refers definitely to the sixth trumpet in Revelation 9, neither can one say that they are unrelated. It can be said that Ezekiel 38 and 39 are completely fulfilled from the beginning of the sixth trumpet in Revelation 9 through the sixth bowl in Revelation 16.

We still do not know what the name of the place "Magog" in Ezekiel 38:2 refers to. Most know that Rosh refers to Russia, Meshech is Moscow, and that Tubal is a city called Tobolsk in Russia. Perhaps in the future the four angels of the great river Euphrates will lead the soldiers of these four places to fight the war (Ezek. 38:15). Also, these countries, Persia, Ethiopia, and so forth, are neighboring countries of the great river Euphrates. The sixth trumpet in Revelation 9 tells us of their victory, whereas the sixth bowl in Revelation 16 tells us of their defeat.

C. Revelation 9:15

"And the four angels were released, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year that they might kill the third part of men."

These four angels like to kill. Once they are loosed, they go out to kill people. God does not command them to do so. He only releases them; they go out to kill. They are killers by nature. Every event in the prophecy is well-prepared in advance and then executed when the time comes. "The hour and day and month and year." Not only are the day and month and year ordained, but also the hour. The "third part" of the first through fourth trumpets is limited to the earth, the sea, the rivers, and the hosts in the heavens, but the "third part" of the sixth trumpet reaches men directly. The fourth seal kills the "fourth part" of men throughout the twenty centuries, but the "third part" of men that the sixth trumpet kills are killed within a short period of time.

D. Revelation 9:16

"And the number of the armies of horsemen was two hundred million; I heard their number."

No other country in the world produces more horses than Russia. Moreover, Russia exhausts her ability to have more horses. Persia, Egypt, Ethiopia, and so forth are also horse-producing countries. Horses are good for fighting and are not afraid of guns or artillery. In the future these ones will lead the army of horsemen to war.

E. Revelation 9:17

"And thus I saw the horses in the vision and those sitting on them, having breastplates of fire and of hyacinth and of brimstone; and the heads of the horses were like the heads of lions, and out of their mouths proceed fire and smoke and brimstone."

Those who ride the horses have breastplates of three colors: fire, hyacinth, and brimstone. The breastplates are for self-protection. The horsemen do not fight, but merely direct the horses in the direction they should go. Even if they are human, those riding the horses must be particularly possessed by demons.

F. Revelation 9:18

"By these three plagues the third part of the men were killed, by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone proceeding out of their mouths."

Fire burns, smoke suffocates, and brimstone stinks. All three belong to hell (Rev. 19:3; 21:8). Those who kill are not the horsemen but are the horses themselves. Out of the mouths of the horses proceed fire and smoke and brimstone, by which the third part of men are killed. Therefore, it is the mouths of the horses that cause men to die.

G. Revelation 9:19

"For the power of the horses are in their mouth and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents and had heads, and with them they harm men."

The horses' tails are like serpents with heads, and with them they hurt men. It seems that Deuteronomy 28:49-57 supplements what the sixth trumpet does not say.

H. Revelation 9:20-21

"And the rest of the men, who were not killed by these plagues, still did not repent of the works of their hands, so as not to worship the demons and the idols of gold and silver and brass and stone and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk; and they did not repent of their murders or of their sorceries or of their fornication or of their thefts."

God permits the plagues to come upon men in this way in order to call them to repent. But the men refuse to repent, and instead, they commit six kinds of sins. These six sins are worshipping demons and idolatry, which offend God, and murder, sorcery, fornication, and theft, which offend men. The sixth seal speaks of men's fear of God's wrath; the sixth trumpet speaks of men's fierceness. As soon as the sixth seal ends, there is an insertion. The same is true as soon as the sixth trumpet ends.

God abhors two kinds of sins: (1) worshipping idols and (2) worshipping demons. (According to Mr. Panton's research, in London alone, there were more than forty such cases. Examples were: the beseeching of spirits in a garden, the worshipping of the serpent in a Sunday School, and so forth.) To worship demons is to worship what God has created, while to worship idols is to worship what man has made. Revelation 9:20 says that there are three things the idols cannot do, but it does not say that they cannot speak. This is because in Revelation 13:15 the idol can speak. All sins stem from a failure to know God. Romans 1:24-32 is the footnote to this.

VII. VISIONS INSERTED BETWEEN THE SIXTH AND SEVENTH TRUMPETS

A. A Strong Angel

(Revelation 10:1-7)

1. Revelation 10:1

"And I saw another strong Angel coming down out of heaven, clothed with a cloud; and the rainbow was upon His head, and His face was like the sun, and His feet like pillars of fire."

This strong Angel refers to the Lord, because:

(1) The Lord is manifested here as the Angel, the position He takes in the Old Testament.

(2) He is in the midst of a cloud, or clothed with a cloud; He is not riding on top of it (Matt. 24:30). Since the Lord sets Himself in the clouds, this is still the time of mystery, for He has not yet manifested His glory.

(3) In Revelation 4:3, a rainbow surrounds the throne. In 10:1 a rainbow is upon the Lord's head. Since the Lord is clothed with a cloud, the rainbow is certainly in the cloud also. Although the rainbow signifies that the Lord remembers grace and mercy, the fact that He is in the cloud means that such remembrance is still a mystery and is not yet manifested.

(4) "His face was like the sun." This manifests His glory, though at this time He is still in the cloud.

(5) "His feet like pillars of fire." This indicate steadfastness (Gal. 2:9; Jer. 1:18). "Fire" signifies the holiness and righteousness of God (Exo. 19:18; Heb. 12:29).

2. Revelation 10:2

"And He had in His hand a little opened scroll. And He placed His right foot on the sea and the left on the land."

"His right foot on the sea and the left on the land." The Lord's head faces upward toward the heavens and does not bear direct relationship with the earth. The Lord places His two feet as pillars of fire upon the sea and the earth. This means that He casts fire upon the sea and the land, signifying His judgment of them with the holiness and righteousness of God. To "place" means to claim. Whatever the Lord places His feet upon, He claims for Himself (Deut. 11:24; Psa. 8:6).

"A little opened scroll." Some say that this little scroll refers to the Old Testament. Others say that it is the prophecy concerning the Jews in the Old Testament. Still others say that it refers to Revelation 11—22. However, none of these is acceptable. There is much evidence to show that this scroll is the scroll spoken of in chapter five:

(1) According to Revelation 5:3-7, when the scroll is in the hands of the Lamb, it is not yet open. In Revelation 10:2 it is in the Angel's hand and it is open.

(2) Because in 5:1-3 the scroll is tightly sealed, nothing is said about its being large or small. In 10:2 it has been opened. One can now know what it is like and can thus say that it is a little scroll.

(3) In Revelation 10:9-10, John eats this little scroll, meaning that God has revealed the things to him.

(4) The "days" in Revelation 10:7 is "a period" in the original text. As soon as the seventh trumpet is blown, the mystery of God is over and becomes manifest. When the seventh seal is opened, the scroll is still unopened because the seventh seal produces the seventh trumpet. The seventh trumpet must first be blown before the scroll can be opened. Hence, as soon as the seventh trumpet is blown, the mystery is completed.

(5) In Revelation 10:2, 7, and 8, John foresees the scroll being opened in the vision. But this does not mean that the scroll is opened at the time of the sixth trumpet.

(6) Revelation 10:11 says to "prophesy again." From this we see that the prophecy is divided into two sections. Just as the little scroll is divided into two sections, so the prophecy of Revelation is divided into two sections. The little scroll begins to open as soon as the seventh trumpet is blown. Hence, the first section extends from the first seal to the blowing of the seventh trumpet, and the second section follows from the seventh trumpet to the new heaven and new earth. At the blowing of the seventh trumpet, there are the plagues of the seven bowls. How do we know that the second section of the little scroll not only covers the kingdom and the new heaven and new earth, but also the seven bowls?

Revelation 10:10 says that as soon as John has eaten the little scroll, his stomach becomes bitter and his mouth sweet. There is bitterness as well as sweetness.

The scroll is opened only when the seventh trumpet is blown. This means that the first section of the little scroll is closed, whereas the second section is open. Consequently, the first section of this book's prophecy is a mystery. It extends from the first seal to the blowing of the seventh trumpet, that is, from 6:1 through 11:19, because 10:7 clearly says that when the seventh trumpet is blown, the mystery of God is finished. Revelation 11:15 also says clearly that as soon as the seventh trumpet is blown, the kingdom will come. Hence, the second section is open; it extends from the seventh trumpet (yet not including the blowing of it) on through the new heaven and new earth, that is, from 12:1 through 22:21.

The judgments of the seven seals and of the seven trumpets are the procedure for opening the scroll; this brings in the kingdom and also eternity.

3. Revelation 10:3

"And He cried out with a loud voice just as a lion roars. And when He cried out, the seven thunders uttered their own voices."

"The seven thunders." In the original text, this refers to something definite. This voice of thunders is often heard in Revelation. It is the outpouring (the utter release) of God's wrath. "As a lion roars." This speaks of God as the King of the whole world, with a voice of judgment that causes men to tremble when they hear it.

4. Revelation 10:4

"Seal the things which the seven thunders spoke, and do not write them."

"Seal the things..., and do not write them." John was writing while he was seeing. What God did not want men to know, He would not have written down. From this we see that what God allows John to write is what man should know and understand.

5. Revelation 10:5-6

"And the Angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land lifted up His right hand to heaven and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things in it, and the earth and the things in it, and the sea and the things in it, that there shall be delay no longer."

"The things in it" include not only the dead, but also the living. (There are angels in the heavens, men on the earth, and spirits in the sea.) "Swore" means that we

are once again back to the Old Testament because in the New Testament one should not swear (Matt. 5:34-37).

6. Revelation 10:7

"But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel when he is about to trumpet, then the mystery of God is finished, as He has announced the good news to His own slaves the prophets."

As soon as the seventh trumpet is blown, the mystery is over.

B. God Telling John to Devour the Little Scroll

(Revelation 10:8-11)

"And the voice which I heard out of heaven, I heard again speaking with me and saying, Go, take the opened scroll in the hand of the Angel who is standing on the sea and on the land. And I went to the Angel and told Him to give me the little scroll. And He said to me, Take it and devour it, and it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be as sweet as honey. And I took the little scroll out of the hand of the Angel and devoured it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth; and when I had eaten it, my stomach became bitter. And they said to me, You must prophesy again over many peoples and nations and tongues and kings."

God commands John to devour the little scroll. This shows that God is eager to tell us the following facts. This agrees somewhat with Revelation 1:1-2. "Bitter" indicates bitterness (Ruth 1:20), and "sweet" indicates joy (Psa. 119:103).

C. The Temple and the Altar

(Revelation 11:1-2)

1. Revelation 11:1

"And there was given to me a reed like a rod, and someone said, Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship in it."

What does "measure" mean? By reading Numbers 35:2, 5; Ezekiel 45:1-3; 42:15-20; and 48:8, 12, 15, we know that "measure" means protection, separation unto God. What does "a reed like a rod" mean? Revelation 21:15 through 17 speaks only of a golden reed for measuring. It does not mention a reed like a rod for measuring because, by the time of the new heaven and new earth, sin, Satan, Antichrist, and the false prophet have all been thrown into the lake of fire. Therefore, all is peaceful. The measuring in Revelation 11:1 means punishment (Prov. 10:13; Psa. 89:32). Everything within the measure of the rod is holy and is protected by God; everything beyond the measure of the rod is in danger and is of the world.

"The temple of God." Is this temple heavenly or earthly? It is a heavenly temple because: (1) this book emphasizes the heavenly temple (Rev. 11:19; 16:17), and (2) in the future the temple on the earth will be defiled by idols. How could God protect it and say that it is holy?

"The altar." This is the incense altar and not the altar of sacrifice because 11:2 says that the court which is outside the temple is not measured. The altar of sacrifice is in this court. This court is not measured, but the altar is measured. Hence, it is clear that this altar is within the temple, and only the incense altar is within the temple. This is also made clear by the phrase "and those who worship in it," which is mentioned after "the altar." Thus, this is obviously the incense altar. To measure the people who worship in the temple means that God protects only those who are raptured.

2. Revelation 11:2

"And the court which is outside the temple cast out and do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles, and they will trample the holy city for forty-two months."

"The court which is outside the temple" is the temple on the earth. The heavenly temple is the temple itself. In ancient times, the Jews had a central holy temple. Even though the kings established great high places to worship God, all the other kings who revived the kingdom abolished these great high places. God does not want what man establishes. Even during the transitional period, when the Gentiles were called unto the Lord, the Jews who became Christians still went up to the holy temple to worship God (Acts 2:46; 3:1; 5:20).

In the Old Testament age, there was one central holy temple. But in the New Testament age, there is no physical sanctuary, for in the New Testament we are to worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24). It is in the heavenly Holy of Holies that one worships God (Heb. 10:19-22). How did God destroy the temple on the earth in order to make people worship Him in the heavenly temple? The Lord Jesus offered Himself as a sacrifice to God. Once He died, the offering of sacrifices stopped (Heb. 10:5-18), and furthermore, a number of years later the Romans destroyed the holy temple. Hence, there is no longer a holy temple on the earth. But here there is a temple on the earth again; thus, it is a return to the Old Testament. Matthew 24:15 refers to "the abomination of desolation...standing in the holy place." The "abomination" refers to an idol. "The holy place" will have idols during the time of the great tribulation (2 Thes. 2:2-4; Rev. 13:14).

"The holy city" is Jerusalem (Matt. 4:5). Those who worship in the heavenly temple are the people spoken of in Revelation 7:9-17. "Trample" is the same as what is mentioned in Luke 21:24. The Gentiles will trample Jerusalem for forty-two months.

D. The Two Witnesses

(Revelation 11:3-12)

1. Revelation 11:3

"And I will cause My two witnesses to prophesy a thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth."

Who are these two witnesses? Some say that they signify Christendom, some say that they signify a certain sect, and some say that they signify the gospel preached by Christians. None of these have sufficient justification for the following reasons:

- (1) These two witnesses wear sackcloth. Is it possible that they signify a group?
- (2) Their miracles in Revelation 11:5-6 are for self-defense and result in killing. They are not like the miracles performed during the gospel age, which are for saving people.
- (3) Revelation 11:9 speaks of their corpses. One cannot say that these corpses signify a group; much less can they refer to the gospel.

These two witnesses are simply two witnesses because: (1) witnesses have to be men (Acts 1:8); (2) they wear sackcloth; (3) they are killed; (4) they have corpses; and (5) they are prophets.

Who then are these witnesses? Some say they are Elijah and Moses. They say this because Revelation 11:6 says that they can cause the heaven to stop raining, as was done by Elijah (1 Kings 17:1), and they can turn water into blood, as was done by Moses. But this interpretation is based only on what these two persons have done. Hebrews 9:27 says that it is reserved for men to die once. Moses died once already. How could he die again? Thus, Moses cannot be included here.

In the original text, "two witnesses" is preceded by the definite article. This seems to indicate that one would know who these two people are immediately upon reading it. The words in Revelation 11:4 are quoted from Zechariah 4:2-3, 5, 11, and 14. "Stand" in Revelation 11:4 signifies living. When a man is tired, he sits down; when he is sick, he lies down; and when he dies, he falls down. These two persons stand before the Lord of the earth. The whole Bible mentions only two persons who did not die; they are Enoch and Elijah. These two alone stand

before the Lord. (It is said that an apocrypha written by John states that Enoch and Elijah will come back.) "Two witnesses." Two is the number specified in the Bible for witnessing (Deut. 17:6; 19:15; Matt. 18:16). "Sackcloth" has the meaning of bitterness. The New Testament does not command us to wear sackcloth, but in the Old Testament there was such a commandment (Isa. 22:12; Joel 1:13). What the two witnesses preach is judgment, not the gospel. Enoch preached judgment (Jude 14-15), and Elijah was a prophet who wielded a sword (1 Kings 18:40; 2 Kings 1:10, 12). They preach sad news, not glad tidings.

In the three and a half years of the great tribulation, even if Christians remain, it will be impossible for them to preach the gospel because they will no longer be able to escape tribulation.

2. Revelation 11:4

"These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands which stand before the Lord of the earth."

"Olive trees" produce oil and the "lampstands" give light. There is oil, and there is light. The olive trees and the lampstands were standing at the time of Zechariah (Zech. 4:11-14), they were standing when John was writing the book of Revelation, and they are still standing now. The words translated "anointed ones" (see Zech. 4:14, KJV), when translated directly from the original, are "sons of oil." This means that these two persons are filled with the Holy Spirit.

"The Lord of the earth." The Jews have their kingdom. In Genesis 14:22, God is the possessor of heaven and earth. After the Jews lost their kingdom, God was known only as the God of the heavens (Dan. 2:18, 28, 37, 44). Now He is again called the Lord of the earth, for He has returned to His Old Testament position and has again acknowledged the Jews.

What kind of people are these two witnesses? Perhaps they are those who sell the oil to the five foolish virgins (Matt. 25:1-2, 8-10a), or perhaps they are those who give a little help to the persecuted ones during the time of the great tribulation (Dan. 11:34).

3. Revelation 11:5

"And if anyone desires to harm them, fire proceeds out of their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone desires to harm them, thus must he be killed."

These two oppose the whole world and Antichrist. "If anyone desires to harm them, thus must he be killed." We see that these two persons must know even

the evil thoughts that arise in people's hearts. They witness with force; thus, they are not preaching the gospel. They perform miracles only to protect themselves and to support the Jews and the remaining Christians during the great tribulation. The miracles are not for saving people.

4. Revelation 11:6

"These have the authority to shut heaven that no rain may fall during the days of their prophecy; and they have authority over the waters to turn them into blood and to smite the earth with every plague as often as they desire."

"Rain" signifies God's grace because God sends rain on the just and on the unjust (Matt. 5:45). "No rain" means that God withdraws His grace.

5. Revelation 11:7

"And when they have completed their testimony, the beast who comes up out of the abyss will make war with them and will overcome them and kill them."

The beast or the wild beast signifies Antichrist. The word "beast" is mentioned thirty-six times in this book. Thirty-six is six times six, six being the number of man. The very name of the wild beast signifies his personality, work, and all that he has. (The Lamb is mentioned twenty-eight times in this book. Twenty-eight is seven times four. This special name signifies the Lord's personality, work, and perfect relationship with both God and man.)

This beast comes up out of the abyss. Revelation 13:1 says that the beast comes up out of the sea. Thus, the abyss is below the sea. The abyss is the dwelling place of the devil. One who comes up out of the abyss must be a resurrected person. According to Revelation 17:8, we know that the beast will have died and resurrected. The authority of the two witnesses enables them to kill people at will, but they cannot kill the beast because he is a resurrected beast.

6. Revelation 11:8

"And their corpses will be on the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified."

From the physical point of view, "the great city" is Jerusalem, but according to its spiritual meaning, this is Sodom (the place famous for its sin) and Egypt (the place that opposes God). Historically, it is the place where the Lord was crucified. The manner of the death of these two witnesses may be similar to the crucifixion of the Lord, because verse 8 says, "Where also their Lord was crucified." The word "also" emphasizes that their death was just like the kind of death that the Lord suffered in crucifixion. This corresponds with the crucifixion of the prophets in Matthew 23:34-35.

7. Revelation 11:9

"And those of the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations see their corpses for three and a half days, and they will not allow their corpses to be placed in a tomb."

"Those of the peoples and tribes and tongues" means that representatives from all peoples and tribes and tongues come to visit. These two persons become the common enemies of mankind, so when the nations hear that they have been killed, they come to see what has happened. According to Joel 3:1-2 and Zechariah 12:3 and 14:2, people from every nation come to Jerusalem at this time.

The "three and a half days" fall between three and four days. These are neither like the Lord who did not see corruption for three days (John 2:19; Acts 2:30-31) nor like Lazarus who began to stink after four days (John 11:17, 39). The three days, the four days, and the three and a half days are recorded by John alone.

8. Revelation 11:10

"And those who dwell on the earth rejoice over them and make merry; and they will send gifts to one another because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth."

The message spreads everywhere, and these are the reactions. The sending of gifts indicates their extreme rejoicing. There is such rejoicing probably because (1) the people's flesh has been tormented and (2) their consciences have also been tormented.

9. Revelation 11:11

"And after the three and a half days, the breath of life out of God entered into them, and they stood on their feet; and great fear fell upon those beholding them."

Resurrection is the work of the Spirit. That "they stood on their feet" indicates that they are now living. (In 11:8 the dead bodies are lying down.) The "fear" is probably caused by two reasons: (1) the immediate reason is that they are seen to have come alive all of a sudden; (2) the remote reason is that since they have had such authority in the past, what will these two now do since they have resurrected? "Great" here is the same word in the original text as "great" in 11:8 and 11:13.

10. Revelation 11:12

"And they heard a loud voice out of heaven saying to them, Come up here. And they went up into heaven in the cloud, and their enemies beheld them."

The "cloud" here and the "cloud" in 10:1 of this book both refer to the same thing. The Lord's ascension was beheld only by His disciples; however, the ascension of these witnesses is beheld even by their enemies. This allows the latter to know that only God is God.

E. The Great Earthquake

(Revelation 11:13-14)

"And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell; and seven thousand men were killed in the earthquake, and the rest became terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven. The second woe has passed; behold, the third woe is coming quickly."

"The city" here is the city of Jerusalem. In the original, "seven thousand men" is seven thousand men of renown. The whole book of Revelation records only four earthquakes: (1) In 6:12, at the time of the sixth seal; (2) in 8:5; (3) in 11:13; and (4) in 11:19. (The earthquake in Revelation 16:18 is the same as the one in 11:19 because the order of events is the same: a loud noise, lightnings, voices, thunders, an earthquake, and finally, great hail.)

To become "terrified" does not mean to repent. They merely acknowledge that this is God's doing because 16:11 clearly says that they would not repent (cf. Exo. 8:18-19; 1 Sam. 6:5-6; and Josh. 7:19).

This is the end of the inserted visions.

VIII. THE SEVENTH TRUMPET—THE THIRD WOE

(REVELATION 11:15-18)

"And the seventh angel trumpeted; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He will reign forever and ever. And the twenty-four elders who sit before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshipped God, saying, We thank You, Lord God the Almighty, He who is and who was, because You have taken Your great power and have reigned. And the nations became angry, and Your wrath came, and the time came for the dead to be judged, and the time to give the reward to Your slaves the prophets and to the saints and to those who fear Your name, to the small and to the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth."

This portion concerns the results of the sounding of the seventh trumpet. The plagues of the seven bowls are the plagues that occur at the sounding of the seventh trumpet. This is the third woe spoken of in 11:14. After 11:16 the seats of

the twenty-four elders are not mentioned again because the kingdom has arrived. Furthermore, after 19:4 the elders themselves are not mentioned again because they have resigned their position of ruling the universe.

The "wrath" in 11:18 refers to the plagues of the seven bowls. In verse 18 only three kinds of people receive the reward: (1) "Your slaves the prophets" (There are prophets in the New Testament too. These are those who have spiritual gifts.); (2) "the saints"; and (3) "those who fear Your name." (In the Old Testament time, there were people who feared God, but this designation does not apply to those in the church age. The people who fear God at this time are probably those Gentiles who enter into the kingdom to be the common citizens.)

"Those who destroy the earth" probably refer to: (1) those who build up the religious Babylon (the people of the Roman Catholic Church); (2) those who worship the image of the beast and follow him (those in Revelation 13:14); and (3) those in Revelation 20:7-9.

IX. THE SITUATION IN HEAVEN AFTER THE SEVENTH TRUMPET (REVELATION 11:19)

"And the temple of God which is in heaven was opened, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple; and there were lightnings and voices and thunders and an earthquake and great hail."

This verse and Revelation 16:17 through 21 are concurrent, for both show us the situation at the end of the third woe.

CHAPTER SIX THREE-IN-ONE SATAN (Revelation 12:1—13:18)

I. THE GREAT SIGN (REVELATION 12:1-6)

When a sign is revealed, it causes men to know what will come to pass. Beginning from Revelation 12:1, the apostle John prophesies again because 10:11 says, "You must prophesy again." Following Revelation 11:15-18, we see the situation after the sounding of the seventh trumpet. Hence, Revelation 12:1—22:21 is his prophesying again; it supplements the first section (chapters six through eleven). Chapters six through eleven provide the outline, arranged in sequence, whereas chapters twelve through twenty-two give the details.

The first section ends with 11:15: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He will reign forever and ever." Because it says that the kingdom goes on forever and ever, this section covers all the things through the new heaven and new earth. Hence, this is not speaking about the millennial kingdom. Therefore, we can say that chapters six through eleven cover everything through the new heaven and new earth. Then chapters twelve through twenty-two speak again in detail about all the crucial things in the first section. This is like Genesis 1, which speaks of God's work in six days, while chapter two speaks again about what was done on the sixth day in specific detail. Chapters six through eleven of Revelation are in the principle of Genesis 1, and chapters twelve through twenty-two follow the example of Genesis 2.

In Revelation 9:1 a great star falls from heaven to the earth. This is the great red dragon in 12:3.

Chapters twelve through fourteen are written symbolically, chapters fifteen through sixteen are written literally, and chapters seventeen through eighteen are again written symbolically. God's wrath and judgment are never written symbolically; they are always written literally.

A. Revelation 12:1

"And a great sign was seen in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon underneath her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars."

Some people say that the "woman" here refers to the church, but this is not correct because: (1) before the second coming of the Lord, the position of the church before Christ is that of a virgin (2 Cor. 11:2); (2) the church has never been typified as a mother, and it has never had any daughters (names like "mother church" cannot be found in the Bible); and (3) the church is raptured at the end, but this woman is never raptured.

Some people say that this woman is Mary, but this is also incorrect. (1) How could Mary be depicted by the description in Revelation 12:1? (2) The Lord Jesus was the firstborn Son, but this woman already has other children (12:17). (3) This does not agree with the prophetic nature of this book. If the woman were Mary and the man-child were the Lord, then this description would be historical and would be contrary to the prophetic nature of this book because this book is the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Who then is this woman? Let us consider a few things. First, every woman (singular in number) in this book refers to a city (17:18; 21:9-10). Second, J.K. Seiss says that the sun refers to the Lord, the moon to the devil, and the twelve

stars to the twelve tribes. While it is possible to say that the sun represents the Lord and the twelve stars, the twelve tribes, how can one infer that the moon stands for the devil? Third, Robert Govett says that the sun refers to grace (this is possible), the moon refers to the law (how does he explain this?), and that the stars refer to the twelve tribes (which is correct).

A third school says that the sun, moon, and stars refer to Christians. Their basis for such an interpretation is 1 Corinthians 15:41. However, the stars in 1 Corinthians 15:41 are general, while the "twelve stars" in Revelation 12:1 are specific.

Our answer is that the "woman" refers to Jerusalem in the nation of Israel. The reasons for this are:

(1) By reading Genesis 37:9-10, we immediately know that the sun refers to Jacob, the moon to the mother of Israel, and the twelve stars to the twelve tribes. Explained in this way, we realize that what is described here is the city of Jerusalem, which represents the nation of Israel. (These three, the sun, the moon, and the stars, cannot be explained separately; they have to be viewed together.)

(2) The one "clothed with the sun" is obviously the mother of Israel. (She is only clothed with the sun; she is not the sun itself.) "The moon [was] underneath her feet." This means that she is being forgotten. "On her head [was] a crown of twelve stars"; these are obviously the twelve tribes (Gen. 37:9-10).

(3) "Travailing in birth" (12:2). In Isaiah 26:17-18; Jeremiah 6:22-25 (Zion is Jerusalem); 13:19-21; 30:6-7; Micah 4:8-10; and 5:1-3, the prophets clearly say that Jerusalem will suffer a tribulation just as a woman travails in giving birth.

(4) In Revelation 12:7 the angel, Michael, helps her. Daniel 12:1 clearly says that Michael will rise up to help Israel during the great tribulation.

(5) This woman typifies Jerusalem in the nation of Israel. God commands her to flee to the wilderness (Rev. 12:6, 14). In Matthew 24:16-20 the Lord expressly says that they would flee. Luke 21:20-24 also states this very clearly.

B. Revelation 12:2

"And she was with child, and she cried out, travailing in birth and being in pain to bring forth."

Since everything about this woman is symbolic, her pregnancy, birth, and crying out in 12:2 must not be interpreted literally. Birth has only three meanings in the Bible: (1) literal birth, (2) spiritual birth, and (3) resurrection. Since Revelation

12:2 is symbolic, this birth cannot be literal. Furthermore, since the man-child shepherds the nations with an iron rod, which speaks of overcoming, this birth cannot be a spiritual regeneration either. Since it is neither the first interpretation nor the second, it must be the third, that is, a birth in resurrection. The external evidence of this is in Acts 13:33 and Romans 1:4, but this chapter also contains evidence. The last phrase of Revelation 12:11 says that those brought forth were martyred ones, that they were dead ones. These were begotten from the dead. Hence, it indicates resurrection. Symbolically speaking, this is Jerusalem. When the Christians are resurrected, Jerusalem has to pass through the great tribulation, which is like hard labor. The woman's crying out must be their prayer. Why do Christians come out of Jerusalem? It is because (1) the Lord is the Lion of the tribe of Judah (Rev. 5:5); (2) salvation is of the Jews (John 4:22); and (3) Jerusalem is our mother (Gal. 4:26).

The dragon has two aspects: (1) the heavenly dragon and (2) the earthly devil. Jerusalem also has two aspects: (1) she has a high position before God, and (2) she is a refugee on earth.

C. Revelation 12:3

"And another sign was seen in heaven; and behold, there was a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems."

The "great red dragon" is the same as "the Devil and Satan" in verse 9. He is God's adversary. He is also the serpent in Genesis 3:1. Red is the color of war. The "great red dragon" signifies that he is a murderer from the beginning to the end. (See John 8:44 and 1 John 3:8, both of which are also recorded by John.)

"Seven heads." Compare this with Revelation 17:9 and 12. The "ten horns" are ten kings which are subordinates of the great king. The heads are larger than the horns, while the horns execute the decisions of the heads. After the revival of the Roman Empire, the dragon will lead the ten small kings to persecute the children of God.

D. Revelation 12:4

"And his tail drags away the third part of the stars of heaven, and he cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to bring forth, so that when she brings forth he might devour her child."

The third part of the stars of heaven that are cast down to the earth are the angels in 12:9. One third of the angels follow the devil. The casting down of the dragon happens before the rapture of the man-child.

E. Revelation 12:5

"And she brought forth a son, a man-child, who is to shepherd all the nations with an iron rod; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne."

Since the "woman" in 12:1 typifies Jerusalem of the nation of Israel, who then is the "man-child"? Some say it refers to the Israelites, but this cannot be true because of the following reasons:

- (1) The sun, the moon, and the stars already typify the nation of Israel.
- (2) This man-child is raptured to the throne, but the Bible never says that the nation of Israel will be raptured. This would not match the prophecy concerning Israel.
- (3) This man-child believes in the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 12:11), but the Israelites never have. Some say that the Israelites will believe in the Lord during the tribulation, but the Bible never says so. The Bible says that when the Lord Jesus' feet stand upon the Mount of Olives, God will open up to the Israelites a fountain of salvation, and they will be saved at that time (Zech. 13:1; 14:4; 12:10-14).

Some say that the man-child is the Lord Jesus, but this cannot be true for the following reasons:

- (1) The "woman" typifies Jerusalem, but the Lord was born in Bethlehem.
- (2) This man-child is not an individual but a corporate entity (Rev. 12:10-11).
- (3) If the man-child refers to the Lord, then the dragon must refer to Herod. But 12:9 expressly says that the dragon is Satan himself.
- (4) After the man-child is born, he is immediately raptured, but after Jesus was born, He lived for over thirty-three and a half years and was raptured only after His death and resurrection.
- (5) Because it is a "great" sign, the words "brought forth" cannot be interpreted literally.

Some say that the man-child refers to the whole church, but this cannot be true either, because:

- (1) The whole church cannot be resurrected, for this would mean that the whole church has died.
- (2) The whole church is not raptured at the same time. Some go first, and some go later; but here all of the man-child is raptured at the same time.
- (3) The promise of shepherding all nations with an iron rod is not given to the whole church but to the overcomers (2:26-27), and not all in the church are overcomers.

(4) The matter of reigning is not for the whole church since only those who suffer together with the Lord may reign together with Him (2 Tim. 2:12).

Who then is the man-child? He refers to the overcoming Christians who have died.

(1) He must include some of those in the church in Smyrna, those who were faithful unto death (Rev. 2:10). This matches 12:11, which says, "even unto death."

(2) He includes some of those in the church in Thyatira, those who will shepherd all nations with an iron rod (2:26-27). This matches 12:5, which says, "To shepherd all the nations with an iron rod."

(3) He includes some of those in the church in Philadelphia, those who will be saved from and not subjected to the tribulation (3:10). This matches 12:5, which says that the man-child is "caught up to God."

(4) He also includes some of those in the church in Laodicea, those who will sit on the throne (3:21). This matches 12:5, which says that the man-child will "shepherd all the nations."

Hence, the man-child is neither the whole church nor a part of those in various local churches. They are the overcomers in the churches. They are the Christians who were martyred and resurrected, because: (1) Revelation 12:11 expressly says that they loved not their soul-life even unto death, and (2) "brought forth" here symbolizes resurrection.

In covering Revelation 7:16-17 we have already mentioned eight points that match what is recorded here. The man-child is a major part of the great multitude that no man can number. (Chapter seven speaks in a general way, revealing an outline of the rapture, whereas chapter twelve speaks in detail about a portion of the raptured ones.)

Matthew 25:1 through 13 is a parable concerning the ten virgins, hence; the word "slept" cannot be interpreted literally. Furthermore, we cannot say that it means unwatchfulness, because the five wise virgins also slept. Therefore, sleep indicates death. The five wise virgins are the man-child in Revelation 12:5, and the five foolish virgins are a part which includes the remnant of the woman's seed in Revelation 12:17 (there are survivors among this part).

Revelation 12:5 says that this group of Christians has died, resurrected, and been raptured.

F. Revelation 12:6

"And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place there prepared by God so that they might nourish her there a thousand two hundred and sixty days."

The fleeing of the woman is the flight that is described in Matthew 24:6-20 and Luke 21:20-24. In Revelation 12:1 the woman is in heaven; in 12:6 she is in the wilderness. Immediately after the man-child is born, she loses her position in heaven. She is now just the earthly Jerusalem. The wilderness means a desolate and uninhabited place. God nourishes her at this time in the same way that He once nourished the children of Israel in the wilderness.

In Galatians 4:21-31 there are two contrasts. The first is between the Jerusalem in heaven and the Jerusalem on earth; the one signifies the Christians, and the other, the Jews. One is represented by Isaac, and the other, by Ishmael. The main thought, however, is to prove that we Christians are free in the same way that Isaac was free.

II. WAR IN HEAVEN

(REVELATION 12:7-9)

A. Revelation 12:7

"And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels went to war with the dragon. And the dragon warred and his angels."

The war determines who is to live in the heavens—the man-child or the dragon. The man-child now wants to obtain the position of the dragon; hence, he must go to war. In the whole Bible there is only one archangel—Michael. The meaning of this name is "the one who is very much like God" (some say that Michael is the Lord Jesus). During the time of Job, the dragon could come before the presence of God (Job 1:7). He could also do this during the Lord's time. But after the man-child is caught up, he can no longer do this.

B. Revelation 12:8-9

"And they did not prevail, neither was their place found any longer in heaven. And the great dragon was cast down, the ancient serpent, he who is called the Devil and Satan, he who deceives the whole inhabited earth; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast down with him."

The designation "dragon" implies cruelty; the old serpent, deceit; the Devil, temptation; and Satan, opposition. The devil is cast down from heaven, and he draws one third of the angels down with him. He also opens the abyss (9:1). At this point, how dark the world is!

III. A LOUD VOICE

(REVELATION 12:10-12)

A. Revelation 12:10

"And I heard a loud voice in heaven saying, Now has come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ, for the accuser of our brothers has been cast down, who accuses them before our God day and night."

In the past God used the blood to redeem, but now He uses His power to redeem. The power of the kingdom of God is perfect before the throne of God; however, before Satan is cast down, God's will cannot be carried out in the air. After the one thousand two hundred sixty days, the kingdom of God will come to the earth, and God's will shall be carried out on the earth also. (In Matthew 12:28, when the demons are cast out, the kingdom of God comes.)

B. Revelation 12:11

"And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they loved not their soul-life even unto death."

There are three things which overcome accusations: (1) The blood of the Lord. (The accusations may not always be false; hence, we need the blood.) We rest in the precious blood of the Lamb (Rom. 8:34). (2) The word of our testimony. We should not only believe with the heart, but should also speak out with the mouth. Once we speak, Satan can do nothing. (3) Loving not the soul-life even unto death. The greatest trial is death. If we are not afraid of death, even unto death, Satan can do nothing.

C. Revelation 12:12

"Therefore be glad, O heavens and those who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and the sea because the devil has come down to you and has great rage, knowing that he has only a short time."

In Revelation 13:1 a beast (Antichrist) rises up out of the sea. In 13:11 another beast (the false prophet) comes up out of the earth. In 9:1 a star (the dragon) is cast down from heaven. These three will come to the earth; therefore, "Woe to the earth and the sea."

The foreknowledge of Satan here, "knowing that he has only a short time," is comparable to the foreknowledge of historians; it comes through inference.

During the tribulation, there is the wrath of God, and there is also the wrath of Satan.

IV. THE DRAGON PERSECUTING THE WOMAN

(REVELATION 12:13-17)

A. Revelation 12:13

"And when the dragon saw that he was cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who brought forth the man-child."

The prophets in the Old Testament have much to say about this. During the great tribulation, Jerusalem will be besieged by the Gentiles (Zech. 14:1-2). The persecution of the woman by the dragon is the fulfillment of this. It is also the execution of Revelation 12:12.

B. Revelation 12:14

"And to the woman there were given the two wings of the great eagle that she might fly into the wilderness into her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time from the face of the serpent."

Since the woman is a sign, the wings must be a sign also. They signify the extraordinary power given to them by God to enable them to run fast. This is similar to the way God brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, as an eagle bears its young on its wings (Exo. 19:4; Deut. 32:11-12). The fleeing here matches that described in Matthew 24:16-20. At that time, the Jews will be protected by God in a special way.

C. Revelation 12:15

"And the serpent cast water as a river out of his mouth after the woman that he might cause her to be carried away by its current."

Since "the serpent" is Satan, the "water" cannot refer just to water, but must refer to something else. From Jeremiah 46:7-8 we know that water represents the advance of a hostile army (see also Jer. 47:2-4; Isa. 59:19). Hence, the dragon's use of water to pursue the woman must refer to his use of the armies of the nations to pursue the children of Israel.

D. Revelation 12:16

"And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river which the dragon cast out of his mouth."

"The earth" is the earth. In Exodus 15:10 God used water to drown the armies of Egypt, and in Numbers 16:30 He opened the earth to swallow up people. God will use His ways to protect the chosen Jews.

E. Revelation 12:17

"And the dragon became angry with the woman and went away to make war with the rest of her seed, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus."

"The rest of her seed" includes the faithful Jews and the remaining Christians. If this were to refer only to the Jews, it could only be said that they keep the commandments of God; it could not be said that they bear the testimony of Jesus. (At this point the Lord has not yet come, and the Jews have not yet believed in Him.) "The saints" in 13:7 refer to both the Jews and the remaining Christians. They are "the rest of her seed."

V. THE BEAST COMING UP OUT OF THE SEA

(REVELATION 12:18—13:10)

A. Revelation 12:18

"And he stood on the sand of the sea."

Revelation 12:18 should be connected to the first part of 13:1. "The sand of the sea." "The sea" denotes the Mediterranean, and the "beast" represents either a nation, the Roman Empire, or a person, Antichrist.

If the beast indicates a nation, then the sea should be interpreted spiritually, but if it indicates a person, then the sea should be just the sea. When interpreted spiritually, the sea always refers to the Gentiles. The earth, interpreted spiritually, indicates the Jews. The types in the Bible concerning the sea and the land always correspond with this. For example, in both Revelation 17:15 and Daniel 7:3, the sea typifies the Gentile world. To come up out of the sea means to come from the Gentile world.

The beast coming up out of the sea denotes the revival of the Roman Empire. "The sea" speaks of the place from which he comes, and "beast" speaks of his nature. Revelation 9:11 and 11:7 refer to his coming up out of the abyss, and 13:1 speaks of his coming up out of the sea. These two places correspond with each other. To come up means to ascend out of (1 Sam. 28:13-14). We know that the beast is resurrected from the dead because the abyss is where the spirits of the dead are kept.

B. Revelation 13:1

"And I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns ten diadems, and on his heads names of blasphemy."

The "ten horns" represent ten minor kings (17:12), and the "seven heads" indicate seven major kings (17:10). Heads are larger than horns; they direct the

horns. Hence, the seven heads and ten horns must refer to seven emperors and ten minor kings.

The "seven heads" are successive kings, whereas the ten horns are simultaneous rulers. (The Roman Empire had a total of thirteen Caesars, but among them, five died violently. In the original text, the words "have fallen" in 17:10 mean "have died in a violent way." The sixth Caesar, Domitian, was also killed. Likewise, the seventh will be killed. God mentions seven Roman emperors, each of whom met with a violent death. The ten horns are only subordinate kings of the Roman Empire.)

Antichrist is the beast and is the seventh head. Revelation 12:3 says, "And on his heads seven diadems." Revelation 13:1 says, "And on his horns ten diadems." In the future, Antichrist will come out of the Roman Empire and will control Europe. According to history, the ten kings in 12:3 have not yet received their diadems and their authority. By the time of 13:1, the ten kings will have received their diadems and their authority. At that time, however, Antichrist will not yet have received his authority. It is in 17:13, when the ten kings crown the beast, that Antichrist receives his authority.

"And on his heads names of blasphemy." This means that the kings claim to be God. According to history, each of the five Caesars demanded that others worship them as a worship to God. To exalt oneself and to put down God is blasphemy (Matt. 9:3; 26:65; John 5:18; 10:33; Mark 3:28; Rev. 16:21).

C. Revelation 13:2

"And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, and his feet like those of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority."

"A leopard." In order to understand this portion, one must read Daniel 7:3-8 and 2:31-33: (1) The lion is the golden head in chapter two, which refers to Babylon; (2) the bear indicates Medo-Persia and is the silver breast; (3) the leopard is the bronze belly, which is Greece; and (4) the dreadful and terrible beast is the iron legs, which is the Roman Empire. Babylon's army was very fierce in battle; Medo-Persia's army was more fierce and deliberate; Greece's army was most ferocious; and Rome's army was the most cruel. This beast in 13:2 possesses each of these four evil characteristics. He is the totality of the power of the Gentiles.

The leopard with its spots indicates sin (Jer. 13:23); the Lord Jesus has no blemish or spot. Revelation speaks of the Lord as a Lamb twenty-eight times, and it speaks of the beast as a wild beast thirty-six times. God will use this beast to judge men (Jer. 5:6; Hosea 13:7; Hab. 1:8). "Leopard" refers to his sinfulness; the bear bites (see 2 Kings 2:24, the tearing up of forty-two children); and the lion devours. (God sealed the mouths of the lions in Daniel 6:22 and delivered Paul out of the lion's mouth in 2 Timothy 4:17.)

"The beast" in Revelation 13:2 indicates a kingdom because it has seven heads and ten horns. We also know this from 17:9-10 and 12. In addition, according to Daniel 7, the lion, the bear, and the leopard, all indicate kingdoms. Therefore, the fourth beast must also indicate a kingdom, which is the Roman Empire.

At the same time, this "beast" also indicates a man. Have fallen in 17:8-11 in the original text means to have died violently. The one who still existed at John's time was the Roman Caesar, Domitian. The beast is personified in 19:20 and 20:10; he must be a man. God cannot cast a kingdom into the lake of fire.

"Slain to death" in 13:3 must refer to a man. The dragon is a counterfeit of God, the beast is a counterfeit of Christ, and the false prophet is a counterfeit of the Holy Spirit. The counterfeit father also gives authority to the counterfeit son. This "power" (v. 2) is for performing supernatural and deceiving wonders. In 2 Thessalonians 2:9, the phrase "wonders of a lie" does not mean that the wonders are themselves lies; it means that the purpose of performing these wonders is to deceive people.

"His throne." This must mean that he has a kingdom; without a kingdom, there cannot be a throne. The dragon revives the Roman Empire and delivers it to the false Christ.

"Power" speaks of influence, and "authority" is the legitimate power to execute laws.

D. Revelation 13:3

"And one of his heads was as it were slain to death, and his death stroke was healed. And the whole earth marveled after the beast."

Revelation 13:14 tells us that the wound was caused by a sword. John wrote this book in A.D. 96. From 17:7-8 we see that "was" means prior to A.D. 96, "is not" means that this one was not on the earth at the time that John wrote this book, and "about to come up out of the abyss and go into perdition" means that this one is going to appear and will go to the lake of fire. Revelation 17:10 says, "Five have fallen, one is." This latter one is John's contemporary emperor, Domitian.

"The other has not yet come," that is, he was not yet on the earth at that time. But he could now be on the earth, though not yet manifested. According to the words of 17:11, there are seven souls and seven bodies but eight lives. "He himself is also the eighth and is out of the seven," one of the previous seven. So we can see that this one must have died and been resurrected. (The seventh dies; then this one becomes one of the previous six, resurrected.) From this we can see that in the future there will be a very powerful one who will rise up to revive the Roman Empire and become the king of the ten kingdoms. Someone will kill him and, probably after three days, he will rise again, causing people all over the earth to think that he is God. Actually, he is not resurrected; instead, the spirit of one of the previous emperors will enter into his body to resurrect it. (This spirit may be that of Nero.) Many people do not believe in the resurrection of Christ, but they will believe in the resurrection of Antichrist.

E. Revelation 13:4

"And they worshipped the dragon because he gave his authority to the beast; and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like the beast? And who can make war with him?"

Antichrist can be such because the dragon is behind him. People will worship the beast because they will see (1) no personality greater than the beast and (2) no ability comparable to his ability.

F. Revelation 13:5

"And there was given to him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and authority was given to him to act for forty-two months."

"Speaking great things" is to exalt oneself. "Speaking...blasphemies" is to profane God. The "authority" in this verse is something allowed by God, and there is a limit to it. "Forty- two" equals six times seven. Seven is a complete number, and six is a number for Satan. Here Satan is doing something that is neither six nor seven (similar to doing something that is neither black nor white). In Numbers, between the exodus from Egypt and the entry into Canaan, there were forty-two stations. The bears tore up forty-two children in 2 Kings 2:24. In the holy Scriptures, forty-two is the number of wandering and judgment. Second Thessalonians 2:9 through 11 tells us the reason that God allows Satan to do whatever he wishes for forty-two months. In the original text, the word "lie" in 2 Thessalonians 2:11 has the definite article. It is the lie of Genesis 3:4, which suggested (1) that things shall not surely be as God has said and (2) that man shall be like God (in wisdom). God gives the beast the authority (John 19:11).

G. Revelation 13:6

"And he opened his mouth for blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, which tabernacle in heaven."

The first thing the beast does is blaspheme against God. The name of God includes the person, nature, and authority of God. "His tabernacle" here is heaven.

H. Revelation 13:7

"And permission was given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them; and authority was given to him over every tribe and people and tongue and nation."

"The saints" are the remnant of the Christians and the Jews who are faithful to God. By this time, the beast's sphere of influence reaches the whole world, but his kingdom is limited to Rome.

I. Revelation 13:8

"And all those dwelling on the earth will worship him, every one whose name is not written in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain from the foundation of the world."

This proves that there will still be some Christians on earth at this time, because there will still be people whose names are written in the book of life of the Lamb. God's selection alone is able to preserve them from temptations.

J. Revelation 13:9

"If anyone has an ear, let him hear."

In chapters two and three, the churches still had a place. Hence, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." Here, however, although there is still the remnant of the Christians, the church no longer has a place, and God again returns to the Old Testament standing!

K. Revelation 13:10

"If anyone is for captivity, into captivity he goes; if anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he is to be killed. Here is the endurance and the faith of the saints."

Christians cannot war, as the Crusaders did, against their enemies; they can only endure (1:9). To lose endurance is actually to lose faith. To fight will result only in being killed or captured.

VI. THE BEAST COMING UP OUT OF THE EARTH (REVELATION 13:11-18)

A. Revelation 13:11

"And I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spoke like a dragon."

In the original text, this beast refers to a wild beast. He comes up out of the earth and must, therefore, be a resurrected one, since Hades is under the earth. At the same time, the "earth" indicates the Jewish kingdom because in the Bible the sea always indicates the Gentiles and the earth indicates the Jews.

This beast is the false prophet and is a man because: (1) he is called the false prophet three times in the Bible (Rev. 16:13; 19:20; 20:10); (2) the Lord says clearly in Matthew 24:24 that there will be false prophets; and (3) there are altogether three evil spirits—Satan, the beast (Antichrist), and "another beast" (the false prophet), all of whom are charged with commissions. Therefore, the beast is certainly not a system. Still, there are others who say (for instance, Mr. Gabelein) that the beast in Revelation 13:1 indicates the king of the north (mentioned in the book of Daniel) and that only in 13:11 does the beast actually refer to Antichrist. However, to say this is illogical because: (1) since Christ came out of the Jews, Antichrist should, of course, come out of the Gentiles; and (2) since chapter twelve concerns Satan, the beast in 13:1 must be Antichrist, and the beast in 13:11 must be the false prophet. This is actually a counterfeit of the Triune God.

"Two horns." This beast is merely a person; he does not represent a kingdom. The horns of the Lamb indicate the Spirit (5:6). Since these horns are like the horns of the Lamb, these two horns must indicate two spirits. "To give breath to the image of the beast" in 13:15 may be translated "to give spirit to the image of the beast." This is one spirit, and 16:13 tells of another spirit.

"He spoke like a dragon." This indicates that his speaking deceives people and is cruel and violent. The first beast sits upon the dragon's throne; this beast speaks the dragon's language.

B. Revelation 13:12

"And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his sight, and he causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose death stroke was healed."

The second beast works by utilizing the first beast's authority. The verb "causes" is in the active voice. That the second beast causes is mentioned a total of eight times in this book. The Holy Spirit is the power of the Godhead; He is the

Executor. In a corresponding way, the false prophet is the same. The "worship" here is a system of coercion. This is different from the worshipping referred to in 13:4, which is voluntary.

There is much evidence to show that the first beast is Nero, raised from the dead, and the second beast is the traitor Judas, raised from the dead.

Concerning the first beast's being the resurrected Caesar Nero, more proofs will be listed later in this book. Let us first consider the second beast. Acts 1:20, Psalm 69:25, and Psalm 109:8 refer to Judas. Acts 1:20 quotes from Psalms 69 and 109. In Psalm 109:6, Satan stands at Judas's right hand; this has not yet been fulfilled. Previously, Satan only entered Judas's heart (John 13:27). It must be at the time of Revelation 13:12 that Satan begins to stand at his right hand. Acts 1:25 says, "To go to his own place." In the whole Bible, only Judas is described as going to his own place. All the others are said either to have been gathered to their people or to have gone to Hades. Judas seems to have a special place, a place reserved for his use alone. The entire New Testament only speaks of "the son of perdition" twice: once in John 17:12, which indicates Judas explicitly, and once in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, which indicates Antichrist. If the first beast, who is called the son of perdition, is Antichrist, who else can the second beast, who is also called the son of perdition, be, except Judas? In John 6:70 the Lord says that Judas is a devil. So then, who else besides Judas can be the one in this triune counterfeit?

C. Revelation 13:13

"And he does great signs, so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth before men."

The greatest miracle is to cause fire to come down from heaven to the earth. Probably because of the fact that the two witnesses can cause fire to come down, this one causes fire to come down and performs even more miracles.

D. Revelation 13:14-15

"And he deceives those who dwell on the earth on account of the signs which he was given power to do before the beast, commanding those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast, who had the stroke of the sword and revived. And power was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast that the image of the beast might even speak and cause whoever would not worship the image of the beast to be killed."

Here is the totality of all future idols. This image seems to somewhat resemble that other man. After the Lord resurrected, His wounds remained, and He

showed them to Thomas (John 20:27). The beast's sword wound also remains, causing people to believe that he is resurrected from the dead.

"Breath" here ("life" in the KJV) can also be translated "spirit." Once the spirit is given, there is, of course, life right away. This beast has three characteristics: (1) he has life; (2) he can speak; and (3) he can cause those who will not worship the image of the beast to be killed. This is different from what is written in Psalm 135:15-17 and Jeremiah 10:4-5. In ancient times the idols had mouths that could not speak, eyes that could not see, ears that could not hear, and were dead. But in the future it will not be the same. How does the image of the beast kill people? Of course, we do not know. It may be that the image of the beast passes death sentences upon people so that they will be killed, or it may be that the image of the beast itself has some kind of mechanism with which to kill people.

E. Revelation 13:16

"And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the freemen and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand or on their forehead."

The "mark" here must be obvious. Since the mark is sealed on the body and the body is physical, the mark must also be physical. When people buy things, it will be easily recognized. Therefore, it must be obvious. Satan seals people. This is to say that their spirit, soul, and body belong to him. These must be those who openly follow him, and this must be something that cannot be hidden. Perhaps women receive the mark on their right hands and men receive it on their foreheads. There will definitely not be any Christians among these people.

F. Revelation 13:17

"And that no one may be able to buy or sell except he who has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of his name."

It is not hard not to sell, but it is really hard not to buy. There are several kinds of marks: one is the name of the beast; one is the number of his name; and others may be various kinds of symbols.

G. Revelation 13:18

"Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred sixty-six."

This beast is not the beast that comes up out of the earth but the beast that comes up out of the sea. Many people only search into the number 666, but they

forget to pay attention to the context of the whole verse. According to this verse, there are three things which must agree:

- (1) The number of a man (the number of a place cannot be used).
- (2) The number of the beast. In 13:1 the beast has seven heads, and 17:9 and 10 say that these seven heads are the seven mountains and also the seven kings. (History clearly tells us that Rome is a city of seven mountains.) Then does this beast refer to the Roman Empire or to one of the Roman emperors? Since 13:18 says that the number of the beast is the number of a man, this beast must not refer to the Roman Empire but rather to one of the Roman emperors!
- (3) It must be the number of a person's name, a person who is a Roman emperor. The sum of these numbers is 666. From these three facts we can find out who the beast is.

The letters of the Greek and Hebrew alphabets all represent numbers. Except for Caesar Nero, there is no other man in history who has this number. Nero's number is 306, to which 360 must be added to make it correct. The title of Caesar exactly represents the number 360. When the Bible mentions the names of the Roman emperors, the title Caesar is always added, as in Luke 2:1 and 3:1, which mention Caesar Augustus and Tiberius Caesar. History tells us that Nero always called himself Caesar.

According to the Hebrew alphabet, the sum of the numbers of the name Caesar Nero is exactly 666. Some people think that the former Nero committed suicide and that the future false Christ will be cast into the lake of fire. So how can we say that this is Nero? According to Revelation 17:11, we know that this false Christ is the resuscitated Nero. Hence, there is no conflict at all.

The following shows the sums of these numbers:

Nero			Caesar		
Greek		Hebrew	Greek		Hebrew
Νε	נ	50	Και	ק	100
ρ	ר	200	σα	ס	60
ω	ו	6	ρ	ר	200
ν	נ	50			
		306	+		360
			=		666

From this we see that the first beast, which comes up out of the sea, is Antichrist, the resuscitated Caesar Nero; while the beast that comes up out of the earth is the false prophet, the resurrected Judas, the betrayer of Jesus.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE FIRSTFRUITS, THE HARVEST, AND THE GATHERING OF THE GRAPES

(Revelation 14:1-20)

I. THE FIRSTFRUITS

(REVELATION 14:1-5)

A. Revelation 14:1

"And I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him a hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads."

Is Mount Zion here the heavenly one or the earthly one? It is not the earthly one for the following reasons:

- (1) By then, the earthly Zion will still be in the hands of the Gentiles (11:2).
 - (2) Revelation 14:3 clearly says that these ones have been purchased from the earth. By this we can realize that they are not standing on the earthly Mount Zion.
 - (3) We know from the last two sentences of 14:4 and from Exodus 23:19 that the firstfruits are not left in the field. As soon as they ripen, they are put into God's house. (Exodus 34:26 says the same thing.) Since the hundred and forty-four thousand are the firstfruits, they should not be left in the field, which signifies the world (Matt. 13:38), but should be put on the heavenly Mount Zion, which is the New Jerusalem.
 - (4) Revelation 14:3 says that they stand "before the throne and before the four living creatures and the [twenty-four] elders." We know that the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders are all in heaven.
 - (5) The ones described in 14:1-5 are the firstfruits. This is in accord with the matter of the harvest in verses 14-16. If the reaping of the harvest takes place in heaven, even more should not the firstfruits be in heaven?
 - (6) It is unreasonable to assume that this occurs on the earth at that time, because the Lord Jesus does not come to the earth until chapter nineteen.
- Who are these hundred and forty-four thousand? Are they the same group of people as the hundred and forty-four thousand in 7:4? The hundred and forty-

four thousand in 7:4 and the hundred and forty-four thousand mentioned here are two different groups of people, for:

(1) The group mentioned in 7:4 are selected from the Israelites; the group in 14:1 are purchased from the earth (v. 3) and purchased from among men (v. 4).

(2) The seal which the group in 7:4 receives is different from the seal which this group receives. In the former case, it is "the seal of the living God" (7:2). This is a term used in the Old Testament. In this case, the seal is the name of the Lamb and the name of the Father. This name has to do with the church; hence, this group of people must be related to the church.

(3) The ones in 7:4 are "the slaves of our God" (v. 3), while the ones in 14:1 are the children of God (from the word "Father" in the last part of verse 1).

(4) In Revelation, every time that the Lord calls God the Father, it is in relation to the church (1:6; 2:27; 3:5, 21), never to the Israelites.

(5) The ones in 14:1 are related to the Lamb. (They stand with the Lamb, have the Lamb's name, and belong to the Lamb.) But in chapter seven, the Lord is only an angel, returning to the position of a messenger in the Old Testament.

(6) The song sung by the ones in 14:1 is "a new song" (v. 3), while the ones in 7:4 can sing only the old song.

(7) The ones in 14:1 are virgins (v. 4), but to be such among the Israelites was a matter of curse. (Exodus 23:26; Deuteronomy 7:14; 1 Samuel 2:5; and Psalm 113:9 all show that childbearing is a blessing and that not to bear children is a curse. Judges 11:38-39 shows that to be a virgin is a thing to be mourned.)

(8) The articles used for the hundred and forty-four thousand in Revelation 7:4 and the hundred and forty-four thousand in 14:1 are indefinite articles. This shows that these two groups of a hundred and forty-four thousand are different people.

The hundred and forty-four thousand in 14:1 are a special group of people in the church; they are not the whole church.

(1) Since the number one hundred and forty-four thousand in 7:4 should be interpreted literally, the number in 14:1 should also be interpreted literally.

(2) If the number one hundred and forty-four thousand in 14:1 were not to be interpreted literally, there would be no way in which to interpret all the other numbers in this book.

(3) The hundred and forty-four thousand are the firstfruits (v. 4). One cannot say that the whole church is the firstfruits.

(4) There is not the fact of the whole church being virgins.

(5) These are raptured to Mount Zion before the great tribulation (before the speaking of the three angels in verses 6-11).

(6) Revelation 14:5 points out that they are different in their nature. It is a fact that not every regenerated Christian has this nature. These are the overcomers, the called-out ones, in the church of God. (Both John and Peter are included in this group.) From 14:1 we see that this group of people is related to the Lamb.

B. Revelation 14:2

"And I heard a voice out of heaven like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder; and the voice which I heard was like the sound of harp-singers playing on their harps."

This "voice out of heaven" is the voice of the hundred and forty-four thousand. It is as melodious as "the sound of harp-singers," as majestic as "the sound of loud thunder," and as tumultuous as "the sound of many waters."

C. Revelation 14:3

"And they sing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders; and no one could learn the song except the hundred and forty-four thousand, who have been purchased from the earth."

Only these can sing the new song. All Christians are purchased, but these are the first to be purchased back to home. All Christians are redeemed, but these are the first to be redeemed back to home.

D. Revelation 14:4

"These are they who have not been defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are they who follow the Lamb wherever He may go. These were purchased from among men as firstfruits to God and to the Lamb."

This verse says, "These are they" two times. This explains who these hundred and forty-four thousand are:

(1) "These are they who have not been defiled with women, for they are virgins." We cannot say that the women here are idols, because the Bible never says this. Nor can we say that the women here are evil doctrines. The Bible often translates "women" into "wives." For example, "wives" in Acts 21:5 (KJV) is the same word in Greek as "women" in Revelation 14:4. The Bible not only says that these are they who have not been defiled with women, but also that they are virgins. Hence, we see that this passage is not only about chastity, but even more, it is about virginity. This corresponds with Matthew 19:10-12. Consider Revelation 14:1 again. God has only given this gift to one hundred and forty-four

thousand people (cf. Luke 20:35; 1 Cor. 7:7); not every Christian has this gift. In the future when Antichrist appears, one of the dangers will be the forbidding of marriage (1 Tim. 4:1-3). Daniel said that the coming Antichrist will not marry. "And he will not regard the gods of his fathers or the desire of women" (11:37). It is impossible that only one hundred and forty-four thousand will not worship Antichrist; otherwise, who are they that overcome by not following the evil teachings? Furthermore, 14:4 is an explanation and must, therefore, be explicit, requiring no further interpretation. Moreover, the words of explanation are all in the present tense.

(2) "These are they who follow the Lamb wherever He may go." This verse does not refer to things in the past. It refers to the present and to the future. These are they who are closest to the Lord; they are like the Lord's bodyguards.

(3) "These were purchased from among men as firstfruits to God and to the Lamb." These are men, but they are different from ordinary men, for they have been purchased from among men. In Leviticus there are three different matters: the firstfruits (23:17), the harvest, and the gleanings (23:22). The harvest comes when there is the maturity. After the reaping, the harvest does not remain in the field but is collected into the barn. The rapture is not determined by God but by man; when the harvest is ripe, it is reaped. The firstfruits are the Christians who mature first; they are raptured first.

E. Revelation 14:5

"And in their mouth no lie was found; they are without blemish."

The words of their mouths expose what is in their hearts. These two expressions were originally used to describe the Lord; now they are used to describe the hundred and forty-four thousand.

This does not mean that there are no females within the hundred and forty-four thousand. The Bible only records the males. Although there were females among those who left Egypt and among those who ate manna in the wilderness, God did not consider the female as a unit. Adam is a man, a human being, while Eve is just a female. Furthermore, although Dinah was the daughter of Jacob (Gen. 30:21), Israel still had only twelve tribes.

This does not mean that the people in Revelation 14:1-5 are the only ones in the first group of raptured ones. It merely means that among the first group of raptured ones, there are those who are like this.

II. THE FIRST ANGEL

(REVELATION 14:6-7)

A. Revelation 14:6

"And I saw another angel flying in mid-heaven, having an eternal gospel to announce to those dwelling on the earth, even to every nation and tribe and tongue and people."

The "another angel" here is different from the "another Angel" in 7:2. The latter refers to the Lord.

This "eternal gospel" is different from the gospel of grace. The eternal gospel, according to the text which follows, teaches people to worship only the Creator. It does not preach God's redemption; it preaches only God's creation. It does not cause men to worship the Lamb, but to worship God. It does not preach God's grace, but God's judgment. It does not cause men to thank and praise God, but to give glory to God.

"Those dwelling on the earth, even to..." In the original language, there is no "even to." In the Bible, "those dwelling on the earth" are different from "every nation and tribe and tongue and people." "Those dwelling on the earth" are that group among those in "every nation and tribe and tongue and people" that loves the world the most and is the most connected to the earth. Although the future kingdom of Antichrist will only be as big as the Roman Empire, its influence will reach every nation and tribe and tongue and people. In this book, "those dwelling on the earth" may be those who actually live in the Roman Empire. The coming great tribulation will have Rome as its center.

At this time, the gospel is no longer one of salvation through believing in Jesus; it is to teach men to worship God and not to worship the image of the beast. How did the sheep in Matthew 25:34-40 know to treat the Lord's little brothers well? They knew it through the powerful proclamation of the angels.

B. Revelation 14:7

"Saying with a loud voice, Fear God and give Him glory because the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who has made heaven and earth and the sea and the springs of waters."

To "fear God" is covered clearly in the Old Testament. If someone treated others well in his conduct, he was a person who feared God. Hence, when the time of judgment comes, the angels will remind men to fear God and give glory to Him.

In the fourth trumpet heaven suffers. In the first trumpet the earth suffers, in the second trumpet the sea suffers, and in the third trumpet the springs suffer.

III. THE SECOND ANGEL

(REVELATION 14:8)

"And another angel, a second one, followed, saying, Fallen, fallen is Babylon the Great, who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the fury of her fornication!"

Does this Babylon refer to the physical Babylon or to Rome? The Babylon in Revelation 17 is mysterious; it typifies the Roman Church and is religious. The Babylon in chapter eighteen refers to the material Babylon. The Babylon in 14:8 corresponds with the word in 17:2; hence, it refers to the Roman Church. The second angel announces to men the fall of Babylon, that is, the failure of the Roman Church. Hence, we see that the great harvest which follows must come after the failure of the Roman Church.

"The wine of the fury of her fornication!" refers to the persecutions carried out by the Roman Church. The Roman Church gives to the unfaithful ones the wine of fornication and to the faithful ones the wine of fury. Wine signifies derision. In the future, the Roman Church will revive, but ultimately, it will utterly fail.

IV. THE THIRD ANGEL

(REVELATION 14:9-12)

A. Revelation 14:9-10

"And another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also shall drink of the wine of the fury of God, which is mixed undiluted in the cup of His wrath; and he shall be tormented in fire and brimstone before the holy angels and before the Lamb."

In verse 10 the angel informs men that all those who conduct themselves according to verse 9 will suffer God's punishments. Wine indicates something temporary.

There are two kinds of punishment here: (1) the wine of God's fury, which is the fury mentioned in chapter fifteen, and is temporary; and (2) the suffering before the Lamb, which speaks of their hopelessness in regard to receiving salvation. Moreover, to suffer before the holy angels means that the angels will put them in hell.

B. Revelation 14:11

"And the smoke of their tormenting goes up forever and ever; and they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name."

This shows us that once a person goes to hell, there will no longer be any chance for repentance. Moreover, one does not perish immediately when he goes into hell. The saints will not need to sleep in the new heaven and the new earth, while those in hell will not be able to sleep forever.

C. Revelation 14:12

"Here is the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus."

This verse corresponds with 13:10. "The commandments of God" refer particularly to the first and the second commandments: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me," and "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image." This is the time for the believers to exercise their endurance.

V. BLESSED ARE THE DEAD WHO DIE IN THE LORD (REVELATION 14:13)

"And I heard a voice out of heaven, saying, Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. Yes, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow with them."

"From now on" refers to the time after the worship of the beast begins. This shows that one can escape the persecution of the beast by death. Those "who die in the Lord" must be the Christians. Here it does not say the seven Spirits of God, but the Spirit. The Spirit is directly related to the church, while the seven Spirits are directly related to His judgment. Our works cannot go before us to God. However, Christ's work goes before us to God and secures for us God's acceptance. Our works follow us to God and bring to us God's reward.

VI. THE REAPING OF THE HARVEST (REVELATION 14:14-16)

A. Revelation 14:14

"And I saw, and behold, there was a white cloud, and on the cloud One like the Son of Man sitting, having a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand."

"A white cloud" here agrees with 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17. "One like the Son of Man" is a word related to the church (Rev. 1:13). "Having a golden crown" signifies having obtained glory. The sickle has to be sharp so that the reaping

can be done quickly. In Matthew 13:37, the Lord is the Sower; at His second coming, He will be the Reaper.

B. Revelation 14:15-16

"And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, Send forth Your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come because the harvest of the earth is ripe. And He who sat on the cloud thrust His sickle upon the earth, and the earth was reaped."

In verse 15 we have the angel sent from God speaking to the Lord. Here the Lord takes the position of a servant. In Matthew 9:38 the Lord says that God is the Lord of the harvest. Here the Lord is a sent One.

"Harvest." Mr. Darby does not recognize that Christians can pass through these judgments. Hence, he thinks that the harvest here refers to something negative. However, nowhere in the entire Bible is harvest referred to in a negative way. The wheat is not like the fig, which can remain on earth for a long time. Once it has ripened, it must be harvested. The first time that the harvest is mentioned in the Bible is in Genesis 8:22. There it clearly indicates that the harvest is a blessing from God. In John 4:35 the Lord refers to the harvest in a positive way. Matthew 3:12 says that the wheat should be gathered into the barn. In Exodus the firstfruits of the harvest should be gathered into the house of God (23:19; 34:26). To be gathered into the house of God typifies the initially-raptured Christians being taken to the throne of God, while to be gathered into the barn typifies the majority of the believers being raptured to the air. The barn is between the field and the house. The field refers to the world (Matt. 13:38), while the house refers to the heavens. Hence, the Christians who are gathered into the barn are those who are raptured to the air, which is between the heavens and the world.

The harvest in Matthew 13:37-43 is a reaping of what the Lord has sown. What the Lord has sown is something good; hence, what is reaped must also be good. In Mark 4:26-29, God is reaping because the time of harvest has come. Romans 11:16 says that if the firstfruits are a certain way, the whole lump is also. Since the firstfruits in Revelation 14:1-5 are good, the harvest in verses 14 through 16 must be good also. Since verses 1 through 5 do not refer to the judgment of the sinners, verses 14 through 16 should not refer to something negative; they cannot refer to God's judgment.

The word "ripe" can be translated "dried up." The immature grain will not be harvested. Likewise, the immature Christians will not be raptured. The firstfruits

are composed of those who ripen first, those who forsake the world first. It is only after the worldly Christians have been dried up of the world that they will no longer love the world.

Matthew 13:39 says that the angels are sent to reap the harvest. The sickle in Revelation 14:14 is in the Son of Man's hand; it is a mysterious sickle. When the Lord comes to receive us, we will be raptured. Then, we will "stand before the Son of Man" (Luke 21:36).

VII. THE GATHERING OF THE GRAPES

(REVELATION 14:17-20)

"And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the altar, he who has authority over fire, and he cried with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, Send forth your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripened. And the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth and cast it into the great winepress of the fury of God. And the winepress was trodden outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress up to the bridles of the horses for a thousand six hundred stadia."

Revelation 14:14-16 speaks of the harvest of the wheat. In the entire Bible, wheat refers to the Christians, and the fig, to the Jews. Sometimes grapes refer to the evil ones among the Gentiles. This is because:

(1) The Lord does not say that He is the grape. He only says that He is the true vine (John 15:1). The Lord Jesus is the vine, while the Christians are the branches. With Christ in the branches, there are the heavenly grapes. The earthly grapes here must refer to Antichrist and those who follow him. These stand in contrast to the heavenly grapes.

(2) The gathering of the grapes happens after the harvest. By that time, the good ones will have already been raptured. Hence, whatever is left must be the bad ones.

(3) According to Revelation 14:18, the grapes here are the evil ones who oppose Christ.

(4) The Old Testament also refers to grapes in a negative sense (Deut. 32:32).

(5) In verses 19 to 20 of Revelation 14, blood is pressed out. This shows that the pressing of these grapes is not a positive thing.

(6) The treading of the winepress in Joel 3:13 and Isaiah 63:1-6 is a sign of the wrath of God and the judgment of God.

Revelation 14:14-16 speaks of the end result of the wheat, while verses 17 through 20 speak of the end result of the tares. After the Christians are raptured, God will send the angels to gather the tares with a sickle, and this sickle is sharp. In verse 15, when the wheat is ripened, its water will be dried up, but when the grapes are ripened, their juice will be full. The wheat and the grapes are completely opposite to one another. Wheat can only ripen when it dies to the earth, while grapes become ripe by absorbing the water of the earth. The more worldly the grapes become and the more they receive from the world, the more they are filled up with sins, and the time for God's judgment will come.

Verse 16 says, "He...thrust His sickle upon the earth." This is only the reaping. But verse 19 says, "The angel thrust his sickle into the earth"; this seems to be a digging out of even the roots. There is a difference between the harvest of the wheat and the gathering of the grapes. One is good, and the other is bad.

"The winepress" is a kind of stone press. To put the grapes in the winepress is to squeeze out every drop of water, causing these ones to suffer loss and bear pain.

This passage of verses 17 through 20 covers the period that ends with the Lord Jesus' coming to the earth. This passage corresponds with 19:15. A proof of this is that "outside the city" in 14:20 refers to outside of Jerusalem (chapters fifteen and sixteen being a supplement to the seventh trumpet). Furthermore, "the bridles of the horses" in 14:20 corresponds with 19:14 because when the Lord descends with His army, they will be riding on horses.

"A thousand six hundred stadia" (14:20). Revelation 16:16 says that this battle will be at Armageddon. According to Isaiah 63:1, it will start from Bozrah. One end is Armageddon, while the other end is Bozrah. In between these two places there are exactly a thousand six hundred stadia. (The battle of Armageddon will take place when Antichrist is persecuting the Jews, and the Jews seek refuge in the Mount of Olives. When their escape routes are cut off, the Lord will set His feet upon the Mount of Olives, and the mountain will split into two halves—Zech. 14:4-5, making a way for the Jews to escape. The Lord will then fight with Antichrist and destroy him—Rev. 19:17-21.)

God's kingdom will not come through the preaching of the gospel but through bloodshed. The church can only wait for the Lord's return; He alone will bring in the kingdom.

Isaiah 34:1-8 speaks of Bozrah and of the extent of the bloodshed.

After these things, the kingdom will come. With the Israelites, after the harvest and the gathering of the grapes, there was the feast of tabernacles. The feast of tabernacles was a type of the millennium. (Revelation 15—16 does not continue the thought in 14:17-20, because 14:17-20 corresponds with 19:15.)

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE OUTPOURING OF THE SEVEN BOWLS

(Revelation 15:1—16:21)

I. THE LAST SEVEN PLAGUES

(REVELATION 15:1)

"And I saw another sign in heaven, great and wonderful, seven angels having seven plagues, the last plagues; for in them the fury of God was finished."

In 12:1 there was "a great sign." Here in 15:1 there is a "great and wonderful" sign.

II. PRAISE

(REVELATION 15:2-4)

A. Revelation 15:2

"And I saw as it were a glassy sea mingled with fire and those who come away victorious from the beast and from his image and from the number of his name standing on the glassy sea, having harps of God."

A "glassy sea" was mentioned before in 4:6; however, neither the people nor the fire were mentioned there. In 4:6 the glassy sea is before the throne; that is, it is in the heavens. Hence, "standing on the glassy sea" in 15:2 indicates that these people have been raptured to the throne in heaven. This portion of the Bible tells us that these people have passed through the great tribulation and have encountered the beast, the image of the beast, and the number of the beast. Revelation 14:4-16 shows us a perspective of the rapture by God as seen from the earth. Revelation 15:2 shows us the perspective as seen from heaven.

B. Revelation 15:3

"And they sing the song of Moses, the slave of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and wonderful are Your works, Lord God the Almighty! Righteous and true are Your ways, O King of the nations!"

Why does it not say, "They sing the song of the Lamb," and then, "the song of Moses"? Why do they sing "the song of Moses...and the song of the Lamb"? If they had worshipped the image of the beast, they would have broken the law of Moses and violated the commandment of God. But they did not do this;

therefore, they sing the song of Moses. The one who gave the commandment not to worship idols was Moses; hence, they sing the song of Moses. The one who empowered them so that they would not worship the idols was the Lamb (13:8); hence, they sing the song of the Lamb. What they sing is clearly recorded in Revelation 15:3-4. This is not the song sung by Moses in Exodus 15. (Since 15:3 clearly mentions the name of Moses, this seems to indicate that Moses is not one of the witnesses in 11:3.)

The first phrase of this song is concerning God's works. The second is concerning God's ways. "Works" are only outward, but "ways" are inward principles. "Lord God" is the name used for God when He has a relationship with man. "Righteous" is related to His principles. "True" is related to His promises.

C. Revelation 15:4

"Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy; for all the nations will come and worship before You, for Your righteous judgments have been manifested."

"Holy" pertains to God's nature. "Righteous judgments" are the principles of God's work.

III. THE TEMPLE OF THE TABERNACLE (REVELATION 15:5-8)

A. Revelation 15:5

"And after these things I saw, and the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened."

"The temple of the tabernacle," though in the heavens, is still not eternal because it is the temple of the tabernacle. Moses built the tabernacle according to the heavenly pattern (Heb. 8:5), but when the temple was built, the tabernacle was done away with. Similarly, in eternity, when the Lamb becomes the temple, this temple of the tabernacle in the heavens will also be annulled. Revelation 15:5—16:18 and 16:21 are the amplification of 11:18.

B. Revelation 15:6

"And the seven angels who had the seven plagues came out of the temple, clothed in clean bright linen and girded around the breasts with golden girdles."

These seven angels are priestly angels because their clothing is that of the priests. They are probably serving God in the heavenly temple. In offering of the Old Testament sacrifices, the drink offering was poured out first, then the burnt

offerings were offered. What the angels are doing here is similar to what was done in the Old Testament.

C. Revelation 15:7-8

"And one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the fury of God, who lives forever and ever. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power, and no one could enter into the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished."

This means that from this time onward no one can enter into the temple of God to intercede. There is no longer any possibility of appeasing the fury of God (Lam. 3:44).

IV. THE SEVEN BOWLS

(REVELATION 16:1-21)

"And I heard a loud voice out of the temple, saying to the seven angels, Go and pour out the seven bowls of the fury of God into the earth."

The first through sixth bowls are similar to the plagues of the first through sixth trumpets, except there is a difference in degree. The first through sixth bowls are a repetition of the plagues of the first through sixth trumpets. However, the plagues of the bowls are more severe than those of the trumpets. The seventh trumpet includes the seven bowls; hence, the seventh trumpet repeats all the plagues of the first through sixth trumpets in greater severity. This is why the plagues of the seventh trumpet are the most serious of all.

A. The First Bowl

(Revelation 16:2)

"And the first went and poured out his bowl into the earth; and there came to be an evil and malignant sore upon the men who have the mark of the beast and worship his image."

Those who suffer this plague are only those with the mark of the beast and who worship his image. This sore is similar to those which Lazarus had (Luke 16:20-21), from which there was no recovery. One of the plagues in Exodus was also a kind of sore (9:8-10). At one point, Job also had sores (Job 2:7), as well as Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:7) and the Philistines (1 Sam. 5:6, 9, 12). Sores are sometimes used by God as a kind of judgment (Deut. 28:27). These men in Revelation 16:2 had the mark of the beast; therefore, God gave them a mark also, a sore. This sore is "evil" because it is continually increasing. It is not that the trumpets are over and then the bowls begin. In the first trumpet, only the

green grass and trees on earth are burned. In the first bowl, the people on earth are hurt directly.

B. The Second Bowl

(Revelation 16:3)

"And the second poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became blood like that of a dead man; and every living soul that was in the sea died."

The plague in the second bowl is more serious than that in the second trumpet; its scope is greater. The sea becomes blood like that of a dead man (dark blue and green in color). This plague will cause navigation to be greatly hindered. Furthermore, the fishing industry will be totally stopped (Psa. 105:29; Isa. 50:2).

C. The Third Bowl

(Revelation 16:4-7)

1. Revelation 16:4

"And the third poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of waters; and they became blood."

In the third trumpet, only the third part of the waters became bitter and distasteful for drinking. Now everything becomes blood, which is completely undrinkable. God gives them blood to drink because they have persecuted too many Christians and prophets of God.

2. Revelation 16:5

"And I heard the angel who had power over the waters saying, You are righteous, who is and who was, the Holy One, because You have judged these things."

There is an angel that specifically rules the waters. In 1:8 and 4:8 we have "He who is and who was and who is coming, the Almighty." In 11:17 and 16:5, the expression "who is coming" is absent. Therefore, the Lord's coming again must be after chapter four and before 11:17.

3. Revelation 16:6-7

"For they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink; they are worthy of it. And I heard the altar saying, Yes, Lord God the Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments." Revelation 16:6 refers to the prophets, which indicates that there is a second Pentecost, because prophets are one type of gift.

"True" is related to promises. "Righteous" is related to principles.

D. The Fourth Bowl

(Revelation 16:8-9)

"And the fourth poured out his bowl upon the sun; and it was given to it to burn men with fire. And men were burned with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God, who has the authority over these plagues, and they did not repent so as to give Him glory."

In the fourth trumpet the heavens became only darkened, but this time the heat of the sun burns man (Luke 21:25). According to scientists' calculations, the heat of the sun should diminish continually, but here God reverses it (Psa. 121:6). The burning in Isaiah 24:6 probably refers to the heat of the sun scorching man (cf. Isa. 42:25; Deut. 32:24; Mal. 4:1). Men think of the pain they are suffering, but do not consider the reason for their suffering. They do not pay attention to the eternal gospel preached in Revelation 14:6-7 by the first angel.

E. The Fifth Bowl

(Revelation 16:10-11)

"And the fifth poured out his bowl upon the throne of the beast; and his kingdom became darkened; and they gnawed their tongues for pain and blasphemed the God of heaven for their pains and for their sores; and they did not repent of their works."

These two verses are related to the angels that came out of the abyss in the fifth trumpet. The pain in verse 10 is due to the sores of the first bowl and the burning of the sun of the fourth bowl. They have the plagues of each of the previous bowls, plus the present darkness (Psa. 64:3-8).

F. The Sixth Bowl

(Revelation 16:12-16)

Revelation 16:12 refers specifically to the sixth bowl, while verses 13 to 16 are inserted visions.

1. Revelation 16:12

"And the sixth poured out his bowl upon the great river Euphrates; and its water was dried up that the way of the kings from the rising of the sun might be prepared."

"The great river Euphrates." The boundaries that God promised to the children of Israel were from Egypt to the Euphrates (Gen. 15:18). In addition, history tells us that when the Roman Empire was at its peak, it also had the Euphrates as its boundary. In the future there will be a great confederation of two parties. One party will be the Western world with the Mediterranean Sea as its center and the ancient Roman Empire as its boundary (including England, France, the northern part of Africa, Spain, Portugal, Romania, Czechoslovakia, Greece, and all the

way to the lands of India and Persia). The other party will be the Eastern world with Russia as its center (including the Persians, the Ethiopians, the Armenians, etc., and perhaps China, Japan, Afghanistan, etc.).

In the future, the religious influence will spread from Rome to reach the whole earth; however, the political influence will not be the same. Italy's Fascist Black Party and Russia's Communist Red Party will be the two most influential parties in the world.

The armies from the east mentioned in Ezekiel 38:1-6 will cross the river to fight with the armies from the west. They will have already come to attack once during the sixth trumpet. The fighting in the seventh trumpet will be even more fierce.

"Armageddon." Megiddo is the name of a place. Ar means mountain. Armageddon is the mountain of Megiddo. This place is called Jezreel in the Old Testament.

Originally, the Euphrates River was quite broad with rapid currents and was not easy to cross over. However, when the sixth bowl is poured out, the water in the river will be dried up, and it will become easy to cross over.

2. Revelation 16:13-14

"And I saw, out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits as frogs; for they are spirits of demons doing signs, which go forth to the kings of the whole inhabited earth to gather them to the war of the great day of God the Almighty."

"Unclean spirits" are in opposition to the Holy Spirit. "Frogs" denote something nonsensical. The goal of these kings is just to go to war for the sake of war. They go to war because of the devil's instigation. Eventually, the Lord will come down to destroy them.

3. Revelation 16:15

"(Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he who watches and keeps his garments that he may not walk naked and they see his shame.)"

There is still something to say to the Christians. The garment here is not the garment on the physical body. "I come as a thief" is a word from the Lord to the church. The word here may be to those who are about to be reaped in Revelation 14:14-16. It may also be for those Christians who are left behind. The reaping of the grapes in 14:17-20 is the war of Armageddon in 16:16. Revelation 16:15 is before the war of Armageddon, pointing to the Christians at the time of harvest,

but it can also be considered as being spoken after 14:14-16 and before 16:16, in which case it refers to those Christians who are left behind.

G. The Seventh Bowl

(Revelation 16:17-21)

1. Revelation 16:17

"And the seventh poured out his bowl upon the air; and a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying, It is done."

"It is done" can also be translated "It is sufficient." "The air" is the sphere in which Satan exercises his authority. It may be that up until this point Satan still has some authority in the air. Therefore, God still needs to give him one last punishment.

2. Revelation 16:18

"And there were lightnings and voices and thunders; and there was a great earthquake, such as had not been since man appeared on the earth, such an earthquake, so great."

Concerning the great earthquake see Ezekiel 38:20.

3. Revelation 16:19

"And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And Babylon the Great was remembered before God to give her the cup of the wine of the fury of His wrath."

"The great city" refers to the city of Jerusalem. "Nations" means Gentiles in the original language. "Babylon" here refers to the material Babylon. (In 14:8 "Babylon" refers to the Babylon which was fallen before the Battle of Armageddon. It corresponds to the Babylon in chapter seventeen. The one in chapter sixteen refers to the material Babylon, which is after the Battle of Armageddon. This corresponds to the last half of chapter eighteen.) Sketches of these two Babylons are recorded in 14:8 and 16:19; the details are given in chapters seventeen and eighteen.

4. Revelation 16:20

"And every island fled, and the mountains were not found."

This time the earthquake is severe. However, according to the Psalms, the sea, the islands, and the mountains will all be here in the millennium (Psa. 72:3, 10; 97:1).

5. Revelation 16:21

"And great hail, every stone about the weight of a talent, came down out of heaven upon men; and men blasphemed God for the plague of the hail, because the plague of it is exceedingly great."

One Greek talent equals fifty-six English pounds. One Jewish talent equals one hundred fourteen English pounds. In addition to the hail striking down from above, the earth is shaken out of place.

CHAPTER NINE

BABYLON AND ITS DESTRUCTION

(Revelation 17:1—20:6)

Revelation 17:1—19:4 should be considered as one chapter rather than three separate chapters. Revelation 18:1-3 is the continuation and development of earlier verses since 18:3 speaks of three matters: (1) "All the nations have drunk of the wine of the fury of her fornication," which is mentioned only in chapter seventeen (17:2); (2) "And the merchants of the earth have become rich by the power of her luxury," which is mentioned only in chapter eighteen (18:11-15); and (3) "And the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her," which is mentioned in both chapters seventeen and eighteen (17:2; 18:9).

Revelation 16:19 speaks of the great city, Babylon, while 14:8 speaks of Babylon the Great. If these were the only references to Babylon, without chapters seventeen and eighteen, there would be no way to know clearly what they mean. In chapters seventeen and eighteen, there are two Babylons: one is Babylon the Great, and the other is the great city, Babylon.

The word Babylon is from the word Babel. According to Genesis 10—11, Babel was a city in Shinar built by Nimrod, a man who relied on his own strength to protect himself. Genesis 11:1-4 records the beginning of the tower of Babel. Because God confounded their language and scattered the people abroad, the name of the city was called Babel (v. 9). Babel, or Babylon, means confusion.

Babel was also a place of idol worship which is contrary to God. This city became greater and greater and reached its climax during the time of Nebuchadnezzar. At that time, because the Israelites rebelled against God, God delivered them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon. This was at the time of Daniel. One day Nebuchadnezzar had a dream, and through Daniel's interpretation, he was helped to understand the dream. In this dream the golden head of the great image signifies Babylon at its height. Later, Media and Persia (the silver arms) destroyed Babylon, and the city became desolate. Following

this, Greece (the bronze abdomen) destroyed the empires of Media and Persia. Then the Roman Empire (the iron legs) destroyed the empire of Greece. Babylon was the first kingdom, and the Roman Empire, the last. All four of these kingdoms persecuted the Jews. All of the first three nations have passed, but the influence of the Roman Empire remains to this day, although the ten toes have not yet appeared. Today the Jews are still under the rule of the Roman Empire (because England is still part of the Roman Empire). Babylon worshipped idols intensely and hated the Jews to the uttermost. The Roman Empire was the same.

Rome was not only a political city but also a center of religion. At the beginning of the church age, Rome had the greatest number of Christians, yet Rome hated the Christians the most. In the fourth century, Constantine embraced Christianity, encouraging and rewarding his people to join it. At that time he accepted Christianity as the state religion. It was also at that time that the center of politics shifted from Rome to Constantinople. Rome remained under the reign of Constantinople until A.D. 700. Eventually, at a conference held by Leo III in Constantinople (A.D. 725), it was decided that worshipping idols was heretical and, therefore, illegal. Rome opposed this decision and separated herself from Constantinople. Since that time, the church was divided into the eastern Roman religion (the Greek Orthodox Church) and the western Roman religion (today's Roman Catholic Church). The Eastern Church gradually became weaker, while the Roman Catholic Church grew more prosperous. Later, because the Roman Catholic Church was in power, many faithful Christians who loved the Lord were killed.

Revelation 17 and 18 indicate that the Roman Church will prosper beyond anything that has ever been recorded, and her power will be exceedingly great. When Antichrist comes, he will set up his own image for the people to worship. Therefore, Antichrist and the ten kings with him will dispose of the Roman Church. However, even after the religious Rome is terminated, the political Roman Empire will still exist, having the Mediterranean Sea as its center. After the three and a half years of the great tribulation, God will destroy the political Rome.

Why is it that chapters seventeen and eighteen do not refer to Rome directly, but rather mention Babylon? It is because John was living under the reign of the Roman Empire. If he had referred to Rome directly, this book could not have been published. This does not mean that John was afraid to write in an open

way, but that the Holy Spirit intended to keep it hidden. However, the Holy Spirit, so that people might not mistakenly consider Babylon as the historical Babylon, says in Revelation 17:5, "MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT." First, the word "mystery" indicates that this must be interpreted spiritually rather than literally. For example, if in Revelation 11:8, Jerusalem had been clearly spelled out, this book would have been opposed by the Jews. Therefore, it was written with spiritual implications. Second, John did not say Babylon but "Babylon the Great," indicating that this Babylon must be much greater than the physical, historical Babylon. When we read these chapters in this way, we realize that Babylon here is not the ancient Babylon, but Rome.

How do we know that the Babylon mentioned here is Rome? The reasons are as follows:

- (1) There is only one city in the world which is built on seven hills; that is the city of Rome. In history Rome is known as the city of seven hills. This matches 17:9.
- (2) "Fallen" in 17:10 indicates that the ones mentioned in this verse did not have a good end. Some were murdered, and some committed suicide. When John was writing this book, the king who "is" was no doubt the Roman emperor at that time.
- (3) There is no kingdom other than the Roman Empire that has ruled over the kings of the earth. This is a fulfillment of 17:18.

What are the similarities between Babylon and Rome?

- (1) Babylon was the first to invade the Jewish holy land and enter into the Holy Place. Later Rome did the same.
- (2) Babylon means confusion, and Rome was full of confusion. It mixed the state with the church, the church with the world, the law with grace, man's tradition with God's word, heathens with Christians, Judaism with Christianity, God's promise to the church with God's promise to the Jews, fleshly things with spiritual things, earthly things with heavenly things, things to be rejected in the present with the glory in the future, and so forth. It was the center of all types of mixture and was utterly chaotic.
- (3) The testimony of the church fathers also acknowledges that Rome was Babylon. Tertullian said that Babylon was Rome. Jerome said, "When I dwelt in Babylon and resided within the walls of the scarlet adulteress, and had the freedom of Rome, I undertook a work concerning the Holy Spirit, which I propose

to ascribe to the Bishop of that city." Augustine said, "Babylon is a former Rome, and Rome, a later Babylon."

(4) There were several famous authors of the Roman Church, such as Robert Bellarmine, Cesare Baronius, Jacques Bossuet, Hug, etc., who also admitted that Babylon refers to Rome. According to Bellarmine, when John was writing the book of Revelation, every time he wrote "Babylon" he meant Rome.

One school says that Babylon simply refers to the political aspect of Rome, not the religious aspect, but that is a mistake. If it refers to only the political aspect of Rome, then the city should have fallen only once. Why does 14:8 say that it is fallen, and then 16:19 say it again? Furthermore, the fall in 14:8 takes place before the setting up of the beast's image, before the three-and-a-half-year period. However, the fall in 16:19 occurs at the time of the seventh bowl, which follows the setting up of the beast's image. Thus, these two falls must be related to the two aspects of Babylon. One is the religious aspect of Rome. (In the religious aspect, Babylon means confusion.) The other is the political aspect of Rome. (In Hebrew the word for "Rome" means the arrogant one, the one who is self-exalting and against God.)

"MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT" refers to the religious Babylon. The reasons are as follows:

(1) Revelation 17:1 says, "The great harlot who sits upon the many waters." The woman here signifies Rome. However, the city of Rome was not built on many waters (there is only one river in Rome). Therefore, the woman here must not refer to political Rome.

(2) Revelation 17:9 says, "The seven mountains where the woman sits." It is true that the city of Rome was built upon seven hills, but if the city of seven hills signifies political Rome, the woman cannot also signify political Rome, for a city cannot sit upon another city. Therefore, this woman must be the religious Rome which rests upon the political Rome.

(3) Revelation 17:6 says, "And I marveled with great marvel when I saw her." If this woman signifies the political Rome, what is there to marvel at? It is marvelous because it signifies religious Rome. (That people of other religions would persecute Christians is nothing to be marveled at, but it is a marvel that the Church of Rome would persecute Christians.)

(4) The fornication in 17:2 refers to doctrinal, not physical, fornication. Since a material city cannot commit fornication, this must signify the religious Rome.

(5) If political Rome rules over the kings of the earth, surely it cannot, at the same time, commit fornication with the kings of the earth. Therefore, 17:2 must refer to religious Rome.

Listed below are the reasons why Babylon also refers to political Rome:

(1) According to 17:16, the woman's destiny is to be burned utterly with fire by the beast (Antichrist) and the ten horns (the ten subordinate kings). But 18:8 mentions God's judgment on her. Therefore, 17:16 refers to the religious aspect and 18:8 to the political aspect.

(2) Revelation 18:7 says, "For she says in her heart, I sit a queen," but 17:16 indicates that the woman has already been rejected by Antichrist and the ten kings. How can 18:7 say that she still sits a queen? Hence, one must refer to religious Rome and the other to political Rome.

(3) Chapter seventeen uses symbols extensively; however, the latter part of chapter eighteen is mostly literal. This is why, in chapter seventeen, the angel has to give John an explanation, because it is full of signs. However, the latter part of chapter eighteen needs no further explanation, because it does not contain signs.

(4) After 8:13 mentions "woe" three times, exactly three woes follow. Since 18:2 mentions "fallen" twice, there should be two falls. One must be the fall of political Rome, and the other, the fall of religious Rome.

(5) In this book, there are two Jerusalems, one on the earth and another in the heavens. In the same way, this book has two aspects of Rome, the political and the religious. Political Rome is different from religious Rome, but the two are inseparable.

I. THE GREAT HARLOT AND THE BEAST SHE RIDES ON

(REVELATION 17:1-18)

A. Revelation 17:1

"And one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me, saying, Come here; I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits upon the many waters."

These are the events which come to pass after the pouring out of the seven bowls. It is marvelous that one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls also shows John the wife of the Lamb in 21:9. This fits with 17:1 because not until after the harlot has been judged will God reveal the wife of the Lamb. "The many waters" are "peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues" (17:15).

This harlot is sitting upon many peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues. This means that the influence of the Roman Church has reached the whole earth. The Roman Church often calls herself the mother and mistress of all the churches.

Why does God say that she is a harlot? It is because she traffics with and mixes with the world. She makes the fellowship among the saints so open that it includes even the worldly people. Thus, she gains the worldly enjoyment and worldly glory. She is as salt that has become tasteless. A harlot is one who commits fornication without marriage. An adulteress is one who commits adultery after having been married. In saying that she is a harlot, it is clear that God has never acknowledged any relationship between the Church of Rome and Christ. As a prostitute commits fornication before getting married and as a harlot commits fornication before her marriage, the Church of Rome has not preserved her virginity for Christ.

She is "the great harlot." She would not be great if she had followed the principles in Matthew —7. She should be only a little flock on the earth (Luke 12:32), bearing the testimony that the world is rebellious and that Christ is coming to judge it. The greatness referred to here is exactly what the Lord prophesied in Matthew 13:32. Genesis 1:12 says, "Herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit...after his kind," but the herb in Matthew 13 became a tree. This is the greatness of "the great harlot." The Pope was even greater than the kings. While the kings could only rule over man's body, the Pope ruled over both man's soul and spirit. Furthermore, he ruled over the kings as well. Hence, the Pope is greater than the kings. This is not the proper condition of the church on the earth.

B. Revelation 17:2

"With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and those who dwell on the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication."

According to the original Greek, throughout chapter seventeen the word "fornication" is used rather than adultery. A harlot commits fornication, while an adulteress commits adultery. Adultery is a sin committed by someone who is married, while fornication is committed by one who is not. This signifies that from the beginning to the end God never acknowledges having any relationship with the Church of Rome.

"With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication."

(1) The Roman Church would baptize anyone who was willing to be baptized in order to please the kings of the earth. Thus, she put the principles of Christ and the holy Word of God up for sale at a cheap price.

(2) The church made her boundaries equal to those of the nation and made Christianity the national religion of Rome. Whoever was a Roman citizen by birth could be a Christian. Originally, the boundary of the church was smaller than that of the nation, but the church dared to make herself as great as the nation.

(3) The church made an alliance with politics by putting emperors and government officials over the church. Above all, the Church of Rome was the first to commit the sin of fornication, that is, to bring religion to the worldly people through the authority of the emperor. This happened not only under the Roman Empire, but in many other nations as well. This has resulted in nothing more than an empty name.

"With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication" indicates that she has had a direct relationship with the kings of the earth. "Those who dwell on the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication" indicates that she has had an indirect relationship with those who dwell on the earth. "The wine of her fornication" refers to her heretical doctrines. She has made those who dwell on the earth lose their direction and become befuddled with her heretical doctrines. On the one hand, the teachings of the Church of Rome encourage people to become Christians, saying that as long as they give an amount of money and confess their sins before a priest, they can be forgiven. On the other hand, the Church of Rome does not teach them to have a sanctified living. Rather, she allows them to continue to enjoy all the worldly blessings, and thereby, the wine of her fornication has intoxicated all the people of the earth. Worldly people cannot live without religion, and the Church of Rome is the most agreeable to their taste. On the one hand, she does not care for spiritual reality, yet on the other hand, by means of various religious ceremonies, she brings people emotional consolation as well as hope for the future.

This has been the condition of the Church of Rome, and in the future, she will be revived in the same way. In China, for instance, while there are no more than three to four hundred thousand Protestants, there are at least two million members of the Church of Rome. Once a person becomes a member of the Church of Rome, he remains a member until death. Over the past year, while certain major denominations in the United States did not gain even one member, the Church of Rome gained millions. Some members of a denomination in

England advocate returning to the Church of Rome, while some of the Episcopalian Church want to incorporate various characteristics of the Church of Rome into their official prayers. This was nearly passed by the Parliament.

C. Revelation 17:3

"And he carried me away in spirit into a wilderness; and I saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns."

"A wilderness" here may be interpreted spiritually because the earth was originally a wilderness (Psa. 107:33). It can also be interpreted literally because the city of Rome is surrounded by desert. "A woman sitting upon a scarlet beast." The beast here, on the one hand, refers to the Roman Empire because the "seven heads and ten horns" are parts of the Roman Empire. On the other hand, it refers to Antichrist because, though Antichrist is the eighth head, he encompasses the brutality of the seven heads and the authority of the ten horns. In God's eyes, Antichrist is only a beast, but the woman is a harlot. She is not as brutal or irrational as a beast; rather, she is a rational yet fallen harlot.

"A woman sitting upon a scarlet beast" refers to the fact that the Church of Rome is united with the Roman Empire and has carried out a tremendous amount of evil through it. For example, if a country magistrate offended a priest, the Pope would order that mass not be held in that locality. In this way he would stir up the people to oppose and attack that magistrate. The Church of Rome would never deal openly with any situation; instead, it would let the Roman Empire deal with it. Thus, the extent of the influence of the power of this woman has been as great as that of the beast because the woman is riding on the beast.

The beast is scarlet, the same as the dragon. This indicates that the beast comes out of the dragon and is one with the dragon in its appearance.

"Names of blasphemy" are different from words of blasphemy. To have "names of blasphemy" is to be called by names which are used to address God. All the Roman emperors claimed they were gods.

D. Revelation 17:4

"And the woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and gilded with gold and precious stone and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the unclean things of her fornication."

"Purple" is the color of nobility in the Roman Empire. This is similar to the use of the color yellow in China during the previous Chin Dynasty. All the members of

the Roman Senate wore a wide piece of purple cloth on their chests. Furthermore, all their gladiators wore a thin strip of purple around their waists. Just as the Chinese emperor was clothed in yellow when ascending the throne, the Roman emperor was clothed in purple. "The woman was clothed in purple." This indicates that she has obtained worldly glory (cf. Luke 16:19, where the rich man clothed himself in purple).

Purple is not a primary color, but a blend of blue and red. Blue is heavenly, but red is earthly. (Edom in Genesis 25:30 means both red and earthy). Thus the color purple signifies the blending of heavenly things with earthly things.

The Roman Church also makes much use of the color scarlet. While writing a book on Revelation, Mr. Barnes asked a person from Rome what its most striking color was. The answer was scarlet. "Scarlet" is the particular color of the Pope and the bishops, and among the bishops there are the cardinals. Their garments, hats, socks, chariots, etc., are all scarlet. As for the Pope, even his undergarments, vessels, and the clothing of his bodyguards are all scarlet. Whenever the Pope comes out to visit the people, they welcome him by decorating the streets with scarlet.

"And gilded with gold and precious stone and pearls." These are all materials which signify God's truth. The Roman Church decorates herself with these treasures on the outside. (Gold, precious stone, and pearls also have their literal meanings. Compare this with 1 Peter 3:3 and 1 Timothy 2:9.) On the one hand, the Roman Church displays many good points outwardly, but on the other hand, she is not proper before God.

"Having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations." She has no crown on her head because she is not the emperor. She has no scepter in her hand because she has no authority. A golden cup full of abominations is her only power, with which she entices people and leads them astray. Her success in gaining people is not through any direct authority but through enticement.

In the Roman Empire, there were plates showing a woman holding a golden cup in her hand with the caption, "Sitting upon the Universe." It seems that the Romans were admitting unconsciously that this woman was the Church of Rome.

E. Revelation 17:5

"And on her forehead there was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF THE HARLOTS AND THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH."

Although it is a mystery, it is written on her forehead, that is, this mystery can be seen. This means that if you have the eyes to see, you will see the real meaning of this mystery.

God has ordained Jerusalem as the center of worship (religious) as well as the center of His administration over the whole earth (political). The error of the Church of Rome, however, is in claiming that God has raised it up to replace Jerusalem, thus making Rome both the political and religious center. She has assumed, at the present time, the position that Jerusalem will have in the millennial kingdom.

Though the "harlots...of the earth" are not the great harlot, we must ask whether or not they come out from the Church of Rome. A national church is a small harlot. The Anglican Church, for example, is the national Church of England. Therefore, the Anglican Church must be a small harlot. In England, the bishops of the churches are appointed by the king. Anyone who would prosecute a bishop must do so before the king. The establishing of any rites in the church must, likewise, be passed by a vote of Parliament. Only then may the church adopt that practice.

Not only are the national churches (whose systems resemble that of the Church of Rome) small harlots, but any church that is joined to the world and whose behavior is as corrupt as that of the Church of Rome, is also a small harlot. (Consider, for example, the practice of admitting people into church membership, not based on regeneration, but on their willingness to donate. Consider further the practice of accepting people at the Lord's supper, not according to whether or not that person is saved, but according to whether he is a member of the church. Moreover, sprinkled infants and YMCA members are all included in a church's membership. These are all examples of the conduct of a harlot!)

"THE MOTHER OF THE HARLOTS AND THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH." In the Old Testament the word "abomination" always refers to idolatry (Deut. 7:25-26). The Church of Rome is famous for her idolatry. It worships Mary, the angels, the apostles, and many saints. The Church of Rome separated from Constantinople because it insisted on the worship of idols.

F. Revelation 17:6

"And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. And I marveled with great marvel when I saw her."

This shows us that whatever this woman has done in the past will be repeated in the future, but with more intensity and severity. Note that it does not say that this woman shed the blood of the saints or that she shed the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. Rather, it says only that she was "drunk" with their blood. This means that she does not kill the saints directly. Instead, like Paul, who rejoiced at Stephen's death, the Church of Rome kills the saints indirectly through the power of the Roman Empire. The Church of Rome instigates the persecutions, but the Roman Empire is the one that actually carries them out.

The word "saints" here also includes the Jews. In the future, the Jews will also be under the persecution of the Church of Rome. Those who witness for Jesus will likewise suffer loss.

John marvels because such a persecution of Christians comes from so-called Christians. Is it not amazing that those who call themselves believers in Christ persecute those who believe in Christ?

Revelation 17:1-6 describes the vision that John saw. Beginning from verse 7, we have the explanation of the vision by the angel. Hence, verses 8 through 13 should be interpreted literally.

G. Revelation 17:7

"And the angel said to me, Why did you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast who bears her, who has the seven heads and the ten horns."

This tells us clearly that the angel will unveil to John the mystery of the seven heads and the ten horns.

H. Revelation 17:8

"The beast that you saw was and is not and is about to come up out of the abyss and go into perdition. And those who dwell on the earth, those whose name is not written from the foundation of the world in the book of life, will marvel when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will be present."

The beast which the angel shows to John has four periods in his history: (1) he "was," (2) he "is not," (3) he "is about to come," and (4) he will "go into perdition."

The beast described in this book refers, in some instances, to the Roman Empire and, in others, to Antichrist. Here it refers to a man and not to the Roman Empire. The reasons are as follows:

(1) This beast was. How can we say that the Roman Empire was?

(2) This beast is not. How can we say that the Roman Empire was not at the time of John?

(3) This beast comes up out of the abyss. The abyss is the place where spirits are kept. How can we say that the Roman Empire comes up out of the abyss?

(4) This beast will go into perdition. How can we say that the Roman Empire will go into hell in the future?

Since this beast does not refer to the Roman Empire, it must refer to Antichrist.

He "was." This shows that he was a person living on the earth before the time of John.

"And is not." This means that at the time of John this one had died and was no longer in the world. The words "is not" are used in Genesis 42:36-38 and refer to death.

"And is about to come up out of the abyss." This shows that he is not here now, but in the abyss. For him "to come up out of the abyss" means that he will resurrect.

"And go into perdition." This refers to his not being able to remain on earth forever; he will not reign forever. His end will be the lake of fire (Rev. 19:20; 20:10).

The fact that he "was and is not and will be present" is a counterfeit of God "who is and who was and who is coming" (Rev. 1:4). Men "will marvel when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will be present." This marveling results in their worshipping the beast (13:12). Only those whom God has chosen will be preserved by God from this temptation; only those whose names are written in the book of life will be preserved by God from worshipping the beast.

I. Revelation 17:9

"Here is the mind which has wisdom. The seven heads are the seven mountains where the woman sits."

Revelation 13:18 has similar words. However, in 13:18 "wisdom" understands the "number of the beast," while in 17:9 "the mind which has wisdom" understands the "heads" of the beast. We need wisdom from God to understand. "The seven heads" have two meanings: (1) they refer to a place, and (2) they refer to persons.

(1) When referring to a place, the "seven heads" refer to the seven mountains. A mountain is the head of a land and indicates power (Num. 21:20; Jer. 2:6; Amos 1:2; 9:3).

Dr. Woodworth said, "Rome was in John's age usually called the seven-hilled city." In reading many poems by Roman poets, we find that many of them refer to Rome as "the city of the seven hills." Some have said that for five hundred years

after John, Roman poets called Rome "the city of the seven hills." On the Roman gold coin is engraved a woman sitting upon seven hills. Furthermore, on the coins issued during the reign of the Roman Emperor Vespasian, the city of Rome was portrayed as being built on seven hills with two persons standing at its base and the Tiber River flowing in the foreground.

The poet Horace spoke of, "the gods, who look with favour on the seven hills." Another poet, Tibullus, said, "Ye bulls, feed on herbage of the seven hills."

The names of the seven hills are: Aventine, Esquiline, Caelian, Capitoline, Palatine, Quirinal, and Viminal.

(2) When referring to persons, the "seven heads" refer to seven kings, for kings are the heads of the people. The hills, as the heads of the land, exist continuously and simultaneously, while the persons, as the heads of the people, exist temporarily and successively, that is, one comes after the other has passed away. Isaiah 7:8-9 shows both the head of the land and the head of the people, "For the head of Aram is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin." Here we can see that the word "head" refers to the capital as well as to the person.

J. Revelation 17:10

"And are seven kings: five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; and when he comes, he must remain only a short time."

The Brethren consider the seven kings to be seven political systems, but this is against the principle of the Scriptures. The reasons are:

(1) The seven kings are mentioned in the words of explanation by the angel; hence, they cannot be interpreted further.

(2) The Bible never symbolizes a political system by a king. This is not even found in non-Christian writings.

(3) A king speaks of a political system already (a monarchy or a constitutional monarchy). How can a king symbolize another type of political system?

(4) Although some have broken down the Roman Empire into seven different political systems, the seven kings here are successive, while the seven political systems are not successive; they are unrelated, rising and falling at different times, and are intermittent.

(5) If the seven kings refer to seven political systems, what do the ten kings refer to? Would not this mean that the ten kings must also refer to ten political systems? If this is the case, would there not be seventeen political systems in Rome?

(6) Verse 9 says that each of the seven heads upon which the woman sits are mountains. It is impossible for some to be mountains while others are not. In the same way, all of the seven kings must be kings.

(7) In the Bible, the word "head" always refers to a person. How can we say that it refers to a political system? The "four heads" in Daniel 7:6 refer to four kings and not to four systems. Why should Revelation use the seven kings to symbolize seven political systems?

(8) If the kings represent political systems, then during the reign of Constantine, Christianity should have been considered as another system. However, Revelation 12:3 says that the seven heads are on the dragon, signifying that all the heads are of Satan. Can we say that Christianity is also of Satan?

Some may criticize, saying, "Rome had twelve Caesars, with Domitian, at the time of John, as the twelfth. How can one say that there were only seven kings in Rome?" We turn the question back to these ones: How could there have been only seven churches? Of course, the seven churches are only the representatives of all the churches.

Some may say that even if the seven kings are the representatives of the kings in Roman history, how can we know which of the twelve Caesars these seven kings are? This we can find out from the following points:

(1) Revelation 13:1 says, "And on his heads names of blasphemy." Hence, all of these seven kings must have claimed deity and forced men to worship them as gods.

(2) The words "have fallen" in 17:10 refer to their sudden death (cf. Judg. 3:25; 2 Sam. 1:19, 25, 27). Hence, all of these seven kings had to die a sudden death. Before John there were five emperors: Julius Caesar (the first Caesar), Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero. All five of these emperors declared themselves to be gods and forced men to worship them as gods. Each of them died either by committing suicide or by being murdered.

Domitian was the sixth. He was still alive at the time of John. He also declared himself to be a god and was also murdered.

The seventh is the one who "has not yet come." The Bible does not tell us how long it is after the sixth king that the seventh king will come. It tells us only that the seventh king will remain on earth for "only a short time" (Rev. 17:10). Eventually, he will be killed (13:3, 14). The time between the sixth and the seventh kings is the time in which religious Rome reigns. The time of the first through fifth kings and the time of the seventh and eighth kings are the time in

which political Rome reigns. At this time, religious Rome is replacing political Rome.

After Zedekiah was taken captive into Babylon, there was a period of time in which there was no king in Israel. This period lasted until the time of the birth of Christ. In the same way, after the fall of the Roman Empire, there is a period of time before Antichrist appears.

When Antichrist comes, the whole world will be ready. Once Antichrist comes on the scene, he will be able to do many things within three and a half years because by then the seventh one will be ready.

K. Revelation 17:11

"And the beast who was and is not, he himself is also the eighth and is out of the seven and goes into perdition."

This verse has to be read in conjunction with 17:8. Verse 8 speaks of the four periods of the beast's history. Verse 11 also speaks of the four stages of the beast's history, which are: (1) he was, (2) he is not, (3) he is out of the seven, and (4) he goes into perdition.

Since the chronological characteristics of the first, second, and fourth periods in 17:11 correspond with those of the first, second, and fourth periods in 17:8, the third period of verse 11 must also correspond with the third period of verse 8. Hence, he will have to come up out of the abyss.

Here it says that, on the one hand, this one is the eighth and, on the other hand, he is out of the seven. Furthermore, he comes up out of the abyss. Hence, he must be one of the seven who has resurrected to become the eighth.

Which one of the seven is he?

(1) He is not the seventh one, because the seventh one has not yet come into the world (17:10), but he was in the world before (v. 8).

(2) He is not the sixth one, because the sixth one was still in the world at the time John was there. According to the prophecy, this one "is not" in the world at the time of John (v. 11).

Since he is not the seventh or the sixth, he could only be one of the first five. Which one of these five is he? From 13:18 we can tell that he must be Nero.

Revelation 17:8 tells us of the earthly position that Antichrist will occupy in the future, while verse 11 tells us of his royal position.

The seventh one is the forerunner of Antichrist, while the eighth will come in the resuscitated body of the seventh. Eight is the number of resurrection, but the

resurrection of this one is different from the resurrection of the Lord. The Lord is the resurrection Himself, while this one resurrects through the resuscitation of a corpse.

When the Lord was on earth, the Jews chose the living Caesar over the living Christ. Even after Christ resurrected, men still would not receive Him. The coming Antichrist will be a resurrected Caesar, and men will choose such a resurrected Caesar over the resurrected Christ.

L. Revelation 17:12

"And the ten horns which you saw are ten kings, who have not yet received a kingdom but receive authority as kings for one hour with the beast."

The "seven heads" are seven kings, and also the "ten horns" are ten kings. However, there are differences between the heads and the horns:

(1) Horns grow on the head. Hence, the horns must be smaller. The head is the whole Roman Empire, while the horns are but vassal kings under Rome. In other words, they are the subordinate kings of the Roman Empire.

(2) There is only one head at one time, all the heads being successive, but the horns are all kings at the same time.

(3) Among the seven heads, only one has not yet emerged, while all ten horns have yet to appear.

"Who have not yet received a kingdom." This means that they had not yet received their kingdom at the time of John. These ten will receive authority at the same time that the beast, the eighth king, receives his authority.

Many have said that the ten kings refer to ten kingdoms. This is not accurate for the following reasons:

(1) The matter of the ten kings has been explained by the angels; it cannot be further interpreted.

(2) If we change the word "kings" in 17:12 to kingdoms, it does not make sense.

(3) Since the beast is a man, the ten kings must also be men.

These ten kings are different from the other "kings of the earth" (v. 2):

(1) The "kings of the earth" are on earth before the ten kings come, and while the ten kings are reigning, the former remain.

(2) The "kings of the earth" have always maintained a bond with the great harlot, but these ten kings never have any bond with the great harlot. In fact, the great harlot is eventually destroyed by these ten kings (17:16).

M. Revelation 17:13

"These have one mind, and they give their power and authority to the beast."

"These" refer to the ten kings. Some have said that the beast here refers to the Pope. This cannot be right, because no ten kings have ever given their power to the Pope. Some have said that the beast refers to one of the Roman emperors. But this is unreasonable too, because never have ten kings given their power to any one Roman emperor.

The ten kings give their power to the beast because they see the beast resurrecting from the dead and reckon that he is a superman and because they see the work of the evil spirits. After Christ died and resurrected, the Holy Spirit descended and formed the church. After Antichrist dies and resurrects, the evil spirits try to imitate such an operation, and they cause the ten kings to give their power to the beast.

N. Revelation 17:14

"These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and they who are with Him, the called and chosen and faithful, will also overcome them."

According to the order of the record, we have this verse before verse 16. But according to the order of the facts, verse 16 occurs before verse 14. Revelation 19:11 is a detailed account of the war in 17:14. The actual war is recorded in Revelation 19:11-21. Although many follow the Lamb, the One who overcomes is the Lamb Himself. It is the sharp sword which comes out of the Lamb's mouth and the might of His feet that overcome the enemy and trample him under His feet. It is not His followers who overcome the enemy. The Lamb does not overcome the enemy through His power, but through His authority. He overcomes because He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. This speaks of authority, not of power.

There are three groups of people who accompany the Lamb: the called, the chosen, and the faithful. These three groups of people stand in opposition to the great harlot. Those who follow the Lamb must be called. To be called is based on God's own decision. Originally, the choosing came before the calling, but here, the calling comes before the choosing. Therefore, we see that this is a choosing from among the believers. The Lord says that many are called but few are chosen (Matt. 22:14), following the order in Revelation 17:14. Psalms 89:19 explains this. The Israelites had been chosen already, but God chose David from among the chosen Israelites. This shows that the saved ones belong to one group (all the called ones are saved), while the overcoming ones belong to

another group (those who are after God's heart). Those who follow the Lamb are not only called and chosen, but also faithful. To be faithful is to not care for one's self, but to care for the Lord's mind.

O. Revelation 17:15

"And he said to me, The waters which you saw, where the harlots sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues."

This verse explains the meaning of "waters." Since the harlot is a mystery, a sign, and is not interpreted literally, the waters should also be a mystery, a sign, and should not be interpreted literally. If we are satisfied with Christ, we will not be sitting on the waters. If we make the saints' fellowship an open fellowship with the world, we will be sitting on the waters.

This book tells us that the woman sits in three places:

- (1) On the beast (17:3). This speaks of her union with the Roman Empire.
- (2) On the seven hills (v. 9). This speaks of her taking Rome as the center.
- (3) On the waters (v. 15). This speaks of her power reaching the whole world.

Why is she sometimes called "the harlot" and sometimes called "the woman"? The word "woman" refers to her relationship with Rome, while the word "harlot" refers to her relationship with Christ. Politically speaking, she is a woman, and religiously speaking, she is a harlot.

P. Revelation 17:16

"And the ten horns which you saw and the beast, these will hate the harlot and will make her desolate and naked and will eat her flesh and burn her utterly with fire."

The ten horns and the beast hate the harlot. They do not hate the woman, because the woman, the city of Rome (17:18), is their kingdom. They hate the harlot because, in name, the harlot still belongs to Christ.

In this book the beast refers, on the one hand, to Rome and, on the other hand, to Antichrist. In 17:16 it refers to Antichrist. We know now that Antichrist is the resurrected Nero. When Nero was on earth, he persecuted the Christians severely. After he resurrects, how could he allow Rome to belong to Christ? Hence, the first thing he will do is destroy the great harlot. He hates the harlot for two reasons:

- (1) The conduct of the harlot is too evil. Although the consciences of the worldly people have not yet been enlightened by God, they cannot tolerate the conduct of the Roman Church. This conduct includes: (a) teaching that the bread

becomes Christ's actual body after the priest's blessing, (b)restricting the reading of the Bible to the priests only, (c)the practice of confessing to the priests, (d)the inquisition, (e)sending heretics to the civil government, (f)selling indulgences, and so forth. Therefore, even the heathen despise her vulgarness, wickedness, and greed.

(2) The harlot is hated also for her good. There is much truth in the Roman Church, such as God being triune and Jesus being the Son of God, born of Mary. Furthermore, the Roman Church recognizes the Lord's death, resurrection, and ascension. It still belongs to Christ in name. This is why it is hated.

The ways in which the ten horns and the beast deal with the harlot are:

(1) "Make her desolate." This may mean that the Vatican where the Pope resides will become a desolate place.

(2) "Make her...naked." If interpreted literally, this would mean material loss. If interpreted spiritually, this may mean the exposing of her secrets.

(3) "Will eat her flesh." If interpreted literally, this would mean to eat her flesh. If interpreted spiritually, this may mean the slaying of her prominent figures or of the Catholics.

(4) "Burn her utterly with fire." The literal interpretation should not be hard to understand.

"The kings of the earth" are her good friends. Yet when they see her suffering, they only weep and lament over her; they do not help her (Rev. 18:9-10). The seventh king is also her friend; however, he is only a friend temporarily and cannot help her either. Antichrist becomes her archenemy.

Q. Revelation 17:17

"For God has put it into their hearts to perform His mind and to perform one mind and to give their kingdom to the beast until the words of God are accomplished."

Probably this will happen after the harlot is removed. That may be the time for the kingdom of Antichrist to come.

R. Revelation 17:18

"And the woman whom you saw is the great city, which has a kingdom over the kings of the earth."

The woman here refers to Rome because, at the time of John, only Rome had a kingdom over the kings of the earth.

II. THE MATERIAL (POLITICAL) BABYLON

(REVELATION 18:1-24)

A. Revelation 18:1

"After these things I saw another Angel coming down out of heaven, having great authority; and the earth was illumined with His glory."

This is Christ Himself. Besides Him, no one else could have such authority or illumine the earth with his glory.

B. Revelation 18:2

"And He cried with a strong voice, saying, Fallen, fallen is Babylon the Great! And she has become a dwelling place of demons and a hold of every unclean spirit and a hold of every unclean and hateful bird."

God destroyed the religious part of Rome by the beast and the ten horns (17:16). Now, He Himself will come to destroy the city of Rome; hence, there is such a great proclamation. This was prophesied in the Old Testament. (The word "satyrs" in Isaiah 13:21 (KJV) was translated "devils" in the Septuagint. Although Isaiah 34:13-15 speaks of the conditions in the land of Idumea, it is very similar to what is described in Revelation 18:2.)

C. Revelation 18:3

"For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the fury of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich by the power of her luxury."

This verse speaks of three things:

- (1) "All the nations." All the nations have drunk of the wine of the fury of her fornication (cf. 17:2), which especially refers to the religious aspect of Rome.
- (2) "The kings of the earth." They committed fornication with her (cf. 17:2; 18:9), which touches both the Roman religion as well as the city.
- (3) "The merchants of the earth." They have become rich by the power of her luxury (cf. 18:15), which especially refers to the aspects of Roman commerce.

The last clause of 18:3 shows God's attitude towards commerce. Probably in the new heaven and new earth there will be no more commerce. Commerce prospers here probably because of the abundance of luxury. It is not good in the eyes of God for merchants to provide for men's luxury and work for their own profit.

D. Revelation 18:4

"And I heard another voice out of heaven, saying, Come out of her, My people, that you do not participate in her sins and that you do not receive her plagues."

"Her" refers to both the city of Rome and the religion of Rome. There are lightnings and an earthquake right after God pours out His seventh bowl (16:17-

18). Then God remembers the great city of Babylon, and great hail comes down (16:19, 21). Chapter seventeen tells us that Babylon is the great harlot, because upon her forehead is written, "MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT." It also reveals her history, the coming of Antichrist in the future, and her end. Chapter eighteen then tells us that Babylon the Great is fallen.

Although the command to "come out of her" is given at this time, it is directed at those who are in Babylon the Great in 17:5, because within religious Babylon, there are also those who truly belong to the Lord.

E. Revelation 18:5

"For her sins have accumulated up to heaven, and God has remembered her unrighteousnesses."

This verse matches 16:19. Both say that God has remembered Babylon the Great. Chapter seventeen says only that God will destroy the religious part, while chapter eighteen says that the whole great Babylon will be destroyed.

Every time God remembers a sin, He immediately punishes. When God remembers, He remembers clearly; when God forgets, He forgets completely.

F. Revelation 18:6

"Pay her back even as she has paid, and double to her double according to her works; in the cup which she has mixed, mix to her double."

This fulfills the words in Romans 2:6-9. Does the word "double" here contradict the phrase "render to each according to his works"? It could mean that there are two times of rendering.

"In the cup which she has mixed." God will also judge the city of Rome for its sins related to the religious aspect.

G. Revelation 18:7

"As much as she has glorified herself and lived luxuriously, as much torment and sorrow give to her; for she says in her heart, I sit a queen, and I am not a widow, and I shall by no means see sorrow."

The church does not glorify herself; instead, she glorifies Christ. Not only does Rome do the opposite, she also lives luxuriously.

H. Revelation 18:8

"Therefore in one day her plagues will come, death and sorrow and famine, and she will be utterly burned with fire; for the Lord God who judges her is strong."

There is sorrow when there is torment. God gives her torment in order to make her sorrowful.

"The Lord God" is God's name in the Old Testament. Thus, God resumes His Old Testament position.

I. Revelation 18:9

"And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her, will weep and lament over her when they see the smoke of her burning." The kings of the earth have no strength to help the woman. This judgment is God's doing, and they can do nothing. In 17:16 the harlot is burned, and here in 18:9 the city is also burned.

J. Revelation 18:10

"Standing afar off because of fear of her torment, saying, Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city, for in one hour your judgment has come!"

"Woe, woe." This is spoken by the kings. "Woe, woe" is spoken three times in this chapter, in verses 10, 16, and 19.

K. Revelation 18:11

"And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her because no one buys their cargo anymore."

Many people say that because of its geographical location, Rome cannot be a commercial center, but note what is said in verse 11. This city is not a center of import and export. She only buy things but does not sell, because Antichrist lives there luxuriously.

L. Revelation 18:12-13

"Cargo of gold and silver and precious stone and pearls and fine linen and purple and silk and scarlet, and every kind of thyine wood, and every vessel of ivory, and every vessel of most precious wood and brass and iron and marble, and cinnamon and amomum and incense and ointment and frankincense and wine and oil and fine flour and wheat and cattle and sheep, and cargo of horses and chariots and slaves and souls of men."

There are seven kinds of merchandise mentioned here: (1) precious substances; (2) fabrics; (3) vessels; (4) spices; (5) delicious foods; (6) sheep, horses, and chariots; and (7) slaves and souls of men. Slaves and souls of men may be translated bodies and souls. There was a famous saying that went, "Among what Babylon keeps, the first is gold and the last is souls."

M. Revelation 18:14

"And the ripe fruits of your soul's lust have gone away from you, and all the sumptuous and splendid things have perished from you; and men will find them no more at all."

In this verse she is told of her past.

N. Revelation 18:15-16

"The merchants of these things, who became rich by her, will stand afar off because of the fear of her torment, weeping and mourning, saying, Woe, woe, the great city, which was clothed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, and gilded with gold and precious stone and pearl."

"Woe, woe." This time it is spoken by the merchants. Compare this with 17:4; the two verses match each another.

O. Revelation 18:17

"For in one hour such great wealth has become desolate! And every ship captain and everyone sailing to a place and sailors and all who work on the sea stood afar off."

"For in one hour...has become desolate." This is a continuation of the preceding verse.

P. Revelation 18:18-19

"And cried out, seeing the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like the great city? And they cast dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and mourning, saying, Woe, woe, the great city, by which all those who have ships on the sea became rich from her wealth, for in one hour she has become desolate!"

"Woe, woe." This time it is spoken by the ship captains, all the passengers on the ships, and the sailors.

"In one hour." This expression is mentioned three times in this book: (1) by the kings (18:10), (2) by the merchants (v. 17), and (3) by the ship captains, all the passengers on the ships, and the sailors (v. 19).

Q. Revelation 18:20

"Be glad over her, O heaven and saints and apostles and prophets, because God has judged judgment for you upon her."

"Saints" may refer more to men of the Old Testament; "apostles," to Christians; and "prophets," to those from the second Pentecost.

R. Revelation 18:21

"And a strong angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, Thus will Babylon, the great city, be thrown down with violence and shall be found no more at all."

Although it is not known how God will destroy Babylon, it is possible that this will be done by an earthquake because in 16:19 He remembers the great Babylon after a great earthquake. Wherever there is an earthquake, there is usually fire; hence, the kings of the earth and the merchants see the smoke from afar but cannot help (18:9).

S. Revelation 18:22-24

"And the sound of harp-singers and musicians and flutists and trumpeters shall be heard no more at all in you, and no craftsman of any craft shall be found any more at all in you, and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in you, and the light of a lamp shall shine no more at all in you, and the voice of bridegroom and bride shall be heard no more at all in you; for your merchants were the great ones of the earth, for by your sorcery all the nations were deceived. And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints and of all who have been slain on the earth."

The words "no more" or "any more" appear six times in these verses (vv. 21b-23). In 18:23b-24 three reasons (they are actually sins) are given for God's judgment of Babylon:

- (1) "For your merchants were the great ones of the earth."
- (2) "For by your sorcery all the nations were deceived."
- (3) "And in her was found the blood of...all who have been slain on the earth."

The error of today's commerce is that, instead of balancing the wealth, it entices people. Therefore, it is sinful. Sorcery is to communicate with the demons. In the future, Rome may become the center of such activity. Rome will also be preeminent in shedding people's blood.

III. THE PRAISE IN HEAVEN

(REVELATION 19:1-6)

Revelation 19:1-6 is a continuation of 18:24.

A. Revelation 19:1

"After these things I heard as it were a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, Hallelujah! The salvation and the glory and the power are of our God."

"After these things" means after the complete destruction of Babylon. This "great multitude" includes all saved ones (not only those saved during the dispensation of grace).

Hallelujah means "Praise the Lord" in Hebrew. Why "Hallelujah"? It is because salvation and glory and power have now come.

B. Revelation 19:2

"For true and righteous are His judgments; for He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication, and He avenged the blood of His slaves at her hand."

"For true and righteous are His judgments." This matches "righteous and true" in 15:3. They are "true" because God judges according to the real situation; they are "righteous" because God judges according to the proper method. The verses which follow cite God's judgment of religious Rome (the great harlot) as a proof that God is righteous.

C. Revelation 19:3

"And a second time they said, Hallelujah! And her smoke goes up forever and ever."

Naturally, the smoke of Rome will cease, but her punishment will last forever and ever.

D. Revelation 19:4

"And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God, who sits upon the throne, saying, Amen, Hallelujah!"

This is the last time that the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures are mentioned in the Bible. The great multitude in heaven is the first to say, "Hallelujah!" (19:1); then the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures join them, saying, "Amen, Hallelujah!" This shows that they are different from the great multitude in heaven. The great multitude in heaven speaks of salvation, glory, power, and so forth, clearly indicating that the church is included. This shows that the twenty-four elders do not represent the church. From this point on there is no more mention of the twenty-four elders, because they resign from their office at this time.

E. Revelation 19:5

"And a voice came out from the throne, saying, Praise our God, all His slaves and those who fear Him, the small and the great."

This is the last time that the throne is mentioned (this is different from the great white throne). The throne is in God's temple. Here there is only a temple but no city. In the new heaven and new earth there will only be a city but no temple. Therefore, after verse 5 there is no more mention of the throne.

The "voice" is the voice of the Lord Jesus because in 5:6 the Lamb is "in the midst of the throne."

"All His slaves" are those in the church, because this book emphasizes the responsibility of the individuals in the church before God. "Those who fear Him" are the Jews and Gentiles who fear Him.

"Praise our God." This is what the Lord always says (see Heb. 2:12).

F. Revelation 19:6

"And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunders, saying, Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns."

"The voice of a great multitude" is the voice of many people; "the sound of many waters" is a continuous voice; and "the sound of mighty thunders" is a solemn voice.

The word for "reigns" in the original text indicates that He has already been reigning. "The Lord our God the Almighty" has always been King, but His reign was not manifested until now.

IV. THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB

AND THE MARRIAGE DINNER

(REVELATION 19:7-10)

A. Revelation 19:7

"Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready."

Who is "His wife"? This cannot be the church for the following reasons:

(1) The great multitude in 19:1 includes saved Gentiles, saved Israelites, and of course, the church. The church is included among the great multitude that proclaims the words in 19:7. Since the church proclaims this, "His wife" must refer to someone else.

(2) Matthew 25:1-13 speaks of the whole church, but only the five wise virgins are qualified to attend the feast.

(3) The wife here is different from the bride mentioned in Paul's Epistles. The bride Paul speaks of is clothed with Christ, whereas the wife here is clothed with her own righteousnesses. In Paul's Epistles the church as a whole is Christ's bride. In Revelation each church is seen separately, and, therefore, the responsibility of the church before God is emphasized. In Paul's Epistles the church is accepted in Christ, but in Revelation the church is accepted because of

her own conduct. In Paul's Epistles all of those in the church belong to Christ, while in Revelation she is divided into the saved ones and the overcomers.

The five wise virgins in Matthew 25:1-13 are only those attending the feast; they are not the bride.

The wife of the Lamb is composed of the overcoming believers. This wife is none other than the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:9-10).

God is now in His temple, and the voices of praise from the people are also in the temple. During the millennium the temple will gradually lose its place. There the overcomers will be kings in the city and priests in the temple. (Because there will still be sins, there will still be the need of priests.) But in the new heaven and new earth there will be no more temple.

Some within the church will attend the marriage feast (for example, the five wise virgins), and some will not be able to (for example, the five foolish virgins).

B. Revelation 19:8

"And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints."

The wife is a symbol of the New Jerusalem. "And it was given to her" refers to her being rewarded. "Bright" means white and is in contrast to what the harlot wears in 17:4. "Clean" is the same word that is used in 19:14.

"The fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints." In the original text, the word for "righteousnesses" is the same as in Isaiah 64:6: "our righteousnesses."

"The saints." These saints are those who will live in the New Jerusalem. To be a bride is temporary, but to be a wife is from the beginning to the end. This is also the case with the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem is the Lamb's bride in the millennium and the Lamb's wife in the new heaven and new earth.

Christians must be divided into the saved believers and the overcoming believers because only the overcoming believers have a part in the new city in the millennium. However, in the new heaven and new earth, both the saved ones and the overcomers will have an equal share.

The "saints" in this book include not only the Christians but also the Jews.

The bride's garment is temporary; only the overcoming believers are related to the bride.

It seems that the marriage of the Lamb is the first time that the city gate is opened, to let the overcoming believers in. The five foolish virgins cannot get in at this time.

C. Revelation 19:9

"And he said to me, Write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. And he said to me, These are the true words of God."

This verse shows us clearly that some are invited (like the five wise virgins) and that these are blessed. This city is the bride of the Lamb, and only those saints who are invited and have their own righteousnesses as their garment can enjoy the glory and the beauty of the city. (These righteousnesses are also the very glory and beauty of this new city.) They have a foretaste of all the glory and beauty of this city.

"These are the true words of God." This appears two more times, in 21:5 and 22:6. It is written to call our attention especially to what has just been said. Some may think that it is a small thing to be raptured; however, only those who attend the marriage of the Lamb have a portion in the kingdom. Those who are not invited cannot partake of the kingdom. This marriage dinner must be something that is only for the overcoming believers. This matches the promise in Revelation 3:20, because both 3:20 and 19:9 talk about dining.

D. Revelation 19:10

"And I fell before his feet to worship him. And he said to me, Do not do this. I am your fellow slave and a fellow slave of your brothers who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of the prophecy."

Angels are servants of God, and so are we. It is a great temptation to worship created things. "The spirit of the prophecy" is "the spirits of the prophets" in 1 Corinthians 14:32, because prophets are those who prophesy.

V. THE WAR AT ARMAGEDDON

(REVELATION 19:11-21)

A. Revelation 19:11

"And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sits on it called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war."

The marriage of the Lamb is now over, and the Lord comes to the earth with His people. "Faithful and True" are names of the Lord in reference to His second coming, and they reveal His relationship to the world. In chapter one, the church is to view things from the Lord's eyes.

B. Revelation 19:12

"And His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems, and He has a name written which no one knows but Himself."

The "diadems," or crowns, here are stacked layer upon layer without end; this is how He can wear many crowns. The "name" here is a special name. The Lord promises the overcomers in the church in Pergamos a name which no man knows (Rev. 2:17). Therefore, the special name that the Lord receives must also be given to Him by God.

C. Revelation 19:13

"And He is clothed with a garment dipped in blood; and His name is called the Word of God."

"He is clothed with a garment dipped in blood." The garment is not dipped in blood in the heavens, but on the earth during the fighting. This is the description of the war at Armageddon; it matches what is recorded in Isaiah 63:1-6.

The expression "the Word of God" is used only by John, showing that John wrote this book.

D. Revelation 19:14

"And the armies which are in heaven followed Him on white horses, dressed in fine linen, white and clean."

Those who follow the Lamb are the same as the called and chosen and faithful in 17:14. By this time, the standing of every Christian has been decided. Only those who are invited to the marriage dinner of the Lamb may enter into the kingdom because:

- (1) The clothing of the bride is the righteousnesses of the saints.
- (2) The righteousnesses of the saints are the glory and beauty of the new city.
- (3) All those who are invited to the marriage dinner of the Lamb must have "the righteousnesses of the saints." All those who descend with the Lord are those who have been invited to the marriage dinner of the Lamb. Hence, all who enter the kingdom have been invited to the marriage dinner of the Lamb.
- (4) The Lord said, "Until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God" (Mark 14:25). This shows that the dinner is held in the kingdom.
- (5) The dining in Revelation 3:20 matches that of Revelation 19:9.
- (6) Being invited is different from dining. Only those who are invited may partake of the dinner.
- (7) The "blessed" in Revelation 19:9 correspond to the "blessed" in 20:6.
- (8) In the kingdom, the New Jerusalem is the bride. In the new heaven and new earth, the New Jerusalem is the wife of the Lamb. However, in 21:9 it still bears the likeness of a bride.

E. Revelation 19:15

"And out of His mouth proceeds a sharp sword, that with it He might smite the nations; and He will shepherd them with an iron rod; and He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty."

This verse mentions three things that the Lord does:

- (1) "Out of His mouth proceeds a sharp sword." This is the word that comes out of His mouth.
- (2) "Shepherd them with an iron rod." This is mentioned three times in this book: here, in 2:27, and in 12:5. At the beginning of the kingdom, He will smite all the opposing authorities.
- (3) "Treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty." This matches Revelation 14:17-20 and Isaiah 63:1-6.

F. Revelation 19:16

"And He has on His garment and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS."

Because He rides on a horse, special reference is made to His thigh.

G. Revelation 19:17-18

"And I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in mid-heaven, Come here; gather yourselves to the great dinner of God, that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of generals and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free and slave and small and great."

The marriage dinner of the Lamb is for those who are invited, while the great dinner of God is for the birds in mid-heaven.

H. Revelation 19:19-20

"And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war with Him who sits on the horse and with His army. And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet, who in his presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshipped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire, which burns with brimstone."

Here it speaks of the destinies of the beast and the false prophet.

- (1) Verses 11 through 16 speak of how the Lord will fight and triumph.
- (2) Verses 17 and 18 speak of how the birds eat the flesh of the defeated ones.
- (3) Verses 19 and 20 speak of the end of the beast and the false prophet.

The false prophet has done three things. He has: (1) wrought miracles before the beast, (2) deceived those who had received the mark of the beast, and (3) deceived those who worshipped the image of the beast.

We should pay attention to the word "alive." It matches what we explained regarding 13:11-18. Both the beast and the false prophet are resurrected, and since their bodies cannot die twice, they are cast alive into hell.

I. Revelation 19:21

"And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeds out of the mouth of Him who sits on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh."

This is the end of those who follow the beast. The Christians who follow the Lord faithfully will enjoy glory one thousand years earlier than the ordinary Christians. Likewise, those who follow Antichrist faithfully will suffer punishment one thousand years earlier than the other people.

VI. SATAN BEING BOUND

(REVELATION 20:1-3)

A. Revelation 20:1-2

"And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the dragon, the ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years."

Revelation 9:1 says that the key of the pit of the abyss is given to Satan, with which he then does two things: (1) he causes two men to be resurrected, and (2) he causes the locusts to hurt people.

Satan is cast down to the earth as a result of the war in heaven. Now he is cast into the abyss as a result of the Lord being the King of kings and the Lord of lords. God's victory is by authority; His word has authority.

B. Revelation 20:3

"And cast him into the abyss and shut it and sealed it over him, that he might not deceive the nations any longer until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be loosed for a little while."

Some may ask why the dragon is not immediately cast into the lake of fire. The Bible says, "And inasmuch as it is reserved for men to die once" (Heb. 9:27) and "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). The dragon has never died according to the flesh. However, because the abyss is used to imprison the dead spirits, to imprison the dragon there is like putting him through death.

Escape is impossible once the seal is sealed (Dan. 6:17).

There are perhaps three reasons why the dragon will be imprisoned for one thousand years and then released: (1) to show that the dragon will never repent, (2) to reveal the unexposed sins of man, and (3) because God likes to do so.

VII. THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM

(REVELATION 20:4-6)

A. Revelation 20:4

"And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and of those who had not worshipped the beast nor his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years."

Three kinds of people reign with the Lord.

(1) The overcomers, that is, those who sit on thrones (20:4a). To receive the authority to judge here means to possess the kingdom (Dan. 7:10, 18, 22). (Today, according to the Bible, no Christian should work as a judge, a magistrate, or so forth.)

(2) The martyrs throughout the past two thousand years. These were the souls underneath the altar during the opening of the fifth seal. They have been martyred for the Lord's testimony throughout the past two thousand years. Men are resurrected, not spirits.

(3) The martyrs during the tribulation. These are those who did not worship the beast and his image nor have his mark on their foreheads or hands.

"They lived and reigned." Here we have to pay attention to two things:

(1) These people are not resurrected at the time of Revelation 20:4. Their resurrection is merely mentioned here as a postscript. John does not see their resurrection at this moment; he only sees them alive here.

(2) The living people mentioned here refer not only to the resurrected ones, but also to those who are raptured alive, because we cannot say that only those who are resurrected from the dead will reign with the Lord. Although there may not be many who are raptured alive, nevertheless, they shall also reign with the Lord.

Resurrection from the dead is mentioned in 1 Kings 17:22, 2 Kings 13:21, and Revelation 1:18. Second Timothy 2:11-12 speaks of dying, living, and reigning with the Lord.

B. Revelation 20:5-6

"The rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no authority, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years."

"The first resurrection" is not necessarily a once-only resurrection; nor does it refer to any resurrection in general. It includes all the "best" resurrections that happen before the millenium.

The word "this" in verse 5 includes the two things mentioned in verse 4, that is, the living and the reigning. The first resurrection is the "best" resurrection. The best resurrection means to live and to reign. Because verse 4 has two verbs—"lived and reigned," the word "this" in verse 5 must refer to living and reigning. This is called the first resurrection. This resurrection is a reward and is both a resurrection and a reigning with the Lord for one thousand years.

"The second death" does not merely mean to die; rather, it means to go to a certain place to suffer. This is in contrast with the first resurrection. The first resurrection is the enjoyment of glory. Not only do those believers who are resurrected from the dead partake of the first resurrection, but also all those who are raptured alive. This is because the time of the first resurrection is the time of the reward, the time of repayment (Luke 14:14; 20:34-36).

In Philippians 3:11 Paul did not hope to be resurrected from the dead (for surely all dead men will be resurrected), nor did he hope for the resurrection of the spirit (for the resurrection of the spirit is received in regeneration). Instead, what Paul hoped to receive was the "out-resurrection," which is the best resurrection, spoken of in Revelation 20:5, that is, reigning with the Lord.

Read Philippians 1:23-25 again. In chapter one Paul talked of living; he did not want to die. How then could he speak about hoping to be resurrected from the dead in chapter three? In Philippians 3:20-21 he clearly said that he was waiting for the Lord's return. Thus, his hope was to reign with the Lord.

In the Bible, the phrase resurrection from the dead includes being resurrected from the dead, but more profoundly, it also refers to reigning with the Lord.

There are two expressions in the Bible that are slightly different from each other:

(1) "The resurrection from the dead" indicates the resurrection before the millennium and refers to reigning with the Lord for one thousand years.

(2) "The resurrection of the dead" indicates the resurrection after the millennium.

"The rest of the dead" of course includes the unsaved sinners.

"Blessed" in the New Testament can be translated "happy." Those who are happy today are not necessarily holy, while those who are holy can hardly be happy today.

The first resurrection has three kinds of blessings:

(1) "Over these the second death has no authority." The second death is the lake of fire. Those who have no part in the first resurrection will have to pass through the sufferings of the second death. Some Christians will be disciplined and punished in the future (Matt. 18:34-35). First Thessalonians 4:5-6 says that those who wrong their brothers will be punished. Luke 12:4-5 exhorts men to fear the Lord because He has the authority to put some into hell. We can see that hell will have authority over certain kinds of Christians. In John 15:6 we can see that the branches that do not abide in the Lord (the vine) will receive punishment.

Some may say that the Bible states that once a man is saved he will never perish; so why does it say here that some Christians will still suffer being hurt of the second death (Rev. 2:11)? This is because some verses are easily misunderstood. They are listed below:

(a) "He shall by no means see death forever" (John 8:51-52). In the original text, it is, "Not forever see death"; "He shall by no means taste death forever" should be "He shall not forever taste of death."

(b) "They shall by no means perish forever" in John 10:28 is, in the original text, "They shall not forever perish."

(2) "They will be priests of God and of Christ." The meaning of being a priest is to be one who draws near to God. This kind of people will be particularly close to God, for they will have an intimate relationship with Him and with Christ. Today we are all priests; therefore, we all may draw near to God. But in the millennial kingdom, only those who have a part in the first resurrection will be priests of God and of Christ.

Aaron could be a priest only because his rod budded. The budding rod signifies resurrection. The chosen priest is manifested through resurrection (Num. 17:6-10).

All the people of Israel became priests when they left Egypt (Exo. 19:6). But later, due to their worshipping the golden calf, some failed, and God chose Aaron's tribe to be the priests.

Here the overcomers become priests because there is still the need to intercede for others at this time.

"They will be priests...of Christ" because, at this time, Christ will be worshipped as much as God Himself is worshipped.

(3) "And will reign with him for a thousand years." In the Old Testament, no king could be a priest, neither could any priest be a king. But here is a group of people who are both priests and kings. As priests, they draw near to God; as kings, they have dominion over the earth. Only those who have suffered may reign with the Lord and enjoy the glory with Him.

This verse only speaks of the fact of reigning. It does not say how the overcomers reign, because the reigning here is heavenly.

CHAPTER TEN

AFTER THE MILLENNIUM

(Revelation 20:7—22:5)

I. SATAN'S LAST REBELLION

(REVELATION 20:7-9)

A. Revelation 20:7-8

"And when the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war. Their number is like that of the sand of the sea."

What the prophets in the Old Testament saw was mainly concerning the time up to the millennium. They were not clear about what would happen after the millennium. What is spoken of here, however, is concerning those things which will happen after the millennium.

Some may ask, "How can the people in the millennial kingdom still be so deceived after a thousand years?" We must realize that during the millennial kingdom there will be two kinds of people on earth:

(1) The Jews. Isaiah 60:21 says, "Then all of your people will be righteous."

(2) The good Gentiles. These are the Gentiles spoken of in Matthew 25:34 through 40 and 46, who have treated God's elect kindly and are represented by the sheep. They will enter into the kingdom. The evil Gentiles will have been killed (Rev. 19:21).

Although there are these two kinds of people in the millennial kingdom, the Jews have a much higher position than do the Gentiles.

These people are still human; they have flesh, and they continue to bear children. This first group of Gentiles that enter the kingdom are saved, but the

children they bear may not necessarily be saved. Isaiah 65:20 mentions death; thus, we can see that sin still exists at this time.

Zechariah 14:17 indicates that there will still be some who do not want to worship the Lord. Revelation 2:27 says that the Lord and the Christians will shepherd the nations with an iron rod. Thus, in the millennium, the people will be subdued by force. If someone does not obey, he will be smitten to pieces. If someone is evil, he will be removed. When Satan comes, this group of people will be very susceptible to his deception.

B. Revelation 20:9

"And they went up upon the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city; and fire came down out of heaven and devoured them."

"The camp of the saints" is where the Christians live. "The beloved city" is the city where the Jews on earth live. These people occupy the highest positions. Many people will attack the camp of the saints and the beloved city because of the temptation of jealousy.

The battle of Gog and Magog referred to in Ezekiel 38:2 is before the millennium. One of these names refers to a person, and the other, to a place. The battle of Gog and Magog in Revelation 20:8 is after the millennium, and these names refer either to two people or two places.

"Magog" is mentioned in Genesis 10:2, and "Gog" is seen in Numbers 24:7; "Agag" is translated "Gog" in the Septuagint. According to the Arabian records, Gog and Magog occupied the area from Russia and Mongolia unto the eastern part of Germany. The people were nomadic and fierce. Therefore, some say that they are Mongolians, that is, Tartars. Their ancestors hated the Jews from the very beginning.

"The earth" refers to the Jewish land. "Upon the breadth of the earth" means that their numbers are enough to fill the Jewish land.

"The camp of the saints" is where the believers live. Revelation 19:14 speaks of "the armies which are in heaven." In heaven they are the heavenly armies; they are on earth only temporarily. Hence, it is a camp, and since a camp is not lasting, we see that the millennial kingdom will pass away.

II. THE ETERNAL PERDITION OF SATAN (REVELATION 20:10)

"And the devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where also the beast and the false prophet were; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever."

The counterfeit trinity is now in the lake of fire. Some may ask, "How can there still be 'day and night'?" In Revelation 21:23 we shall see that in the city there is "no need of the sun or of the moon that they should shine in it." It does not say that there is no sun or moon in the new heaven and new earth. Moreover, the tree of life will bear fruit every month. If there were neither sun nor moon, how could there be the monthly bearing of fruit?

III. THE JUDGMENT OF THE GREAT WHITE THRONE (REVELATION 20:11-15)

A. Revelation 20:11

"And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose face earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them."

This throne is different from the one in chapters four and five. Two adjectives are used to describe this throne:

- (1) "Great." This judgment is extraordinary; thus, it is great and righteous.
- (2) "White." This is the color that is especially related to the Lord. For example, the Lord Jesus' hair is white, and He rides on a white horse. White signifies being perfectly clean, absolutely righteous.

"Him who sat upon it." This is the Lord. There is much evidence for this in the New Testament, such as John 5:22; Acts 10:42; 17:31; Romans 2:6; 1 Peter 4:5; and 2 Timothy 4:1.

"Earth and heaven fled away." Some say that the fleeing of the earth and the heaven is simply God's restructuring of the earth and the heaven. But the following clause, "And no place was found for them," shows that the old heaven and old earth are removed. Because the trace of sin can still be seen in the old heaven and old earth, the Lord now casts them away. This is what is prophesied in 2 Peter 3:7, 10, and 12. Probably at the same time that God sends down fire to devour the rebellious people, He will burn away the old heaven and old earth.

B. Revelation 20:12

"And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and scrolls were opened; and another scroll was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by the things which were written in the scrolls, according to their works."

"The dead" in 20:12 are "the rest of the dead" mentioned in 20:5. "Standing before the throne." Standing is an indication of being alive. Since they are standing, they are resurrected.

Will there be anyone who is saved at the great white throne? The answer is yes for the following reasons:

(1) This is a judgment. To judge is not only for judging, but also for distinguishing. If all are unsaved, they should simply receive punishment; why would they still need to be judged?

(2) Not only the scrolls are opened (which record the deeds) but also the book of life (he who has his name here is saved). This tells us that some names are in the scrolls, and some are in the book of life.

(3) The Lord Jesus clearly says that some will be saved at the end in the day of resurrection: "An hour is coming in which...: those who have done good, to the resurrection of life; and those who have practiced evil, to the resurrection of judgment" (John 5:28-29).

(4) Practically speaking, it is impossible to say that there are no saved ones here, because:

(a) Death still exists in the kingdom. If these people are resurrected at this time, how can they not be saved?

(b) There are many people who have no part in the first resurrection before the kingdom age. If they appear at this time, how can they not be the saved ones?

(c) The spirits of those believers who had been excommunicated by the church (those who did not repent until the end) can be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. If they are resurrected at this time, how can we say that they are not saved?

(d) The Bible clearly says that if any man denies Christ before man, Christ will also deny him before the angels of God (Luke 12:8-9). These will have no part in the kingdom. If they are resurrected at this time, how can they not be saved?

(e) In the Old Testament time many were saved, yet they were not worthy to reign with the Lord. If they are resurrected at this time, how can we say that they are not saved?

(f) Also there are many babies. If they are not saved at this time, when will they be saved?

(5) Besides the dead that are resurrected, there are also the living people of Israel (in fact, the whole nation) who will stand before the throne. Can we say that they are not saved? Moreover, we have the living Gentiles of the nations.

When Satan deceives the nations, we cannot say that they will all follow Satan. Can we say that those who do not follow Satan are not saved at this time?

"Scrolls" is plural. "According to their works" has two meanings: (1) "By means of," which means that the deeds constitute the basis of judgment; and (2) "Based upon," which means that the degree of their punishment is decided by the degree of good and evil in their deeds.

C. Revelation 20:13

"And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, each of them, according to their works."

"Death and Hades gave up the dead" means that the spirits of men are delivered up. Some say that the words "the sea gave up the dead" also refer to the spirits of men. Yet we have never heard that one's spirit goes to the sea after he dies. "The sea gave up the dead" means that the sea gives up the spirits of those who died in the previous world. Because the abyss is connected with the sea, it is actually the place where dead spirits are imprisoned.

"They were judged, each of them, according to their works." The future judgment is based solely on works. Hence, this is mentioned twice (20:12-13).

D. Revelation 20:14

"And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire."

Death is the last enemy (1 Cor. 15:25-26).

E. Revelation 20:15

"And if anyone was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire."

The opposite of this verse means that if anyone's name is recorded in the book of life, he must be saved. The judgment at the great white throne is according to certain principles. Those who perish, perish because of their evil deeds (not because of their good deeds), and those who are saved, are saved because their names are written in the book of life (not because of their good deeds either).

IV. A NEW HEAVEN AND NEW EARTH

(REVELATION 21:1-8)

(Please pay close attention to the following sub-headings.)

**A. A General Outline
of the New Heaven and New Earth
(Revelation 21:1)**

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and the sea is no more."

The old heaven, the old earth, and the old sea have all passed away. Now there is only the new heaven and the new earth; there is no mention of a new sea. Isaiah 65:17 says that God will create a new heaven and a new earth, but that which follows verse 17 concerns the millennial kingdom. The main purpose of Isaiah 65 is to compare the people who are blessed by God with other people. Verse 17 says that God will create a new heaven and a new earth; this is a proclamation. Verses 18 through 25 describe the conditions in Jerusalem in the millennial kingdom. Also, the new heaven and new earth mentioned in 2 Peter 3:13 are the same as those mentioned in Revelation 21:1.

**B. The Relationship between the New Jerusalem
and the People on the Earth
(Revelation 21:2-4)**

1. Revelation 21:2

"And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."

This city is holy. Formerly, God had only a temple, but not a holy city. He lived in that temple; but now, the holy city replaces the temple, and all of its people are priests. The old Jerusalem was made by men and has become old; the New Jerusalem comes down out of heaven and is new. In the millennium the New Jerusalem will be in the air; it will not come down to the earth, because at that time there will still be the old Jerusalem on earth. But when the New Jerusalem does come down out of heaven, she will still be wearing her new adornment. At the wedding dinner of the Lamb, she is the bride. Now it seems that by adorning herself a little bit, she becomes the wife of the Lamb for eternity.

2. Revelation 21:3

"And I heard a loud voice out of the throne, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will tabernacle with them, and they will be His peoples, and God Himself will be with them and be their God."

"A loud voice." This may still be the Lord's voice. "He will tabernacle with them." Hereafter, there will no longer be any distinction between the Jews and the

Gentiles. God now only cares for men. "The tabernacle of God is with men." The New Jerusalem on the earth is the tabernacle of God. Formerly, when the Israelites were on earth, the tabernacle of God was set up among the people. Now there is no distinction between the Jews and the Gentiles, so the tabernacle of God is with men. God is now dwelling with men. "They will be His peoples" means that, hereafter, they will belong to God and take delight in Him and listen to His word. "And God Himself will...be their God" means that God will take care of them according to what He purposes and will give grace to them (Jer. 24:7; Ezek. 11:20).

3. Revelation 21:4

"And He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death will be no more, nor will there be sorrow or crying or pain anymore; for the former things have passed away."

"Every tear." Tears are a common experience for the people of the earth. But now God wipes away their tears by wiping away the causes of tears, such as death, sadness, pain, and so forth, which all come from sin. Therefore, when these things are wiped away, there will no longer be any trace of sin.

C. The Difference between the Saved and the Perishing (Revelation 21:5-8)

Although these portions, Revelation 21:2-4 and 21:5-8, are closely related to each other, the people in the second half of verse 6 are totally different from those in verse 3.

1. Revelation 21:5

"And He who sits on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And He said, Write, for these words are faithful and true."

"He who sits on the throne" is probably God. "Write" means to write this in a book. We can see from the way this is spoken, that this section is especially important.

2. Revelation 21:6

"And He said to me, They have come to pass. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give to him who thirsts from the spring of the water of life freely."

The second sentence in verse 5 says, "Write," and the first sentence of verse 6 says, "They have come to pass." Even though the words "They have come to pass" are said ahead of time, all that is spoken in this book will be fulfilled. God

will restore the heavens and the earth to their original condition. He is "the Alpha and the Omega"; therefore, all will be accomplished.

3. Revelation 21:7

"He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be God to him, and he will be a son to Me."

The overcoming here is different from that in chapters two and three of this book. In chapters two and three it is the overcoming in the matter of conduct, that is, the overcoming that involves a comparing of believers with believers. But the overcoming here is the overcoming that involves a comparison of believers with unbelievers in the world (1 John 5:4).

What is the difference between the people in verses 6 through 7 and those in verse 3?

(1) According to verse 3, John saw in a vision that the tabernacle of God is with men, that is, God is dwelling with many people on the earth. The people in the second half of 21:6 are those who are thirsty after hearing the gospel preaching mentioned previously.

(2) The people in verse 3 are the people of God who live on the new earth; those in verse 7 are the sons of God who live in the new city.

(3) The people in verse 3 simply receive the common, entire portion of those on the earth, which is to be the people of God. But the people in verse 7 are not only the sons of God, but also His servants and kings (22:3, 5).

(4) "They will be His peoples" in verse 3 indicates something corporate and common. "He will be a son" in verse 7 refers to something particular and intimate.

(5) "They will be His peoples" in verse 3 is spoken in the third person; it is said by men. "I will be God to him, and he will be a son to Me" in verse 7 is spoken by God directly.

(6) The people in verse 3 dwell on God's new earth, but those in verse 7 dwell in God's house.

Differences in position among Christians are limited to the millennial kingdom. In the new heaven and new earth, all believers will be equal.

4. Revelation 21:8

"But the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and fornicators and sorcerers and idolaters and all the false, their part will be in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

"The cowardly." These are the ones who know that they can be saved through believing, but dare not believe for fear of persecution. The "unbelieving" are those who do not believe. The "abominable" are not necessarily the idol worshippers. All those who worship the host of heavenly bodies are also included. "Idolaters" means those who worship images made of gold, silver, brass, and so forth. "Sorcerers" are those who are involved with demons. "The lake which burns with fire." There is no sea in the new heaven and new earth, but there is a lake of fire.

V. THE NEW JERUSALEM

(REVELATION 21:9-27)

A. Revelation 21:9

"And one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, Come here; I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb."

Now the name of the wife of the Lamb is given. Many people say that the wife of the Lamb is the church. They say that there cannot be a real Jerusalem in the future, but there is much evidence that New Jerusalem is a literal new city:

(1) At that time the church will no longer be the church, but a part of the redeemed ones.

(2) This is a book of revelation. Since chapters two and three explicitly mention the church, why should the New Jerusalem in chapter twenty-one be a sign of the church and not simply the New Jerusalem?

(3) According to 3:12 of this book, the New Jerusalem is what the church hopes for. If we say that the New Jerusalem is the church, then the church would be hoping for the church. This would not make sense.

(4) In Revelation 19:7-10, the New Jerusalem is the bride, and the church is but a guest. Hence, we see that the church is not the New Jerusalem.

(5) There must be a new city in the new heaven and the new earth. Since many people will want to come before God, there must be a dwelling place for them. The Lord clearly said, "In My Father's house are many abodes" (John 14:2).

(6) The woman in Revelation 12:1 refers to Jerusalem, and the great harlot in 17:1 refers to the city of Rome. Therefore, the wife of the Lamb in 21:9 must also be a real city.

(7) After the blowing of the seventh trumpet, the kingdom will arrive, and all the mysteries will be fulfilled. How can the New Jerusalem, which is after the

kingdom and is in the new heaven and the new earth, be mysterious and not be real?

(8) In Revelation 17, John wonders greatly when he sees the great Babylon. It is a mystery which needs an angel to explain it to him. But here, John neither wonders nor needs an angel to explain anything, because this city is real.

(9) Some say that the wife of the Lamb must be the church because they regard eternity as something spiritual. They do not realize that in the new heaven and new earth everything is real. God selected the gold and silver used by Solomon to build the temple. Therefore, we cannot say that there would be no use of gold and silver for the building in the new heaven and new earth.

(10) At that time many people will be resurrected bodily, that is, they will possess a spiritual body. There must also be a city for them to dwell in.

(11) Here we are given the shape, size, and all the building materials of the city of New Jerusalem. How can this description be used for the church?

(12) Revelation 21:27 clearly says that many people will enter the city. If the city is the church, how can people enter into people? Also, 21:25 says that the gates of the city shall not be shut by day. Can we say that this speaks about the church?

(13) In 21:9 the wife of the Lamb is shown to John. If "the wife of the Lamb" is a mystery and the New Jerusalem is the explanation, how can we not take the New Jerusalem literally?

(14) The New Jerusalem is in contrast to the old Jerusalem. As the old Jerusalem is a city, so also is the New Jerusalem. Therefore, how can we say that the New Jerusalem is the church?

(15) Galatians 4:26 clearly tells us that there is a heavenly Jerusalem. This Jerusalem is different from the church. Hence, Paul said it (this heavenly Jerusalem) is our (the church's) mother. Therefore, how can we say that the New Jerusalem is the church?

(16) Hebrews 11:10 says, "For he eagerly waited for the city which has the foundations, whose Architect and Builder is God." The New Jerusalem is truly a city with foundations. Was Abraham looking for the church? At that time Abraham could not even have known that there was going to be a church.

(17) Hebrews 12:22 speaks of the heavenly Jerusalem, myriads of angels, and "the universal gathering." Verse 23 mentions "the church of the firstborn, who have been enrolled in the heavens" (referring to the church); "God, the Judge of all"; and "the spirits of righteous men who have been made perfect" (referring to

the Old Testament saints). Here we have God, the angels, the Old Testament saints, the church, and the heavenly Jerusalem. Thus, the church is clearly different from the heavenly Jerusalem. How can we say that the New Jerusalem is the church?

B. Revelation 21:10

"And he carried me away in spirit onto a great and high mountain and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God."

"And he carried me away in spirit onto a great and high mountain" is in contrast to "And he carried me away in spirit into a wilderness" in 17:3.

C. Revelation 21:11

"Having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, as clear as crystal."

This city especially has the glory of God. In ancient times the glory of God in the temple was not obvious since it appeared like a cloud.

"Her light." Is this light the glory of God? The answer is no, because in verse 23 "the glory of God illumined it" and the Lamb is the lamp of the city. The illumination of the glory of God is upon everything, but the shining of the lamp is limited to one place. Formerly, the shining in the Holy of Holies was by the glory of God, while the shining in the Holy Place was by the seven lamps. In 4:5 of this book, the seven lamps of fire are mentioned in relation to the Holy Spirit before the throne. Concerning the Holy Spirit's being sent forth into all the earth, it is the seven Spirits.

"Crystal" is transparent. Today the shining of the sun is not even universal, but the light of the new city in that day will be transparent. We do not know what color this light will be. All that we know is that it will be beautiful.

D. The Gates of the City

(Revelation 21:12-13; cf. verse 21)

"It had a great and high wall and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names inscribed, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel. On the east three gates, and on the north three gates, and on the south three gates, and on the west three gates."

Both verses 12 and 21 mention "twelve gates." According to verse 21 the street is singular in number. Since there are twelve gates, it should follow that there are twelve streets. How can there be only one street? The street in verse 21 is like a square in the middle of the city, around which are roads. Since every side of the

city has three gates, every side must also have three roads. "And at the gates twelve angels." The angels here are not kings; they are the guards of the gates of the new city. "And names inscribed, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel." Israel represents the law of God. "And the twelve gates were twelve pearls" (21:21). Pearl represents the righteousness of God. Thus, we can see that one enters the gates of God according to God's law and righteousness.

E. The Height of the City

(Revelation 21:14-17)

"And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And he who spoke with me had a golden reed as a measure that he might measure the city and its gates and its wall. And the city lies square, and its length is as great as the breadth. And he measured the city with the reed to a length of twelve thousand stadia; the length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. And he measured its wall, a hundred and forty-four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel."

Verse 14 says, "And the wall of the city had twelve foundations." Verse 16 says, "He measured the city with the reed to a length of twelve thousand stadia; the length and the breadth and the height of it are equal." Then verse 17 says, "He measured its wall, a hundred and forty-four cubits." The city is twelve thousand stadia in length, width, and height. (One stadia is equal to 606.75 feet.) The total height of the city is twelve thousand stadia, but the height of the wall is one hundred forty-four cubits. The height of twelve thousand stadia is measured from the bottom foundation all the way to the throne of God. The numbers in this chapter are either twelve or multiples of twelve. Twelve thousand stadia is a multiple of twelve, and twelve is the number of eternal completion.

The wall of the city has twelve foundations. Each layer probably is smaller than the layer under it, similar to the shape of a pyramid. Thus, all twelve layers can be seen.

On the foundations are the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb (v. 14). The apostles represent the grace of God; therefore, the grace of God makes up the foundations of the wall of the city.

F. The Materials of the Foundations of the Wall, the Gates, and the Street

(Revelation 21:18-21)

"And the building work of its wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every precious stone: the first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was, respectively, of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass."

"And the city was pure gold, like clear glass." The gold here is transparent and is different from ordinary gold.

"And the foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every precious stone." The twelve precious stones have twelve colors. Some say that these colors are: (1)green, (2)blue, (3)blue, (4)green, (5)red, (6)red, (7)yellow, (8)sea green, (9)yellow, (10)golden green, (11)purple, and (12) purple.

The combination of these twelve colors is very beautiful. The blending of the eight colors from the fifth through the twelfth produces a rainbow appearance.

G. Revelation 21:22

"And I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple."

There is no temple in the new city. In the Old Testament times, only the temple was holy; no place outside of it was considered holy. At the time of the Lord Jesus, the temple was still on the earth. During the time of the church, there is a temple in heaven, but none on earth. In the millennium, however, there will be a temple in heaven as well as one on earth. In the new heaven and new earth there will be no temple since there will be no sin and, hence, no need to offer sacrifices. The entire new city is holy. In the ancient times, men fellowshiped with God through the temple. Here all who live in the city can fellowship with God directly, because He and the Lamb have become the center of the new city.

H. Revelation 21:23

"And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon that they should shine in it, for the glory of God illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb."

It says here that the new city does not need the sun or the moon to shine in it. It does not say, however, that there will be no sun or moon in the new heaven and new earth. The light of the sun and the moon may shine upon the city, but the city itself has no need of this, because the glory of God illumines it and its lamp is the Lamb.

I. Revelation 21:24

"And the nations will walk by its light; and the kings of the earth bring their glory into it."

The nations will walk in the light of the city. All those who live in the city have a resurrected body, whereas all those who live on the new earth, that is, the nations, still have a body of flesh and blood. These are the people of the nations. At that time, there will be nations, but no tribes (no distinction of race), no tongues (no distinction of language), and no Jews. The nations are the people who will still be alive after the millennial kingdom but were not deceived by Satan. The saved ones in the city include the believers, both in the Old Testament and the New Testament, who are saved by the blood of the Lord (because the gates of the new city have the names of the twelve tribes and the foundations of its wall have the names of the twelve apostles).

Those in the city are sons (21:7) and kings (22:5). The ones who live on the new earth are the living people who have passed through the millennial kingdom. They are the peoples on the new earth (21:3).

"The kings of the earth" are those who rule the nations in eternity. They are a little greater among those of the nations, yet they are very different from the kings in the city. Our Lord is the King of kings, and we are these kings.

"Walk" implies travel. At the time of the millennium, the earthly Jerusalem will be the capital of the whole world. Once every few years, the Gentiles will come to it. In eternity the Gentiles will also travel to the New Jerusalem. Their travel will be guided by the light of the city; thus, they need no other guidance. (The light shall guide them in the same way that the star in Matthew 2:9 guided the magi from the east.) The city will have no need of the light of the earth, but the people on the earth will need the light of the city.

According to the Old Testament, the glory here is the best produce of all the earth. If we read Genesis 31:1, we will immediately understand that the glory there refers to riches, or to the best produce of the earth. Here they "bring their glory into it," which means that on the new earth, the kings of the earth will present the good things from their land as offerings to God and to the city (Esth. 1:4).

J. Revelation 21:25

"And its gates shall by no means be shut by day, for there will be no night there."

According to this verse there will still be day and night in the new heaven and new earth (because the opposite of "day" is "night"). The kings of the earth may travel to the new city during the day, but there is no night in the new city. The condition of the inhabitants of the new heaven and new earth will be like that of Adam and Eve, because they will still have bodies of flesh and blood.

"Day and night" or "night" is mentioned five times in this book in regard to eternity (7:15; 14:11; 20:10; 21:25; 22:5). Therefore, there must still be day and night in the new heaven and new earth. Nevertheless, there is no night in the city; hence, the people there can serve God day and night. Because those who live in the new city have resurrected bodies, they will never get tired. Therefore, they can serve God day and night.

K. Revelation 21:26

"And they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it."

"They" refers to the kings in verse 24. The kings of the earth bring their glory into the city. Also, the people of the nations follow them to do the same thing. This is something done absolutely in peace.

L. Revelation 21:27

"And anything common and he who makes an abomination and a lie shall by no means enter into it, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life."

"Anything common" can also be translated "anything that is cheap." Cheap things are not worth much. "He who makes an abomination" means he who worships idols. "He who makes...a lie" means he who practices sorcery. This does not mean that, at that time, there are still those who practice such abominations and lies. It is only an indication of how clean, solemn, and noble this city is.

"Those who are written in the Lamb's book of life." Two kinds of people live in the new heaven and new earth. One kind will be those of us who have been saved by the blood of the Lord and who live in the new city; the other kind will be the living people who have passed through the millennial kingdom and have become the inhabitants of the new earth. Our names are written in the book of life; we may live in the city forever. The inhabitants of the new earth also have their names in the book of life, but they do not live in the city. Instead, they can only go in and out of the new city.

In the millennium, only the ones who are invited may take part in the new city, but in eternity this privilege is given to all who have their names written in the book of life.

The eating, drinking, and living of the inhabitants of the new earth will be the same as that of Adam before he sinned (but these will not sin); in eternity they will still have a physical body. There is much evidence in the Bible to support this: (1) The Lord said, "For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage" (Matthew 22:30). Only those with resurrected bodies will not be given in marriage. Since the inhabitants of the new earth do not have resurrected bodies, they will still be given in marriage.

(2) The new heaven and new earth are the restoration to the situation before Adam committed sin. Therefore, the people will be fruitful and will multiply; they will eat, drink, and live in the same way that Adam did.

(3) One of the Ten Commandments says, "And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments" (Exo. 20:6). [Note: "unto thousands" should be translated "unto a thousand generations."] If man could never pass through a thousand generations, why did God ever say such a thing? From Adam to the Lord Jesus, there were only seventy-six generations. (Luke 3:23-38 shows that if we include God as one generation, the total is seventy-seven generations.) From Adam to the Lord, there were only four thousand years. Four thousand years was only seventy-six generations. How many generations have there been from the Lord Jesus until now? According to scientific calculations, one generation is, on the average, thirty years. Therefore, two thousand years would only be seventy or eighty generations. In the millennium a man's life span will be greater, so there will be even fewer generations. If we assume that there will be twenty to thirty generations, the total of these three periods will be only two hundred generations. Taking two hundred generations from one thousand, we still have eight hundred. Where are these remaining generations? Therefore, the inhabitants of the new earth must still multiply, except there will be no more death.

VI. THE RIVER OF WATER OF LIFE

(REVELATION 22:1-2)

A. Revelation 22:1

"And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street."

This verse continues to speak about the new city. "Its street" should be a square patch of ground in the center as in 21:21. The former paradise had four rivers

only. However, in the new city there will be a river of water of life, bright as crystal. Therefore, this scene is better than that of the former paradise.

"The throne." This book speaks of the throne in the different ages:

(1) During the gospel age God sits on the throne, and the Lord sits with God (3:21b).

(2) During the millennium God sits on the throne in heaven, while the Lord Jesus also has a throne on earth (3:21a).

(3) The time of the great white throne is like the gospel age again; the Son sits on the Father's throne (20:11).

(4) In the new city there is only one throne, which is "the throne of God and of the Lamb" (22:1). There is no longer this distinction between the Father and the Son. In eternity the Lord's name will forever be the Lamb. This name will remind men that there was sin in the world but that the Lord came into the world as the redeeming Lamb. It will also remind men that they can now eat the fruit of the tree of life and drink the water of the river of life because the Lord once became a Lamb.

B. Revelation 22:2

"And on this side and on that side of the river was the tree of life, producing twelve fruits, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations."

The "tree of life" is real. Although in Proverbs 3:18, 11:30, 13:12, and 15:4 the tree of life is a sign, it cannot be interpreted that way here. In 17:15 when "waters" are mentioned, the angel immediately explains what they refer to. Therefore, if the river of water of life and the tree of life in 22:2 are also signs, the angel would have immediately explained them too. But here the angel does not explain; hence, these are not signs.

Revelation 2:7 says that the tree of life is in the Paradise of God. Revelation 22:2 says that the river is in the midst of the street of the city. This indicates that the New Jerusalem is the Paradise of God. The garden in Genesis 2:8 is the paradise of man, but this is the Paradise of God. Hence, this shows us that God is bringing man to a better place.

"The tree of life" here is singular. How then can one tree grow on both sides of the river? This should not be difficult to understand because even with the banyan tree we find that it can grow several trunks out of one root system and can therefore spread afar. "Yielding its fruit each month" indicates that there still will be months. The days and nights in 21:25 are determined by the sun, and the

months here are determined by the moon. A day is twelve hours, a night is twelve hours, and there are twelve months. The number for eternity is always twelve. "And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations." Revelation 21:4 says that the former things are passed away and that there will be no more pain or death. This also indicates that there will be no more sickness. However, it does not say that there will be no more infirmity. We can see in Matthew 8:17 that sickness and infirmity are different. Where will these infirmities come from? Since the men here have bodies of flesh and blood, they cannot be absolutely exempt from infirmities. Then how can they live forever? It must be that the leaves of the tree of life heal their infirmities continuously, so that they are never tired.

Some may ask whether or not the inhabitants of the earth in the new heaven and new earth can gain eternal life as well. This verse does not give a clear word regarding this. (The tree of life is clearly in the paradise of Genesis 2:9. And from this verse we see that the tree of life is also in the new heaven and the new earth. However, we do not know if the people of the nations will eat of it.)

VII. THE SEVEN DIFFERENT BLESSINGS OF THE REDEEMED ONES (REVELATION 22:3-5)

A. Revelation 22:3

"And there will no longer be a curse. And the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His slaves will serve Him."

"And there will no longer be a curse." This guarantees that there will be no more committing of sins in the new heaven and new earth. The work of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil will be over. Before Adam committed sin in the paradise, his conscience was not functioning, but in the new heaven and new earth, everyone will have a conscience which will be able to distinguish between good and evil. Also the devil shall be no more.

Hence, there shall be no more curse because:

- (1) The curse on the world came from the angels' committing of sins. In eternity, however, the angels will no longer rule; we will be ruling instead.
- (2) There is no mention of animals being in the new heaven and new earth, because the snake was used by the devil.

(3) Besides the tree of life, there is no mention of any other plant being in the new heaven and new earth. This is because the wine from the vine caused Lot to be drunk, bringing a curse to a certain part of humanity.

"And the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it." Seven times in this book the relationship between the Lord Jesus and the new city is mentioned and is based on the name of the Lamb (21:9, 14, 22, 23, 27; 22:1, 3).

"His slaves" are the same as those mentioned in 1:1. They include not only us who are saved, but also all the prophets and saints in the Old Testament age.

"Will serve Him" here does not mean to serve as laborers, but to serve as priests. Revelation 20:6 says that the overcomers will be priests and kings in the millennium. Since there will be no more sin in eternity, neither will there be priests as there were in the millennium. Therefore, priests are not explicitly mentioned here. Nevertheless, there will still be many ways to serve God. This indicates that we will not be lazy in eternity. In the millennium, only the overcomers can be priests; but in eternity all who are saved will serve God.

B. Revelation 22:4

"And they will see His face, and His name will be on their forehead."

"And they will see His face." To continually see God is a special privilege. Fallen men are forever kept away from the Lord's face and from the glory of His strength (2 Thes. 1:9). In the Old Testament, Moses was the only one allowed to see even the back of God (Exo. 33:18-23). In the millennium, only the overcomers can see God's face (Heb. 12:14), but in the new city, all those who are saved will see God's face and will draw near to Him.

Revelation 22:3 speaks "of God and of the Lamb," but verse 4 says only "His face." This shows that the Lord and the Father are one. The Father and the Son are distinct but not separate. "And His name will be on their forehead." During the millennium the one hundred and forty-four thousand alone have His name on their foreheads (14:1). Now all the saved ones have His name on their foreheads.

C. Revelation 22:5

"And night will be no more; and they have no need of the light of a lamp and of the light of the sun, for the Lord God will shine upon them; and they will reign forever and ever."

At this time, there will be no need for either the natural light or the man-made light because the Lord God Himself will shine on them. "And they will reign forever and ever." This is the second thing the believers will do in eternity (the

first being to serve God). In the millennium, only the overcomers will be kings and only for a thousand years. Now, however, all who are saved will be kings for eternity.

Some famous expositors say that Revelation 21:9—22:5 does not refer to the scene in the new heaven and new earth but, rather, describes the millennium. The reason for their interpretation is that according to 22:2, which says that "the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations," there will still be sickness and, therefore, death on earth. Hence, this would refer to the millennial kingdom. However, they may be proved wrong by the following reasons:

(1) According to 21:2 the New Jerusalem comes down only after the former heaven and earth have passed away (v. 1). Before the old earth passes away, the New Jerusalem cannot come down, because the New Jerusalem cannot come down upon the old earth.

(2) According to 21:2 and 10, the Jerusalem here is new, and it comes down out of heaven from God. But during the millennium, the old Jerusalem will still be on the earth. Should the New Jerusalem come down at that time, then would there not be two Jerusalems on earth? The New Jerusalem cannot come down before the old Jerusalem passes away.

(3) In 21:1 and 2, John first sees the new heaven and new earth, and then he sees the New Jerusalem. How can one say that the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and new earth is in the kingdom? Some would then say that though 21:1-8 does refer to the new heaven and new earth, Revelation 21:9—22:5 refers back to the scene of the New Jerusalem in the millennial kingdom. But both 21:2 and 10 clearly say that the New Jerusalem comes down out of heaven from God. Therefore, we see that the New Jerusalem in verse 10 is the same city as in verse 2.

(4) Since 21:5 says that all things are made new, how can the New Jerusalem be something that was in the millennial kingdom before everything is made new?

(5) The people in 21:8 are cast into the lake of fire after the millennial kingdom and after being judged. The new city stands in opposition to the lake of fire. How then can one say that the new city comes first, whereas these people are cast into the lake of fire after the millennium?

(6) "And I saw no temple in it" (21:22), but we know there will be a temple during the millennium. Ezekiel 40:48 clearly tells how the temple will look in the millennial kingdom.

(7) "The city has no need of the sun or of the moon that they should shine in it" (21:23), but we know that the Bible states that during the millennium "the light of the moon will be like the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be sevenfold, like the light of seven days" (Isa. 30:26). How can we say that the New Jerusalem descends during the millennium?

(8) In 21:24 and 26 there is the word "into." This word proves that men may come into the city. But during the millennium the city is suspended in the air; therefore, men of flesh and blood cannot enter into it.

(9) The Lamb's book of life (21:27) appears after the millennium (20:15). How can those whose names are recorded in the Lamb's book of life, which appears only after the millennium, go in and out of the city during the millennium?

(10) There will be no more curse in the new heaven and new earth (22:3), but in the millennium such curses as sickness, pain, death, and so forth will still exist. How then can we say that Revelation 21:9—22:5 describes the millennium?

(11) Revelation 22:3 speaks of "the throne of God and of the Lamb." During the millennium there is only the throne of the Lord Jesus on earth, not the "throne of God and of the Lamb." Hence, how can one say that Revelation 21:9—22:5 describes the things in the millennium?

(12) According to 22:1-3, the throne of God and of the Lamb is in the center of the new city. Nevertheless, Ezekiel says that the glory of God fills the Holy of Holies (43:5; 44:4). If the New Jerusalem does indeed descend during the millennium, will the center of man's worship then be the new city, or will it be the Holy of Holies? Where will God dwell?

Our conclusion is that Revelation 6:1—21:8 covers the prophetic part of this book; Revelation 21:9—22:5 speaks about the New Jerusalem; and Revelation 22:6-21 is not the main body of prophecy but, rather, the epilogue of this book.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE FINAL WARNING

(Revelation 22:6-21)

I. THE MESSAGE OF THE ANGEL

(REVELATION 22:6-11)

A. Revelation 22:6

"And he said to me, These words are faithful and true; and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent His angel to show to His slaves the things which must quickly take place."

"These words" refer to the words in the previous verses concerning the New Jerusalem. "These words are faithful and true."

Twice in this book the angel declares that these words are faithful and true (21:5; 22:6). "The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets" means that the Lord is the God of the spirits of those who are the prophets. Note that the word "spirits" here is plural. See also 1 Corinthians 14:12, where "spiritual gifts" (KJV) should be translated "spirits." The word "spirits" in its plural form always refers to the spiritual gifts which build up the church. These spirits are also spiritual gifts. See also 1 Corinthians 14:32, where "prophets" and "spirits" are both plural: "The spirits of prophets." Here the spirits of the prophets in both the Old and New Testament times are included. "The Lord, the God" here refers to the Lord Jesus. Compare this with Revelation 1:1: "And He..., sending it by His angel." "He" here refers to the Lord Jesus. In 22:6 the Lord God who sends His angel is likewise the Lord Jesus (see also 22:16).

Although beginning from 22:6 we have the epilogue, this verse brings us all the way back to the first chapter of Revelation. "To show to His slaves." This book focuses on our individual responsibility before God as slaves, not as children. "The things which must quickly take place." Some may think that over the past two thousand years God has delayed very long, but what is really long or short is determined by God's "clock," not by our concept of time.

B. Revelation 22:7

"And behold, I come quickly. Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this scroll."

The angel speaks in verse 6; the Lord Jesus speaks in verse 7. The phrase "I come quickly" is mentioned three times in verses 6 through 21 (vv. 7, 12, 20) for emphasis, so that man would realize that "blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this scroll." This book is given to man for him to keep; it is for him to put into practice. Chapter one says to read, hear, and keep, but here only keep is mentioned because, at this point, everything has already been read and heard. Now what remains to be done is keep.

C. Revelation 22:8

"And I John am he who hears and sees these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things."

John was moved by the Holy Spirit to see and hear these things. The Lord had instructed him by His angel. Now he has a conclusion. The "angel" here probably is the same angel in 19:9-10 and 21:9. "I fell to worship before the feet of the

angel who showed me these things." This is the second time John failed (19:10 records the first time). John only fell down and was about to worship; he had not yet uttered any praises. The angel stopped him. This shows that Christians should not involve themselves in any prostration which expresses an attitude of worship.

D. Revelation 22:9

"And he said to me, Do not do that! I am your fellow slave and a fellow slave of your brothers the prophets and of those who keep the words of this scroll. Worship God."

The Lord forbids man to worship anyone other than God. In the Old Testament as well as in this book, the Lord often appeared as an angel. But after the millennium, He will no longer appear as an angel.

E. Revelation 22:10

"And he said to me, Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this scroll, for the time is near."

This verse clearly indicates that this is a book of prophecy and that it should not be sealed. Daniel 8:26 and 12:9 say that what was written should be sealed because the book of Daniel is a book of signs. It covers a long period of time, and it was to be sealed till the end of the age. The book of Revelation, however, exists at the end of the age. It is here to help man understand and, therefore, should not be sealed.

In the parable of the nobleman who went into a far country, the Lord says that when He comes back, He will meet the same servants. This indicates that the Lord will return soon (Luke 19:12-26).

What does "seal" mean? From Matthew 13:10-11 and 13-17 we see that to speak in parables is to seal. The phrase "Do not seal" here shows that this is not a parable, an illustration, or a sign. Revelation is not a book of signs or a sealed book, but an open book.

(A serious mistake of the historical school of interpretation is to regard the book of Revelation as only a book of signs. Some in the futurist school also consider parts of this book to be signs. Actually, this book has only about twenty-eight signs, fourteen of which are explained, such as the golden lampstands, the seven stars, and so forth. The remaining fourteen are minor points and are easily understood. Besides these, there are no other signs in this book. Of what use would this book be if all the things in it were merely signs?)

"For the time is near." Truly, the time is near!

F. Revelation 22:11

"Let him who does unrighteousness do unrighteousness still; and let him who is filthy be filthy still; and let him who is righteous do righteousness still; and let him who is holy be holy still."

This sentence is a continuation of the words "the time is near" in the preceding verse. It implies two things:

(1) Since the time is near, there will be no opportunity to turn if one does not turn now.

(2) Within this short period of time, those who would turn will turn, but those who would not turn will remain the same forever.

It is hard to say whether this word is spoken by the Lord Jesus or by the angels.

II. THE MESSAGE OF THE LORD

(REVELATION 22:12-13)

A. Revelation 22:12

"Behold, I come quickly, and My reward is with Me to render to each one as his work is."

"Behold, I come quickly." This, along with verse 7, is said to draw our attention. This verse corresponds to verse 11. The reward will be given according to man's deeds. Therefore, let him who does unrighteousness do unrighteousness still, and let him who is filthy be filthy still, for the Lord is coming soon!

B. Revelation 22:13

"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End."

This expression is mentioned a few times in this book (1:8, 17; 2:8; 21:6; 22:13). The Lord Jesus says this because He wants us to see that Jehovah in the Old Testament is Jesus in the New Testament. Whether it is the age of the patriarchs, the age of the law, or the age of grace, regardless of the method He uses, God Himself remains the same from the beginning to the end. There is only one God.

III. TWO KINDS OF PEOPLE

(REVELATION 22:14-15)

A. Revelation 22:14

"Blessed are those who wash their robes that they may have right to the tree of life and may enter by the gates into the city."

This verse declares today's situation. Those who wash their robes are blessed in two ways: (1) "They may have right to the tree of life" and (2) "may enter by the gates into the city." Entering into the city does not refer to being a visitor to the city. According to verse 19 the holy city is the portion of those who have washed their robes.

"Wash their robes" means to let the effectiveness of the blood of the Lord Jesus be applied to them all the time (7:14).

B. Revelation 22:15

"Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the fornicators and the murderers and the idolaters and everyone who loves and makes a lie."

This refers to those who perish. Here we need to consider one thing. Do not the nations live outside the new city? If so, how can we explain this? "Outside" here does not refer to the place where the nations live. If we compare verse 15 with 21:8, we will find that this place "outside" the city is the lake of fire. The new heaven and new earth replace the old heaven and old earth, the New Jerusalem replaces the old Jerusalem, and the lake of fire in the new heaven and new earth replaces today's sea. Hence, the lake of fire outside the new city corresponds to Topheth outside of the old Jerusalem (2 Kings 23:10; Isa. 30:33). A "lake" implies a place of limitation.

"The dogs." This is a sign. This sign is not very important, and its meaning is not hard to understand. Matthew 7:6 and Philippians 3:2 explain what "the dogs" signify. "The sorcerers" are those who communicate with demons. Saul died because he communicated with demons (1 Sam. 28:8). God delivered Saul to his enemy to be killed. God hates those who communicate with demons the most; He does not want man to find things out from the dead (Lev. 19:31; Deut. 18:11-12). He allows man to understand only the matters that are included within the sphere of this book.

IV. CHRIST'S OWN TESTIMONY

(REVELATION 22:16)

"I Jesus have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the bright morning star."

This book is written for the church. Fearing that man may not listen, God sends His angel to testify. This verse speaks of God's relationship with man in two aspects. First, it speaks of His relationship to the Jews and to the kingdom. "I am the Root...of David." (According to His divinity, He is the source of David.) This

shows that He is Jehovah in the Old Testament. As David was the first king chosen by God to satisfy His heart's desire, so also the Lord Jesus in the millennium is the chosen King to satisfy God. "And the Offspring of David." (According to His humanity, the Lord Jesus was born of King David.) This speaks of the aspect of His humanity. As Solomon was the son of David and was the king of peace, so the Lord Jesus is the King of peace in the millennium. These two statements answer the question posed in Matthew 22:45, "If then David calls Him Lord, how is He his son?"

Second, it speaks of His relationship to the church and to the rapture. "The bright morning star." The "morning star" appears before dawn in the dark hour. The Lord Jesus is the morning star to the watchful believers that they may be raptured. (The dark hour before dawn is the great tribulation, and dawn is the coming of the kingdom.)

V. THE RESPONSE OF THE SPIRIT AND THE BRIDE (REVELATION 22:17)

"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come! And let him who hears say, Come! And let him who is thirsty come; let him who wills take the water of life freely."

This is the last time that "the Spirit" is mentioned in this book. We do not know why the Spirit is not mentioned in connection with the new heaven and new earth.

The "bride" here is not the same as the wife mentioned in 19:7. The bride of prophecy ends at 22:5. The bride here is the bride mentioned in the epistles of Paul. "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come!" This is the prayer of the Holy Spirit and the church. Verse 16 is spoken specifically to the church, and verse 17 is the reply.

"And let him who hears." This has been mentioned in 1:3, 13:9, and many times in chapters two and three. "Him who hears" always refers to individual persons. "And let him who is thirsty come." This points back to the situation of the church. "Thirsty" means to be thirsty in the soul. "Come" here is the same as "come" in Matthew 11:28. "Let him who wills take the water of life freely." This does not refer to the water of life in 22:1, but speaks of the eternal life which the believers receive, enabling them to be satisfied with Christ and no longer thirst for the world. No one who yearns for the Lord's soon return is indifferent toward the souls of the sinners. On the one hand, they beg the Lord to come soon, and on the other hand, they desire that the sinners would be saved.

VI. THE LAST WARNING

(REVELATION 22:18-19)

"I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this scroll: If anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this scroll; and if anyone takes away from the words of the scroll of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and out of the holy city, which are written in this scroll."

The tree of life and the holy city are the same as those in verse 14. The difference is that verse 14 speaks only of entering into the city, whereas verse 19 speaks of having the holy city as one's portion. This means that one not only enters into the city, but has the city as his portion as well.

No one should intentionally add to or take away from the words of this book. Many books which were written two or three hundred years later have also been called books of revelation. These can easily diminish the value of the book of Revelation written by John. That is why the warning here is so serious.

VII. THE LAST MESSAGE, PRAYER, AND BLESSING

(REVELATION 22:20-21)

A. Revelation 22:20

"He who testifies these things says, Yes, I come quickly. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!"

Here the Lord Jesus Himself testifies. Before, He said, "Behold, I come quickly"; now He says, "Yes, I come quickly."

"Come, Lord Jesus!" is John's prayer. We need not ask what people think about the Lord's coming back. Rather, we need only to ask whether or not their hearts want the Lord to come back, whether or not they are like those who wait for the Lord's coming, those who say to Him, "Come, Lord Jesus!" The very last prayer in the Bible is "Come, Lord Jesus!" This prayer will eventually be answered one day. This is a prayer that many faithful believers have uttered countless times for nearly two thousand years.

B. Revelation 22:21

"The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints. Amen."

This is John's blessing. Without the grace of the Lord Jesus, sinners cannot be saved, and the saints cannot stand. The grace of our Lord Jesus has the power to prepare us for the rapture and bring us into the kingdom.