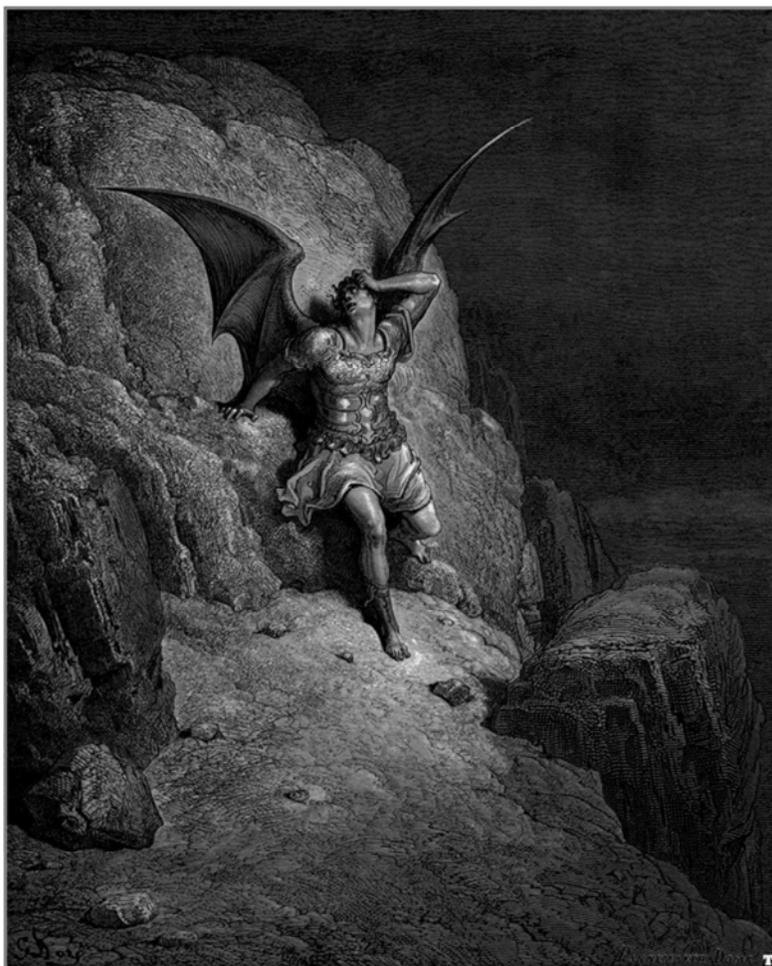


A COMMENTARY ON REVELATION TWENTY:

PAST-PRESENT-FUTURE

L.R. Shelton, Jr.

(1924-2003)



Gustave Dore

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Revelation 20 Chapter 1

My friend, it has been upon my heart for some time now to bring a series of messages on the 20th chapter of Revelation, seeking the understanding of the Holy Spirit to enable us to rightly divide the Word of truth. I believe these messages are in order at this time because of the widespread misunderstanding in Christendom in regard to this very important chapter of God's Word. A correct understanding of the truths contained in this chapter will cause the child of God to praise his risen Lord for all He has done for Him in giving him SO GREAT SALVATION. Will it not encourage our hearts to know that we, the true Israel of God, the children of God, rule and reign with Christ right now? And to know that when Satan is loosed for a little season, we will have as our hiding place the living God Himself in Jesus Christ our Lord?

When rightly understood, this chapter opens to us THE GLORY OF OUR BLESSED LORD AS HE RULES AND REIGNS NOW from His throne in the heavenlies. Herein we see our Lord's victory at the cross in conquering sin, Satan and the world, His triumph over death, hell and the grave, and His final triumph when all His enemies are made His footstool at His glorious second coming, that day we long for as the children of God. So I desire that you will listen to this series of messages with an open Bible and an open mind, praying the Lord to let you see and know that God's people are a victorious people, a people who are MORE THAN CONQUERORS through Him that loved us, and that Christ sits and reigns upon the throne even now as THE CONQUERING ONE.

Now as we give a commentary upon this chapter of 15 verses, we will seek to answer the following questions and many, many more from the Word of God in this series as our God by His Holy Spirit gives us understanding: What does the binding and loosing of Satan mean? When does it take place? What does the "thousand years" mean? When does Christ rule and reign with His saints and for how long? What does "the first resurrection" mean, and why are those called "blessed and holy" who have part in it? What is "the mark of the beast"? How does this compare with Revelation 13? What do these beasts represent? Why could they not buy or sell that didn't have the mark of the beast? When does the "Great White Throne Judgment" take place and how does it compare with the other judgments mentioned in the New Testament? What is the "second death"?

Follow in your Bibles then, as we read this chapter in its entirety:

"And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season. And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished.

This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years. And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison. And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

INTRODUCTION

I believe this chapter can be divided into four natural divisions: First, THE BINDING OF SATAN, vv. 1-3; second, the REIGN OF CHRIST AND HIS SAINTS, vv. 4-6; third, THE LOOSING OF SATAN FOR A LITTLE SEASON, vv. 7-10; and the fourth, THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT of the entire world before the wicked are cast into the lake of fire for ever and ever, vv. 11-15. And my friend, to help you rightly divide this most misunderstood chapter, as we study I want you to keep in mind this great fact: This chapter covers, not only the future, but the present and the past also! THIS TRUTH IS THE KEY TO UNDERSTANDING ALL THAT IS CONTAINED IN THIS CHAPTER. Therefore, I have entitled this series of messages,

A COMMENTARY OF REVELATION 20 PAST-PRESENT-FUTURE

Now before we take up each division in our study, let us understand that what we have before us in this chapter is a picture of what transpires from the first coming of Jesus Christ our Lord to His second coming. It pictures the binding of Satan by our blessed Lord at His first coming; it pictures the rule and reign of Christ and His saints during this gospel age in which we are living; and it pictures the loosing of Satan at the end of this age for a little season to again deceive the nations. And when will this take place? right before the glorious second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, when "...all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:28-29).

Then shall take place the final judgment of the world when our Lord shall sit upon the Great White Throne to judge every man "...out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works", which we will study further in vv. 12-15 of this chapter, and also in these verses in 1 Corinthians 15:24-26: "Then cometh THE END, when he shall have delivered

up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For HE MUST REIGN till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."

A Book of Symbols

Another thing we need to understand as we go into our study is that THIS CHAPTER IS SET IN A BOOK OF SYMBOLS, and we must interpret it in the light of the rest of God's Word. We must compare Scripture with Scripture to arrive at the truth the Holy Spirit would have us to learn. For instance, the first three verses contain seven symbols, namely: a key, a bottomless pit, a great chain, a dragon, a serpent, a thousand years, and a seal. If we took every one of these literally, we'd be in a lot of trouble! We must use Scripture to determine just what the Holy Spirit is giving us so we may rightly divide the Word of Truth and see if the interpretation is spiritual or material or natural (1 Corinthians 15:46). I believe the Word of God is plain upon this, for you see dear friend, we are not to give a literal versus a spiritual interpretation to Scripture, but rather a spiritual versus a natural interpretation; and the Scriptures tell us whether or not the Word is being spiritualized, or whether or not it is giving us a material or a natural thing in its interpretation.

Listen now! We are certainly indebted to the Holy Spirit for interpreting two of the symbols found in the first three verses, and thereby we have a good indication how to interpret all of the other symbols in this chapter. Let's read those first three verses: "And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the KEY of the BOTTOMLESS PIT and a great CHAIN in his hand. And he laid hold on the DRAGON, that old SERPENT, which is the DEVIL, and SATAN, and bound him a THOUSAND YEARS and cast him into the BOTTOMLESS PIT, and shut him up, and set a SEAL upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season."

You see, verse 2 tells us that the symbols of "dragon" and "serpent" mean the "Devil" and "Satan". And then the expression "bottomless pit" is interpreted for us in vs. 7 where it says, "when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his PRISON." So we find that the "bottomless pit" is interpreted as "Satan's prison".

With these truths to go on, we will quickly understand that we are to give these verses a spiritual interpretation; therefore, it behooves us to seek diligently the aid of the Holy Spirit to know His meaning of these verses and to seek help from the rest of the Scriptures.

Now bear with us as we lay our groundwork in this introduction, that we might be able to move on from here to the interpretation of these verses.

There is one other thought I want to bring before you before we go into this interpretation: We must eliminate all the things our friends, the pre-tribulationists, pre-millennialists and the dispensationalists, have read into these verses. I want you to notice very closely that nothing is said here about a regathered Israel in Palestine; nothing is said about the restitution of Israel as a nation in covenant relation with God; nothing is said of Israel as a political commonwealth among the nations of the earth, nothing is said of Jerusalem as the world capital after the second coming of Christ; nothing is said of Jewish racial supremacy over the Gentile nations of the world; and nothing is said of the saints reigning on the earth after the second coming of Christ.

My dear friend, none of these things are seen in these verses; in fact, they cannot be found anywhere upon the pages of the New Testament! Therefore, to see these things in these verses, they must be read into them; and to come to these Scriptures with any preconceived ideas, is to come up with a FALSE interpretation!

The Key that Unlocks the Great Truths

REMEMBER: the key that unlocks the great truths in this chapter is to interpret it in the light of what it really teaches: the past, present and future, which takes in the time from the first coming of our Lord Jesus Christ as the conquering Savior of sinners at the cross, through this present age in which we are living, unto the glorious second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the future age that is yet to come. And we are going to prove without a shadow of a doubt from the Word of God that when our blessed Lord comes Back the second time, **THAT ENDS THIS WORLD'S HISTORY:** that is the finish; **THAT WILL BE THE DAY OF JUDGMENT!**

Seven Divisions to Revelation

Listen now! This 20th chapter of Revelation forms part of the 7th division of the Book of Revelation and follows the same arrangement or division as the other six divisions; that is, each one of the seven divisions of the Book of Revelation covers the entire span of the gospel age from the first coming to the second coming of Christ.

In other words, just as the four gospels beautifully portray varying accounts of our Lord while on earth, so in the Book of Revelation we see seven views of the same subject, the entire gospel age. Let's see if I can describe it: Here's a farm house-picture it in your mind! You take a picture from the front of the house and then from the back and each side of the house; then you go up in a plane and take a picture from above the house. The house is the object of every picture, but there are different views of that one object. Well, this is the understanding and interpretation of the Book of Revelation; each of its seven divisions presents a different view of the same subject: this present gospel age in which we are living, which began with the first coming of Christ and ends with His glorious second coming. Study this out for yourself, and see if you can see the arrangement as we give you the outline:

1) In chapters 1-3 we see Christ in the midst of the seven golden lampstands, His church; and wherever there is a church (His called out ones), it is a lampstand or light-bearer. So we see the light of Christ shining in the midst of the darkness. We are told in Matthew 5:14: "Ye are the light of the world", and in Matthew 28:20 that He, Who is our Light, would be with us: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

2) Chapters 4-7 show us the open book with the seven seals. Wherever the church shines forth as the light-bearer, then the world hates the church, for the darkness refuses to be conquered by the light. Then persecution follows; also trials of every description. These trials however, are overruled for the good of the church, because we see in the beginning of this division the throne that is set in heaven, not on the earth; so believers are ever victorious, for we are told in John 16:33: "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer, I HAVE OVERCOME THE WORLD."

3) In chapters 8-11 we see and hear the seven trumpets of judgment. Wherever and whenever the church is persecuted, the Lord hears and answers the prayers of His persecuted children. He sees the blood of the martyred saints. Therefore, trumpets of judgment warn the wicked, as we are told in Luke 18:7: "And shall not God avenge his elect, that cry to Him day and night?"

4) In chapters 12-14 we find the woman and the man-child persecuted by the dragon and his helpers, the beast, the false prophet and the harlot. We find in these chapters that the struggle on the surface between the church and the world, only indicates a deeper struggle between Christ and the dragon. We are told in Genesis 3:15: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

5) Chapters 15 and 16 show us the seven bowls of wrath opened up and poured out upon the earth. For the impenitent, bowls of wrath always follow trumpets of judgment. This is true today; it was true yesterday and it will be true tomorrow, no matter what part of the earth you live on, or what strata of society you live in. We are told in Romans 2:5-6: "But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds."

6) In chapters 17-19 we find the fate of the great harlot, the beasts and the false prophet. It seems that Satan and all his helpers are victorious, but in reality they are always defeated, "for the Lord God OMNIPOTENT REIGNETH" (Revelation 19:6). We are told in I John 2:17: "And the world passes away, and the lust thereof."

7) Then in chapter 20-22 we find the judgment upon the dragon-Satan-which began at the cross; and then we see the end of this age with the new heavens, the new earth and the new Jerusalem. We find Paradise regained, and Christ with His church in complete glorification upon the new earth, which is the fulfillment of Romans 8:37: "We are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

With this outline in view, remember that this Book of Revelation sets forth Christ as the victorious One as He rules and reigns over the world in behalf of His church in the midst of her persecution and tribulation.

While on the one hand it pictures the trumpets of judgment and bowls of wrath that have been poured out upon the earth because of sin during these many centuries, POINTING TO THE LAST JUDGMENT at the end of this age (Romans 2:5-6); yet on the other hand, it reveals the grace and mercy of God in Christ, as the choir of heaven and earth sing: "Thou art worthy...)for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth" (Revelation 5:9-10).

Then finally it pictures Christ and His church, His people together in victory triumphant: "These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful" (Revelation 17:14).

THE BINDING OF SATAN

Since these divisions are in progress at the same time, running parallel to each other, we know that what we have here in Revelation 20 is another view of what has already been given us by the Holy Spirit in the other six divisions of the Book. So we begin with the first coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in this division, and in vv. 1-3 we see Him binding Satan at the cross so Satan could no longer deceive the nations and keep the gospel from being preached to the whole world. (And we have been in this gospel age (vv. 4-6) for nearly 2000 years now!) But let us look more particularly at the first three verses as we endeavor to answer the following questions: Who was the one who bound Satan? When did this binding of Satan take place? How is he bound? How long will he be bound? And why must he be loosed a little season?

I pray, as we study, that God will be pleased to open your eyes as He has mine to see and understand the **PRESENT REIGN OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST WITH ALL AUTHORITY** as the Lord and King of this world, Who is now dealing with the world in longsuffering and in mercy as He calls out His people for whom He died upon the cross.

The Angel is Our Lord

Listen now! In these verses then, we have before us an earthly scene: "And I saw an ANGEL come DOWN FROM HEAVEN, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and BOUND HIM A THOUSAND YEARS."

The Angel Who binds Satan is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. The time of this binding was at His first coming, for when He came into this world, He entered into the "strong man's house" for the purpose of taking from him "his armour" and "spoiling his house" (Matthew 12:28-29; Luke 11:20-22).

In Matthew 12:22, as our Lord was CASTING THE DEMONS OUT of one possessed, He was accused by the Pharisees of casting them out by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils. But in vv. 28-29 He told them, "But if I CAST OUT DEVILS BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD, then the kingdom of God is come unto you. Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first BIND the strong man? And then he will spoil his house." Luke 11:21-22 gives us these words on this same subject: "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: but when a STRONGER THAN HE shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and DIVIDETH HIS SPOILS."

Now the word used in Matthew 12:29 for "binding the strong man" is the same one used in Revelation 20:2 where Satan...the strong one...was "bound for a thousand years" that he could deceive the nations no more; for Christ...the "stronger than he"...had entered into the strong man's house, bound him and spoiled his house.

This work of binding the devil was begun when our Lord triumphed over Satan in the temptation in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11); as a result, Christ began to cast out demons with His Word (Matthew 8:16).

The power and influence of Satan over the deluded masses in the nations was beginning to be curtailed as Christ "divided his spoils".

And He continued to bind Satan till He "bruised his head" (Genesis 3:15) at the cross; for in John 12:31-32 our Lord said, "Now is the judgment of the world: now shall the prince of this world (Satan) be cast out, and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

Beloved, this is exactly what our Lord did at the cross! He cast Satan out; that is, He bound him so he could no longer deceive the nations and keep the gospel from going to the four corners of the earth. In Colossians 2:14-15 it is said that our blessed Lord blotted out "the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, TRIUMPHING OVER THEM in it." And He triumphed over them all at the cross; He is the ALL POWERFUL ONE!

Listen now, that you may understand this truth:

God had dealt with only one nation in Old Testament times, namely Israel, leaving the other nations to be deceived by Satan; but now Satan was being bound by our Lord, so he could not deceive the nations any longer until the thousand years be fulfilled, and that the gospel of the grace of God should be preached in His name unto all nations, beginning there at Jerusalem. So our Lord Jesus could say after His resurrection (listen now!):

"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and TEACH ALL NATIONS, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world", or the end of this age (Matthew 28:18-20).

And we go forth, teaching and preaching, witnessing and evangelizing IN THE AUTHORITY AND IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS Who bound Satan, that the Word of God and the gospel of the grace of God could reach out to the four corners of the earth!

His Purpose Was to Bind Satan. My friend, the Scripture is plain as to our Lord's PURPOSE for coming into this world. It was two-fold: first, to "destroy the works of the devil" (I John 3:8), "that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Hebrews 2:14-15); and second, to bind Satan during this gospel age so the gospel message might reach His elect. And that is the message of these first three verses of Revelation 20!

The Key is His Authority

What then, is the KEY to the bottomless pit, of which Revelation 20:1 speaks? The KEY in Scripture means authority. Listen to Revelation 1:18 where our Lord said, "I am he that liveth, and was dead: and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; AND HAVE THE KEYS OF HELL AND OF DEATH." In this we see that our blessed Lord has AUTHORITY over hell and death, and therefore is the Angel of vs. 1 Who had the authority to bind Satan.

As Ephesians 1:20-23 tells us, God has "raised him (Christ) from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, FAR ABOVE all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all." I Peter 3:22 also brings this out, that Christ has "gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; ANGELS AND AUTHORITIES AND POWERS BEING MADE SUBJECT UNTO HIM."

We read in Matthew 16:19 how our Lord gave the KEYS (authority) of the kingdom to the apostle Peter: "And I will give unto thee the KEYS OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." And under the power of the Holy Spirit, the apostle used these KEYS (this authority) to open the kingdom to the Jews on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, to the Samaritans in Acts 8, and to the Gentiles in Cornelius' home in Acts 10. Again we see how Satan, being bound, could not stop the gospel-the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16)-from reaching the elect of God!

Beloved, I praise God that He not only has the keys of death and hell, but He has the key to the heart of every man! If I didn't believe that, I would never preach again. He had the key to my heart, for by the power of His grace and the convicting power of His Holy Spirit, He turned me unto Himself for time and for eternity. And this is my hope in preaching the gospel of the grace of God-that it will go forth in power. He has the key to open your heart, to let you see that you are lost, under the judgment of God, and in need of a Savior, a Deliverer. And only He has the power-the power of the gospel, the power of His blood-to save, to keep and deliver you from your sins for time and eternity.

The Chain is the Faith of Christ

How is Satan bound? We must remember that since Satan is a spiritual being, the "chain" that binds him must be something spiritual; it cannot be something material. So if we would think of the chain in the same way as we do of the shield, the helmet and sword of Ephesians 6, we would surely be on safe ground that avoids needless speculation, and allows Scripture to interpret Scripture. Therefore, just as true faith is a shield that will quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one, so also faith in action is the "chain" that will and does bind Satan. As the perfect Man, our Lord while on earth lived such a perfect life of faith in God and His Word that Satan was defeated at every attempt he made to prevent the Savior from fulfilling His mission. Through our Lord's victorious life, death, resurrection and ascension to heaven, Satan was beaten and his power broken. As far as the believer is concerned then, the devil is a defeated foe, and the shield of faith keeps that old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, at bay!

Satan Still Exerts His Influence

But I must hasten to add this: Satan has not been made impotent, though he has been chained these many years, for his influences have not been abolished or completely destroyed. On the contrary, within the sphere in which Satan is permitted to exert his influences for evil, he rages furiously. Let me illustrate! A dog securely bound with a long, heavy chain can do great damage

within the circle of his imprisonment, but outside of that circle, the animal can do no damage nor can he hurt anyone. Therefore Satan cannot hurt God's child, even though he comes at us as a roaring lion (I Peter 5:8) or as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14); and Romans 16:20 tells us that we shall bruise him under our feet shortly. Even now we are "MORE THAN CONQUERORS through him that loved us" (Romans 8:37)!

THE ALL CONQUERING ONE

Oh what grace the Lord has shown to poor sinners like you and me, to bind Satan so the gospel could reach His elect, to destroy the works of the devil and to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, so we could be delivered from going down to the pit! And Satan is definitely and securely bound during this gospel age, in that he has not been able to keep the church from preaching the gospel to all nations, as it is written, "NOW is the accepted time, behold: NOW is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2)! So my friend, when our blessed Lord comes the second time, ETERNITY BEGINS; that will end this world's history as you and I know it. Therefore, to offer any soul a hope of being saved after the second coming of Christ is pure deception; the Bible holds out NO HOPE OF ANY SINNER BEING SAVED AFTER HIS SECOND COMING! And we will establish this truth further as we go along.

It should rejoice the heart of every child of God to read and meditate upon this Book of Revelation! Do you know why? This Book pictures the Lord Jesus Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords, the ALL-CONQUERING ONE, as He rules from His throne in heaven during this gospel age. It does not picture Him as sitting idly by, waiting for some future date to be a King on an earthly throne in Jerusalem for a thousand years, OH NO! It pictures Him as the One Who received His throne when He returned to glory after His resurrection, and therefore He rules right now in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, "and none can stay his hand, or say unto Him, What doest thou?" (Daniel 4:35).

Also this Book of Revelation pictures the people of God (you and I who know Him) ruling and reigning with Him right now; that is why it is said of us that in all things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us (Romans 8:37). Yes my dear friend, right now, midst all the judgments, plagues, adversities, calamities, wars and upheavals that we know are in the world today, even midst all the oppression that we feel, the people of God can say, "We can overcome through Him that loved us, for we rule and reign with our blessed Lord and King even right now! Even though all of these plagues come upon us, God is our Fortress and our Strength; for our King and our Lord Who lives within us rules and reigns upon the throne!"

THE "THOUSAND YEARS"

We now come to the expression "the thousand years" in vv. 2 and 3: "and bound him A THOUSAND YEARS, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till THE THOUSAND YEARS should be fulfilled; and after that he must be loosed a little season."

What does this mean? Are we to understand as so many do today, that this is a literal thousand years, reaching from the second coming of Christ unto the Great White Throne Judgment? No my friend, the Bible does not warrant such an interpretation. You cannot find a system of teaching throughout the New Testament that says Christ will reign upon this earth for a thousand years at Jerusalem after His second coming with all His saints ruling and reigning with Him!

Let me illustrate what I mean; If you take the doctrine of faith, you will find it throughout all the New testament-in our Lord's teachings, in the Acts and in the Epistles. In other words, you can work it as a system of truth throughout the New Testament. You can do the same with the doctrine of grace, of the cross of Christ, of justification or sanctification; these all can be worked through the New Testament. Again, you can take the doctrine of prayer, or of Jesus as Lord, the sovereignty of God, of God's great elective purposes, of the judgment of God upon sin, of heaven or of hell-all of these great teachings of God's Word-and work them through the Gospels, the Book of Acts and the Epistles-all through the New Testament.

But not so with the system of Christ's millennial rule at Jerusalem that is taught today! You cannot find in your New Testament that a temple ordained by God will be built that shall again have animal sacrifices offered upon it to God! In fact, you will find just the opposite in Hebrews 10! You cannot find that Israel as a physical nation will once again be dealt with by God and will have supremacy over the entire world, especially the Gentile nations. Dear friend, what you will find is the opposite of all this!

If you will search the Scriptures for yourself, this is what you will find: you will find that our blessed Lord and all the writers of the New Testament hold before our view HEAVEN, THE NEW EARTH, AND BELIEVERS WITH NEW BODIES SERVING THE LORD IN HOLINESS AND PURITY.

I have listed here 90 Scriptures in the New Testament, and every one of them have to do with heaven, the new earth, our new bodies, and serving the Lord in holiness and purity. Not a one speaks of a reign upon earth after the second coming of Christ, with Him sitting upon a throne in Jerusalem. My friend, you will not find it! With this thought in mind, work through your New Testament and see what you find: Matthew 5:12; 19:21; 25:34,46; Lk. 20:34,35,36; John 5:28,29; 10:28; 12:26; 14:1,2,3; 17:22,24; Romans 8:22,23; I Corinthians 15:42-57; 2 Corinthians 5:1-5; Ephesians 2:5-7; Phil. 3:20,21; Colossians 1:5,12; 3:4; I Thessalonians 2:12; 4:17; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10; Hebrews 10:34; 11:10,13,14,15,16; 12:22,23,24,28; I Peter 1:3-5; 2 Peter 1:11; 3:13,14; Revelation 3:7,21; 4:4; 5:9; 7:9-17; 14:1-4; 21:1,2 and 22:1-5.

Now someone would ask me about Matthew 19:27-30 which speaks of the Son of man sitting upon the throne of His glory, and His apostles sitting on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. I would say yes, that is there. But those verses of Scripture must be interpreted in the light of vs. 28 which says this shall be done "in the regeneration". Listen to me now! This expression refers, not to a reign upon this earth as we know it today, but to the reign of our Lord IN HIS ETERNAL GLORY and His apostles reigning with Him IN THE RESTORED OR RENEWED UNIVERSE; that is, in the regeneration or the rebirth of the heaven and the earth in eternity after our Lord's second coming as so clearly brought out in 2 Peter 3:10-14, Revelation 20:11, and Revelation 21:1-5. You are following us, are you not you? I want you to study these Scriptures that you many know these great truths for yourselves!

My friend, not only am I on good Biblical grounds with this interpretation of Revelation 20 and the rest of Scripture on this subject of the end times, but I am also standing on the ground where our forefathers stood, for this teaching is the historical church view! Read the old writers as I have done, and you will see that this is the historical church view that I am setting forth in these studies.

I was deeply enmeshed in the pre-tribulation rapture of the saints and the pre-millennial return of Christ for years, (and I know this system of teaching as well as anyone does), but when the Holy Spirit opened my eyes to the truth of God's Word concerning THE PRESENT REIGN OF CHRIST, I was made to see that these teachings did not agree with God's Word.

When I began to see that what I had been taught had only been promulgated since 1833 and had been given forth as truth based upon a woman's vision, and a man's intellectual reasonings, I was made to praise the Lord for opening my spiritual eyes to the truth of His Word which glorifies and honors Him. If you will write for it, I will send you a book entitled THE GREAT RAPTURE HOAX, which gives the origin of this theory which is so wide-spread today in Christendom.

The Meaning of the Word "Thousand"

All right, what does the expression "the thousand years" mean? According to other Scriptures, the word "thousand" is used to show VASTNESS or a LONG PERIOD OF TIME. To the law and to the testimony, let us compare Scripture with Scripture. In Deut. 1:11 we read that the word "thousand" is used as an indefinite number. Listen! "The LORD God of your fathers make you a THOUSAND TIMES so many more as ye are, and bless you, as he hath promised you!" How is this word "thousand" used here? Now we do know that there were approximately 3 million Jews to whom He was speaking there in the wilderness. So if we multiply that by a thousand, we come up with 3 billion; and there have never been 3 billion Jews upon this earth, from our Lord's time until now.

Again, the word "thousand" is used in the same manner in Deut. 7:9: "...he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a THOUSAND GENERATIONS." Now if we take a generation to be 33 years, then a thousand generations would be 33,000 years; and this earth as we know it has only been in existence not quite 6,000 years.

Also in Psalm 50:10 we see this word used in the same manner: "For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a THOUSAND HILLS." We know that there are more than a thousand hills in this country, and that all the cattle belong unto the Lord, but we see here that the word "thousand" is used to convey the idea of many, or the whole or vastness.

So this is the way it is used here in Revelation 20: it signifies an indefinite period of time from our Lord's first to His second coming. We have been in this period of the binding of Satan and the reigning of Christ for nearly 2,000 years already, since our Lord first came into this world; and the end of the thousand years, this indefinite period, comes with the condemnation of Satan to the lake of fire.

Thus John, the writer of the Book of Revelation, shows the thousand years to be synonymous with this gospel age; in other words, you and I are today living in John's thousand years, the only true millennium, the period between our Lord's first and second coming.

My friend, to me the positive proof that this interpretation is true is found in the word "thousand" itself. In all six times that it is used here in Revelation 20 it is used in the plural form and should read, "thousands of years" which, as we have seen, signifies an indefinite period of time. My authority for this is The Analytical Greek Lexicon, and Thayer's Greek English Lexicon. So I know I am on good Biblical grounds in my interpretation of this word "thousand"!

THE REIGN OF CHRIST AND HIS SAINTS FOR THE THOUSAND YEARS

Dear children of God, as we read the Book of Revelation, let us lift up our heads and hearts unto Him and give thanks, because this Book was written for us as well as to the first century Christians, for one reason: to encourage our hearts in the Lord. It was written to show us the end of all things, to let us know that our Lord Jesus Christ is **PRESENTLY REIGNING** and is **KING** of kings and **LORD** of lords, **THE ALL CONQUERING ONE**; and that because we are in Him, we can never be defeated—we are more than conquerors with Him against sin, the world, the flesh and the devil. Listen to Revelation 17:14: "These (all the enemies of God and of His Christ) shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for **HE IS LORD OF LORDS AND KING OF KINGS**: and they that are with him (all of His people) are called, and chosen, and faithful" and there is **NO DEFEAT** in the army of God!

Now as we go into our study of the reign of Christ for the thousand years and the first resurrection, read with me vv. 4-6 of Revelation 20: "And I saw thrones, and they set upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and **THEY LIVED AND REIGNED WITH CHRIST A THOUSAND YEARS**. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. **BLESSED AND HOLY IS HE THAT HATH PART IN THE FIRST RESURRECTION**: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."

The View Commonly Held

First I want us to notice that these are the only verses in the Bible to which the millennialists appeal to back up their claims of a thousand-year reign of Christ upon this earth in its present condition; but dear friend, the things they claim are going to happen in the thousand years are very silently absent here in these verses! The Jews are not named in this chapter, neither is anything said about their restoration to the land, their conversion or their activity as missionaries during such a period of time.

I want you to notice that neither Jerusalem nor Palestine, nor the earth is mentioned, for it is a heavenly scene! So an earthly throne is not to be found in this chapter. There is nothing here about righteousness prevailing as millennialists assume will be true in their future millennium. Not a word is said about universal peace or abounding prosperity. The productivity of the earth is not mentioned; there is no reference to longevity or the end of toil and suffering, usually supposed to be a part of the millennial experience. None of these are mentioned in this chapter!

The Silence of the New Testament

My dear friend, are not these omissions significant, especially since we cannot find them taught by other New Testament writers? And yet, is it not true that the average Christian takes it pretty much for granted that all these things are to be found in the 20th chapter of Revelation? Over and over we hear people say, "Well are not all these things found in Revelation 20? That is what we have been taught." But, you cannot find them there! You may surely find these things in the books of men, but not in the Book of God.

Thrones in Heaven

What, then, do we find in verses 4 and 5? We find a HEAVENLY SCENE. These thrones and souls mentioned here are in heaven, for if you will search out the Book of Revelation, you will find that the throne of Christ and His people is always set forth as being in heaven. Twenty two times in the Book of Revelation, the throne of God, the throne of the Lamb and the throne of the saints is said to be in heaven: 1:4; 3:21; 4:2-6,9,10; 5:6,7,11; 7:15,17; 8:3; 12:5; 14:3,5; 16:17; 19:4,5; 20:4,11; 21:5; 22:1-3.

Notice also that John saw the SOULS, not the bodies of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the Word of God (vs. 4). Therefore this scene must be this side of the resurrection of their bodies, for our Lord Himself states very clearly that the resurrection of the dead does not take place till the "last day" (John 6:39,40,44,54). He tells us four times in the 6th chapter of John: "I will raise him up AT THE LAST DAY." And my friend, if it is the last day can there be any other day after the last? Or seven or a thousand years? NO! God's Word speaks of the last day as being the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ back to earth again and the day of the resurrection of the dead.

The Scriptures also teach that at the death of the body, every child of God is taken to be with Christ (Phil. 1:23) to await the resurrection of their bodies; therefore they are "absent from the body" and "present with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:8). For here in Revelation 20:4 we find them REIGNING WITH CHRIST, sitting with Him in His throne (Revelation 3:21). "For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet" (I Corinthians 15:25).

THE PRESENT REIGN OF CHRIST

Now I especially want you to grasp this truth: The Word of God presents the Lord Jesus Christ as RIGHT NOW reigning upon His throne in Heaven! He is not waiting for a throne; He is Already enthroned! This is a subject that rejoices my soul every time I think of it. I want you to listen! Brother Peter so clearly brought this out on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. If you will analyze his sermon, you will see that it all has to do with the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus Christ. In

vs. 30 he tells us that David was a prophet, for he prophesied of this in Psalm 16: "...knowing that God has sworn with an oath to him (David), that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne: (David), seeing this before spoke of THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption."

And Peter told them, "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore, BEING BY THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath shed forth this, which you now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens, but he saith himself, (Psalm 110:1), the LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool."

This is exactly what Hebrews 10:12-13 says, "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, SAT DOWN ON THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool." You see, He is sitting upon David's throne now, the SPIRITUAL THRONE IN HEAVEN! Now watch Peter's conclusion to this sermon in Acts 2, which was the burden of his message; "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (vs. 36) He is King, He is Ruling and reigning NOW; so His throne is in the heavens! And in the heart of every child of God.

Five Irrefutable Proofs

Further, in I Corinthians 15:22-28 we find five irrefutable proofs that Christ is ruling and reigning NOW on David's spiritual throne, and that God's children (those who have died in the Lord and we who remain) are reigning with Him in the Spirit.

FIRST, in vs. 22 He tells us that as all men die physically in Adam, so in Christ all shall be made alive and shall rise physically-with a physical body-because Christ rose from the dead and He rules over all: "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

SECOND, in vs. 23, the resurrection will take place at the second coming of Christ: "But every man in his own order; Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming." And my friend, this tells us that there are not half a dozen resurrections! The only physical resurrection of the whole world spoken of in the Word of God is the resurrection at the second coming of Christ (John 5:28-29).

THIRD, in vs. 24 we find that this resurrection will be at the end of the world: "Then cometh the END." Dear friend, There is no time space between the second coming of Christ and the end; they're together! And this is when eternity is ushered in. You see, it is as unbiblical to offer salvation AFTER the second coming as it is to offer salvation AFTER DEATH! (In other words, There is no difference between probation after death and probation after the second coming of Christ.)

This verse plainly declares that His coming ENDS all things as we know them today: "Then the END, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and authority and power" (vs. 24). (You will notice I omitted the word "cometh" which is in italics, because it was not in the original!)

This verse, above all others proves the present reign of Christ, for it is when the end comes that He will deliver up the kingdom to God.

You see, this is the present kingdom of God that we are instructed to seek first with all our hearts (Matthew 6:33): "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness." The kingdom of God is the authority and rule of God in Christ: for Christ-the Person of Christ Who is ruling NOW-is the righteousness of God. He is ruling and reigning NOW as His reward for becoming the God-Man, the Savior of sinners, and dying in the place of His people. He arose triumphant over the grave as our Justifier, and ascended to the right hand of the Father as our personal Representative and our Righteousness before God; He is the King of kings and Lord of lords, sitting upon His throne, ruling and reigning until all His enemies are made His footstool.

FOURTH, vv. 25-26 tells us that with the resurrection of the dead, the last enemy, death shall be destroyed: "For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. THE LAST ENEMY THAT SHALL BE DESTROYED IS DEATH." We see then that the destruction of death is put at the END of His mediatorial or millennial reign and not at its beginning! Now if our dispensational friends were correct in telling us that Christ will destroy death at the beginning of His millennial reign, death could not have been destroyed at the second coming of Christ, because they also tell us that people are going to be born and will die during the millennium!

FIFTH, vv. 27-28 clearly bring out that Christ's reign is BEFORE the resurrection of the dead, and not after it; and that it is WHILE His enemies are being subjected that He is ruling and reigning, and not after their subjection. "For he hath put ALL THINGS under his feet. But when he saith, all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all."

We also find here that Christ's work as Mediator will be brought to an end, because the exercise of this office belongs to the temporal sphere; it is bound up with the subdual of this world; and it is therefore when the kingdom is returned to the Father, then the glory of Christ is made complete in His humanity: "For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2:9).

My friend, to place these verses of I Corinthians 15:22-28 from one to a thousand years after the resurrection that takes place at the second coming of Christ, is to utterly destroy their meaning and to do away with Paul's argument for the resurrection of the human body, which is the subject of the entire chapter of I Corinthians 15.

Yes, the Scriptures teach the PRESENT REIGN OF CHRIST (Acts 2:31- 36; Ephesians 1:20-23; Colossians 1:15-20); for Christ is now sitting upon the spiritual throne of David, crowned with glory and honor, both in heaven and on earth. In heaven angels and authorities and powers are made subject unto Him (I Peter 3:22), and on earth He has power over all flesh (John 17:2; Revelation 1:5).

This is what Revelation 20 is teaching us, not that Christ is waiting for a time in the future to reign literally here upon a partially restored earth from Jerusalem! Nowhere in the Scriptures are we held out the promise of a partially restored earth; rather, in Romans 8:18-23 we are told that all creation groaneth and waiteth in travail for the appearance of the sons of God at the second coming of Christ when, after the judgment, there will be the new heavens and the new earth.

And the message of the entire Book of Revelation is a message of victory, a message of glory, a message of the ruling and reigning power of our blessed Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, Who cannot be defeated; for He NOW rules in the lives and reigns in the hearts of His willing people and in the midst of His enemies, waiting until all His enemies shall be made His footstool (Psalm 110:1-3; Psalm 2; I Corinthians 15:25; Hebrews 10:12,13). Hallelujah, glory to our God that He is unconquerable! And God's people, who rule and reign with Him now (Revelation 2:26-27) are more than conquerors through Him that loved us!

The Message of Romans 8

Let us look at Romans 8:18-23 in a little more detail:

"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."

I do not hesitate to state that these verses have nothing whatsoever to do with any supposed earthly millennium. Those who believe in a literal, physical, material millennium here upon earth, emphasize that this will be a temporary condition lasting a literal thousand years, and that it will be followed by a state of conflict, sin and confusion when the devil will be released again. But there is no suggestion whatsoever of a temporary state in the account which is given here of the glory that is awaiting both the sons of God and the whole creation. What is described here is the entire deliverance of the whole creation from the bondage of corruption; not a temporary deliverance, but a final, permanent and complete deliverance.

In verse 18 the apostle tells us to reckon, or reason that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us at the coming of the Lord. He tells us in vs. 23 that as the creation groans to be delivered from the bondage of corruption—that which is brought on by man's sin—so the children of God groan in this body of sin, this body of humiliation, waiting for the redemption of our body when we shall forever be delivered from the very presence of sin.

Then in vv. 24-25 the apostle tells us to patiently wait for this new body, for this is our hope as the children of God. Our hope is not that of a partially restored earth for a thousand years, but a completely restored earth wherein we will dwell with our Lord in our new bodies.

To apply these verses to a temporarily restored earth is to utterly destroy the apostle's argument for the complete glorification of the believing people of God at the resurrection and second coming of Christ.

THE FIRST RESURRECTION

Now this living and reigning with Christ is called "the first resurrection" (Revelation 20:4-5); and I want to show you from the Word of God that this is a spiritual and not a physical resurrection!

Our Lord told Nicodemus that to enter the kingdom of God a man must be BORN OF THE SPIRIT, so from the study of the Scriptures we must believe that the first resurrection takes place at the time of the NEW BIRTH, when the soul passes from death unto life; it is then that the redeemed soul stands on resurrection ground.

Colossians 3:1 speaks of the spiritual resurrection when it says we are "risen with Christ"; and so does Ephesians 2:4-6: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, HATH QUICKENED US TOGETHER WITH CHRIST, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

And what are we doing? We are living and reigning with Him! Revelation 20:6 says, "For blessed and holy is he that hath part in the FIRST RESURRECTION", which is that passing from spiritual death into spiritual life by the Holy Spirit of God.

To show you that I have not taken this interpretation out of thin air, and that this is "thus saith the Lord Himself", look with me at the words of our Lord in John 5:24-25: "Verily, verily I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is PASSED FROM DEATH UNTO LIFE. Verily, verily I say unto you,

The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live." What was our blessed Lord talking about here? He was saying nothing more or less than that a man lies spiritually dead in trespasses and sins and must be made alive by the quickening power of God's Holy Spirit, here called "the voice of the Son of God." He is saying, "When I speak, the dead are hearing my voice right now, and when they hear my voice, they come forth from the dead. And, believing on Him that sent me, they have everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation, but have passed from death unto life."

And Ephesians 2:1 says, "For you hath he quickened, (you hath He made alive, you hath He raised from the dead) who were dead in trespasses and sins." So we find then, that SALVATION IS A RESURRECTION FROM THE GRAVE OF SIN which must be effected by God Himself; and therefore the first resurrection spoken of in Revelation 20:5 is one and the same: salvation, the resurrection from the grave of sin!

No wonder God calls that man BLESSED who is a partaker of the first resurrection (Revelation 20:6), because he is blessed with this SO GREAT SALVATION which God has been so pleased to pour upon those who have been born again by the Spirit of God! This, my friend, includes the forgiveness of sin, the giving of a new heart, a new nature, a new life; and this puts within us a new hope.

In this first resurrection, the power of sin is broken and we are given the right to be called the children of God; we are clothed upon with the perfect righteousness of Christ, and stand before God justified by the blood of Christ, made holy in the Lord Jesus Christ, adopted into the family of God, filled and sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, and thus enabled to walk in the only way, the narrow way that leads to heaven, glory and perfection (that is, the way of righteousness and true holiness) as we await our new bodies from heaven! Therefore, to know Christ in His resurrection power of grace (Ephesians 1:19-20) is the greatest thing that can ever happen to a poor, lost, hell-deserving sinner!

My friend, do you see how you and I have been robbed these many years of these gracious blessings? We have been robbed of the truth by those who say that the resurrection is a physical resurrection belonging only to a certain number, and after that there is something else and yet something else! This false teaching would corrupt our minds from the simplicity that is in Christ (2 Corinthians 11:3) because it brings confusion, and God is not the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33).

By the first resurrection from the grave of sin (in the new birth), a poor sinner is raised to walk in newness of life in Christ. And Romans 5:17 says, we now "REIGN in life by one, Jesus Christ." Blessed is the man that hath part in the first resurrection, for the second death hath no power over him. Why? Because he has been raised up and made to sit together with Christ in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6); so the second death, which is the separation of the damned from God forever in the LAKE OF FIRE (Revelation 20:15; 21:8), has no power over him. So the child of God NOW REIGNS with Christ, and is among those who are "more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Romans 8:37).

The Martyred Saints

In Revelation 20:4 we see the souls that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, living and reigning with Christ in heaven. And when did they begin to reign with Him? long before they were beheaded, while yet they were upon earth, when they were accepted in the Beloved and seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus as Revelation 5:9- 10 tells us, "Thou...hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and HAST MADE US UNTO OUR GOD KINGS AND PRIESTS: AND WE SHALL REIGN ON THE EARTH." So as they reigned in Christ while they lived on earth, they continue to live and reign with Christ after death. For to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8).

Now you may ask, "Pastor, how does the believer reign even now in Jesus Christ?" Listen! It is by sitting together with Christ in heavenly places, for we are a "chosen generation, a ROYAL priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people"; that we should shew forth the praises of Him Who hath called us out of darkness into His marvelous light; which in time past were not a people, but

now are we the people of God, which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy (1 Peter 2:9-10).

We now reign over and have victory over the world by faith (I John 5:4), as Galatians 1:4 tells us, He has delivered us from this present evil world. We reign, in that sin no longer has dominion over us (Romans 6:14); its power has been broken and we have been freed from its authority (Romans 6:17, 18, 22). So as sin reigned unto death, even so now-praise the Lord-GRACE REIGNS in us through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord! (Romans 5:21). And as Hebrews 2:15 tells us that we are delivered from the fear of death, we reign even over death with all its fears because we have part in the first resurrection. For "blessed are the dead which die in the Lord" (Revelation 14:13); the second death-spiritual death in hell-has no power over us who are in Christ Jesus! (Revelation 20:6).

Further Proof

But the one portion of Scripture more than any other, that the Lord used to enlighten me as to the truth of these verses (4-6 of Revelation 20) is John 11:23-26: "Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" To me these verses of Scripture are proof positive that the first resurrection is a spiritual and not a physical resurrection.

Our Lord was saying, "I give resurrection life (spiritual life) in myself; though one is dead in trespasses and in sin, yet shall he live; he shall be resurrected from being spiritually dead. And whosoever lives spiritually, having trusted Me for salvation and eternal life, shall never die the second death in hell for his own sins-believest thou this?" "Yes, Lord, I believe, for it is truth!"

These verses speak of the sinner being dead in sin, but now, resurrected to new life in Christ; he therefore is the blessed man, for the second death has no power over him.

The "first resurrection" then, concerns only those who are BORN AGAIN by the Spirit of God, who are here called BLESSED AND HOLY. The body, not being raised till the last day, indicates that the first resurrection is a SPIRITUAL experience (John 6:39, 40, 44, 54), which begins at the new birth, is revealed to us in conversion, and worked in us by the Spirit of the living God.

The Doom of the Spiritually Dead

But what about "THE REST OF THE DEAD" mentioned in verse 5, "who lived not again until the thousand years were finished"? What the Scripture is telling us here is that those who live and die without Christ-who do not have part in the first or spiritual resurrection, who are still in spiritual darkness and deadness-will remain spiritually dead until the time of our Lord's second coming when they shall have part in the physical resurrection (John 5:28-29).

Then they will be brought before Christ, the Judge, at the Great White Throne Judgment where they will be sentenced to the lake of fire (Revelation 20:11-15); which is the second death.

Listen further to Revelation 21:8: "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the LAKE WHICH BURNETH WITH FIRE AND BRIMSTONE: WHICH IS THE SECOND DEATH." And, my dear friend, they will stay in this spiritual darkness forever and forever!

Take your Bible and search it out my friend, and you will find that this is truth! Then ask the Lord to search out your heart in answer to the following questions: Do you know anything of these truths in your own soul? Have you had part in the first resurrection, and are among the number of those who are called "blessed and holy"? You are, if you have been born again by the Spirit of God, and the second death shall have no control over you. But if you have not been born again by the Holy Spirit, then you abide under the wrath of God and the second death and hell shall surely find you out! Oh that God would deliver us today is my prayer.

Revelation 20 Chapter 2

We are continuing our study of Revelation 20 in verses 4, 5 and 6 which read: "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years, But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."

If you remember from our last studies, we have showed you from the Scriptures that this chapter covers the time period from the first coming of Christ to the second coming of Christ. Therefore we can truthfully say that what we have here in Revelation 20 is that which has been in the past, that which is taking place now in the present and that which is in the future yet to come. We saw that the binding of Satan in vv. 1-3 took place at the first coming of Christ. One of the purposes of his being bound was that he could no longer keep the gospel from being preached to the nations of the earth as he had prior to our Lord's first coming when He came to die for poor sinners.

Next we showed you from Scripture that the thousand years is not a literal time period, but an expression denoting a long, or an indefinite period of time which has already lasted for nearly 2000 years. We have seen from the Scriptures that it is during this thousand years, or this indefinite time period, that Christ rules and reigns from David's spiritual throne in heaven; that he is not waiting for a time in the future to reign literally here upon earth from Jerusalem on a partially restored earth, but is ruling and reigning now until His second coming when He shall usher in the new heavens and the new earth.

We showed you also that the reason vs. 6 of Revelation 20 says, "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection", is because the first resurrection is everywhere spoken of in Scripture as being a spiritual resurrection! Our Lord confirmed this truth over and over in His ministry while here upon earth, that the first resurrection is the bringing forth of the sinner from the grave of sin and giving him a new heart, a new spirit, and a new nature so now he follows God in Christ and walks in the pathway of righteousness and true holiness.

THE MARK OF THE BEAST

Now as we go further into our study in this blessed chapter of Revelation 20, we come to that expression that has to do with "the mark of the beast". There is something else that is said about those who have part in the first resurrection who rule and reign with Christ for a thousand years, or during this GOSPEL AGE. You see, verse 4 tells us that they are those "Which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands." They had not received THE MARK OF THE BEAST! The question is always asked, "What is the mark of the beast?" Dear friend, I want you to put down everything and listen! (For we will be plowing new ground, as a farmer would say.) So I want you to hear, then compare it with the Word of God and ask the Holy Spirit to give you understanding.

One well-known interpretation of the mark of the beast is that at a given time in this earth's history, there will arise an antichrist who will rule for seven years during a so-called great tribulation period, when every man outside of Christ will receive in their foreheads or on their hands the number 666. Then those who do not bow down and worship the beast by receiving this number will be persecuted or killed. But my friend, the Scriptures bear out very clearly that we have always had antichrists with us according to I John 2:18, 22, and there are many antichrists today! For every individual who is not in Christ is antichrist!

Further, we are in error if we interpret this mark of the beast to be a single, individual, outward, visible sign that will appear on the forehead or hand of the wicked at one particular moment in history, then and only then! This mark spoken of in Revelation 20 which these in heaven did not receive, is not our social security number or our postal zip code number, nor any other kind of mark that any man puts there; it is not a physical mark at all! "Then", you will ask, "what is it?" Will you listen? We will let Scripture interpret Scripture, for if we can understand what the sealing of the Father is in Revelation 7:2 and 14:1, then we can understand what the mark of the beast is. So let us look first at the sealing of the Father.

The Sealing of the Father

In Revelation 7 we are told that the four angels could not hurt the earth in judgment until the servants of the living God were sealed in their foreheads. Then in Revelation 14, we see the same group standing with the Lamb in heaven still with the Father's seal upon them and not one of them is missing!

Who are these 144,000 who are sealed by the Father in Revelation 7 and 14? They are the TRUE ISRAEL OF GOD, symbolized under the names of the twelve tribes of literal or physical Israel. They are the great multitudes of Revelation 7:9 "which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people and tongues," standing before the throne in heaven and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes with palms in their hands, having come out of great tribulation, who had washed their robes, and made them white as snow in the blood of the Lamb (vs. 14).

Did you catch those words: "Which no man could number"? By this we see, that as with the "thousand years", this number is to be taken symbolically. The number 144,000 (which is 12 thousand times twelve thousand) represents the COMPLETE NUMBER OF THE ELECT OF GOD, made up of the Old Testament and New Testament saints, from Abel-the first man ever saved by grace-to the last soul saved before the second coming of Christ. So those who are sealed by the Father are the entire church of the living God!

Dear friend, this sealing of the Father is the most precious thing that could happen to a poor sinner under heaven! For you see, the Scriptures speak of the seal in a threefold sense: First of all, a seal PROTECTS against tampering. That is the reason they put a seal upon the tomb of our blessed Lord, with guards around it, according to Matthew 27:66, that nobody would tamper with that seal; it was to protect. Secondly, a seal marks OWNERSHIP. Thus we read in Song of Solomon 8:6: "Set me as a seal upon thine heart..."

Why? Because the bride desired to belong to the Bridegroom! Third, a seal signifies GENUINE CHARACTER; as we see in Esther 3:12: the decree that all the Jews should be wiped out was sealed with the ring of the king in Esther's day, thus showing the character of the law of the Medes and the Persians, that it was fixed and could not be changed.

So in the same way, the Christian, (the child of God, the true believer, everyone who makes up the TRUE ISRAEL OF GOD) is sealed in this threefold sense.

First, the Father has sealed us, for the believer enjoys the Father's protection throughout his life; and Satan with all his power cannot break this protective seal wherewith the Father has sealed His people.

Second, the Son has sealed us, for He has bought and redeemed each believer with His own precious blood. Therefore He owns us and declares our name before the Father.

Also the Holy Spirit has sealed us (Ephesians 1:13), for He CERTIFIES that we are the SONS OF GOD (Romans 8:16); He is the Spirit of adoption Who cries within us "Abba Father", and witnesses with our spirit that we are the children of the living God, heirs of God and joint-heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ.

"But", you still ask, "What is the seal?" Listen now! The sealing of the Father is nothing less than the HOLY NATURE OF GOD given to us in the new birth (2 Peter 1:4).

It is that new heart and new nature (Ezekiel 36:26), that is given to the people of God. Why then do we receive the very character, the mark, or the seal of God? For one purpose: that we may be made like unto Him in HOLINESS (Ephesians 1:4; 2 Corinthians 3:18; I Thessalonians 4:3,7; Hebrews 12:14). My friend, this is the teaching of the Word of God! You see, every child of God has this seal of holiness and shows it by worshipping the Lamb and following Him all the days of his life, by walking in righteousness and true holiness.

As we see in 2 Timothy 2:19: "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure; HAVING THIS SEAL, (the seal of holiness) The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, LET EVERY ONE THAT NAMETH THE NAME OF CHRIST DEPART FROM INIQUITY." Therefore, those here in Revelation 20:4 stand perfect, pure and clean before the throne and before the Lamb, for they have overcome the wicked one, who is Satan; they have not bowed down to him, worshipped him, nor do they bear his mark; they have overcome by the blood of the Lamb.

The Great Contrast

Surely you should know by now that the MARK OF THE BEAST is the opposite of holiness and godliness! Revelation 13 tells us it is the NUMBER OF MAN, 666; it is his depraved nature of unholiness and ungodliness, and he shows it by worshipping and following the beast, who is Satan, all the days of his life unless God in His sovereign grace lays hold of his heart. Please listen now! I will show you this from the Scriptures!

Every man outside of the Lord Jesus Christ is a child of the devil and follows and serves him. In John 8:44 our Lord Jesus said: "Ye are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it." We see in 2 Timothy 2:26 that the wicked are held captive by him at his will.

And according to Ephesians 2:2-3, the wicked walk according to the course of this world, ACCORDING TO THE PRINCE OF THE POWER OF THE AIR, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.

So just as the children of God bear the image and likeness of their spiritual Father, the Lord God of heaven, which is holiness, the wicked bear the image and likeness of their father the devil, which is UNHOLINESS and UNGODLINESS. He rules them by their depraved hearts, for Mark 7:20-23 tells us, "For FROM WITHIN, OUT OF THE HEART OF MEN, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries..." and all manner of sin.

This is his mark, THE MARK OF THE BEAST, upon every man outside of the Lord Jesus Christ: it is the mark of depravity, the mark of wickedness, the mark of sin! And if this is your heart, dear friend, if this mark is never removed in the new birth, and washed away by the blood of the Lamb, you shall follow the beast (Satan, your father) into the lake of fire which is the second death, according to Revelation 20:10.

Marked in the Forehead or Right Hand

Dear friend, let us see what else Revelation 13 tells us about the MARK OF THE BEAST and again see how Scripture interprets Scripture: "And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a MARK IN THEIR RIGHT HAND, OR IN THEIR FOREHEADS; and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name" (vv. 16-17).

Remember, the mark is the deep depravity of the heart of man apart from the grace of God. Ephesians 4:18 tells us that man's understanding is darkened; therefore his mind is blinded by the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4). And what did we read in Revelation 13:16? THE MARK OF THE BEAST IS IN THE FOREHEAD-IN THE UNDERSTANDING, IN THE MIND!

Then also we see the mark in the right hand, because it is with the HAND that man DOES THE WORKS OF THE FLESH which we see in Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:5 and 1 Corinthians 6:9-10. Again consider the words of our Lord in John 8:44: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do" (which is the mark in the right hand).

And in Ephesians 2:2-3 He tells us that the behavior and conversation of the wicked is in the lusts of the flesh, always fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, for he is deceived in his mind by Satan (which is the mark in the forehead).

And we could multiply these Scriptures by the hundreds to show that the wicked bear Satan's MARK of wickedness and rebellion against God, whereas the children of God have new hearts and new natures, with the Spirit of God indwelling them, thereby bearing His seal which is holiness. So let me state it again very clearly: EVERY MAN OUTSIDE OF CHRIST IS A CHILD OF THE DEVIL, and follows and worships him all the days of his life UNLESS he is made a new creature in Christ Jesus by the Holy Spirit of God.

Who were those spoken of in Revelation 20:4 who "had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands"? They were once children of the devil, but in time they were taken from the kingdom of Satan by the Spirit of God in the first resurrection, so they were washed clean from all their wickedness, their sins and their defilement.

Thus the mark of their former master was removed, and they never again returned to the worship of the beast. They bore the mark of their new Master, the Lord Jesus Christ-the mark of holiness-and were kept by the power of God through faith, so they never apostatized, as the dog who returns to his vomit again or as the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire (2 Peter 2:20-22). They continued till death on the narrow road to heaven, living a godly life by the power of the Holy Spirit. As on earth they reigned with Christ, overcoming sin, Satan, and the world; so they reign now with Christ in heaven until His second coming when they, along with all of God's people, will be given their new bodies in the resurrection (I Corinthians 15:52).

Praise the Lord for such a salvation! That God in His mercy, grace and love, imputes our sins to Christ (Romans 4:6-8), His righteousness to us, and the former things-our sins-never come into His mind again (Hebrews 8:12; 10:17). For like those in Revelation 20:4 we too were once children of the devil and can say: "and such were some of us: but we are washed, but we are sanctified, but we are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (I Corinthians 6:11).

The Number 666

Now let us look again at Revelation 13 and show you the interpretation of the number of the beast: "Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: FOR IT IS THE NUMBER OF A MAN; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six", or 666 (vs. 18). Remember what is written here: the number is the number of man, 666. This is one short of the number seven which is the number of perfection in the Scriptures. Also remember the two statements that begin this verse: first it says: "Here is wisdom", and second it adds, "Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast." It does not say, "Here is a riddle; let him that has a bright mind solve it." Neither does it say you can take the Greek alphabet and use them as numbers and figure out what or who the number 666 stands for, for then you can come up with anybody's name; and I have heard of Hitler, Mussolini, the Pope, Henry Kissinger, and the guesses go on and on and on!

Oh no my friend! The Scriptures say, "here is wisdom"; and what is wisdom? It is applied knowledge or understanding! So he who has this wisdom and applies this understanding can know what the number of the beast is! How?

By the teaching of the Holy Spirit, for it is He Who is the Teacher of every child of God. For when one has been taught by the Holy Spirit of the sin and plague of his own heart from the Word of God, then he knows and understands what the number of the beast means! There is in the very verse itself the clear understanding of its meaning; for we are told that it is the "NUMBER OF MAN" (and the word for man here stands for all mankind).

This number, 666, is one short of seven which is the number of perfection; and the number 6 is given three times to show failure, failure, failure, nothing but failure, because this is what man is, apart from the grace of God. He is a sinner, a failure in all his attempts to reach perfection before God in himself. Therefore, he will stay in this condition, bearing the mark of his father the devil, until God in grace by His resurrection power delivers him from the grave of sin, translates him and brings him into His kingdom and into a state of perfection by the redemptive work of Christ applied to his heart by faith!

Now this is not some fanciful interpretation of mine to add to all that has been said and written on the mark of the beast, but it is one that I have prayerfully and carefully laid before the Lord for years as the Holy Spirit has worked in my understanding. It is an understanding based upon the Scriptures as a whole; and since the Book of Revelation is a part of the canon of Scripture, then we can expect the Holy Spirit to be telling us the same thing here that He has said in all the other Scriptures. Therefore, the signs and symbols of this Book bring us great spiritual truths which are interpreted in the light of the rest of the Bible.

Oh dear friend, if you have not had the mark of your depravity taken away by the blood of Christ, cry to Him Who is able to save to the uttermost, that you may be like those in Revelation 20:4 who washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Your hope is in none other than the Lord Jesus Christ!

Buying and Selling Forbidden

In the light of all we have studied, you will want to ask, "Why could not those in Revelation 13:7 buy or sell?" Listen, and let us hear what the Scriptures teach us as the Holy Spirit leads us! First, Revelation 20:7-9 tells us that Satan will be loosed for a little season just before the end of this age (the end of the world), to again deceive every soul and to keep the gospel from being preached. He will try by his power through the nations of this world to stamp out all signs of Christianity. He will persecute the saints of God and try to kill all of them, for his time will be short. And just when it seems that he will succeed, the Lord Jesus Christ will come in His glorious second coming to deliver the little remnant of His people from being destroyed (Revelation 20:9).

Now 2 Timothy 3:12 tells us that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution", which is true of the children of God now; but how much more in that time when all peoples and nations bearing the mark of the beast will be against the children of God, and they will have no protection but that from God Himself!

In other words, then the children of God will be like those Hebrew children in Daniel 3: they will not bow to Satan and deny Christ, so they will be persecuted or put to death. Their lives of holiness, godliness and righteousness will be such a contrast with the lives of the wicked (those who bear the mark of the beast) that every one will know they are children of God because they bear His seal, His name, His character and His holiness. The world will know that they do not bear their mark, the mark of wickedness, so nobody will sell to them, neither will they be able to sell to others. Therefore they are **MARKED PEOPLE**, marked for persecution and death, except God in His power hold, protect, feed and lead them every day.

My friend, would you and I stand like the three Hebrew children did if it meant our lives, our jobs, our money, our homes, our families, all the protection of the state and all our livelihood? There is coming a day when this will happen, and it could be soon. Is Christ, the Hope of glory, in you to enable you to stand?

How do you stand in these evil days? Is Christ your all in all? Is your eye upon Him to follow Him no matter what may come upon you? If so, you can finish your life's course in Him and not as an apostate (one who has turned back to Satan and the world because his mark of wickedness has never been removed). If so, you will heed those words in Ephesians 6:13: "Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand". But if you do not know Christ in that living, loving and lasting union, you will buckle under to the antichrist! I pray that God will take His Word home to our hearts today and give us understanding!

THE TWO BEASTS OF REVELATION 13

Now you will ask, "How does all of this correspond to the beasts described in Revelation 13?" For we read of a beast coming up out of the sea in vs. 1 and another beast coming up out of the earth in vs. 11. Listen Now! The understanding of what these two beasts represent is very important in understanding the mark of the beast and the workings of the dragon of 13:4 who gave his power to these two beasts. Remember, as we told you in our introduction, we must interpret this Book of Revelation symbolically, so these are not natural beasts.

And the dragon is none other than Satan himself! Listen to his identification in Revelation 12:9: "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world."

Not only does he deceive the whole world, but 2 Timothy 2:26 tells us that they "are taken captive by him at his will", and I John 5:19 says, "the whole world lieth in wickedness." We know this is true, my friend, for every man, woman and child who is not in Christ daily bows down to the idol of this materialistic world, worshipping the counsel of the ungodly.

You see, Revelation 12 not only gives us the identity of the dragon (that old serpent, the devil), but it speaks of his hatred and enmity toward the Lord Jesus Christ, as he waited to devour Him as soon as He was born into this world, if it were possible (vs. 4). (This chapter begins another division of the Book of Revelation, showing another view of the first coming of Christ into the world in vv. 1-5).

Then it speaks of Satan's being cast out of heaven onto the earth in these words: "Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! For the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time" (vs. 12).

So the last verse of this chapter only sets the stage for chapter 13 which shows us the wiles of Satan in his continued opposition against the church of the living God; "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ."

Therefore, the beasts of Revelation 13 symbolize or represent the two areas in which Satan operates as the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2) and as the god of this world, or age (2 Corinthians 4:4).

The first beast described in vv. 1-10 pictures the HAND of Satan, which is the persecuting power of Satan against the church of the living God, operating in and through the nations of this world and their governments. Speaking to the saints of God in 1 Peter 5:8, the apostle says,

"Be sober, be vigilant, because YOUR ADVERSARY THE DEVIL, AS A ROARING LION, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." And he is that roaring lion, my friend, speaking blasphemies against Christ and His church (Revelation 13:5-6) and seeking to destroy the church as he comes against us daily with his demon spirits: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12).

Therefore, we are told to be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. We are to put on "the whole armour of God, that we may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand" (Ephesians 6:10, 11, 13), because Satan uses his HAND, his power, as a roaring lion, to intimidate and persecute the people of God. So we can sum up the MARK OF THE BEAST in these words:

It is the God-opposing, Christ-rejecting, church-persecuting spirit of antichrist, wherever and whenever it manifests itself, as Satan works through the very depraved nature of man.

Now while in the first beast we see the persecuting power of Satan, in the second we see his subtlety, for it is described in these words: "...he had two horns LIKE A LAMB, and he spake AS A DRAGON" (vs. 11).

This is the MIND of Satan, who operates as AN ANGEL OF LIGHT through the false religions and philosophies of this world, causing those with his mark to worship him.

This is set forth clearly in 2 Corinthians 11:13-15: "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for SATAN HIMSELF is transformed into AN ANGEL OF LIGHT. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works."

So under the symbol of this second beast, we see how Satan operates through all his false prophets, all his false apostles and all his false religions, to cause every deceived soul to fall down and worship the beast, he himself, who is the god of this age (this present world system).

In subtlety he deals with the souls of men to keep them deceived as to their true state before God. It is his one aim and desire to make the world religious without Christ, so he works through his imitations.

My friend, Satan's aim to imitate, to deceive and delude has never changed! This is the way he operates, and still today is operating. He has caused many to believe that what is written in the Book of Revelation is all to be in some far-away future, but as we have shown you, each of the seven divisions of Revelation tells us something as to the events upon this earth between our Lord's first and second coming; so all of this has been happening and it is happening right now!

Satan has been and still is operating in these two areas: as a roaring lion and as an angel of light, to deceive the souls of men. And I believe that the children of God to whom this Book was written in the first century, clearly understood that this was the meaning of these two beasts of Revelation 13.

The Satanic World System

Now let us see, by the Holy Spirit directing us, if we can open up to your hearts the way Satan goes about deceiving the souls of men, working in and through these two beasts, his hand and his mind, as the roaring lion and as the angel of light.

You see, 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10 tells us that this deception of the souls of men is, "AFTER THE WORKING OF SATAN with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved."

And Hebrews 3:13 says this deception is caused by SIN, "the deceitfulness of sin". Oh my friend, SIN IS DECEITFUL; it deceives the hearts of men! You ask, "How?" Well, when the solicitation to sin comes, there is within every unsaved soul that which corresponds to the temptation from without, even his depraved, sinful nature, which causes the unsaved to be deceived and to follow Satan to eternal damnation. Therefore, if any soul is ever saved, it has to be by the grace of God, by the power of God, by the blood of Christ, with the Holy Spirit operating upon that soul to make him willing in the day of His power; for no man caught in the deception and net of Satan and sin can ever save or deliver himself out of this terrible snare.

We are warned about the deception of Satan in I John 2:15-17 where we read: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." (So, blinded by the pleasure of sin, unsaved man has within him that which corresponds to the attractions of the world.) "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever."

Now in the New Testament the word "world" has many different meanings: it is used to describe the universe, the earth, mankind, the Jews, Gentiles and the believers; and you can only know the meaning of each use of it by the context in which it is found. So what does the word "world" mean in the above verses of Scripture? My friend, the words "not of the Father" tell us: it means the SATANIC WORLD SYSTEM THE WORLD OVER WHICH Satan as the prince or god of this age rules; it is the ordered system of which he is the head, the demons (his fallen angels) are his emissaries, and the unsaved human race are his subjects as they bear his mark or image.

So it is the sum total of human life in the ordered world outside of Christ. It is that life considered apart from God, alienated from God, and hostile to God. This Satanic world system is made up of those EARTHLY THINGS which SEDUCE men from God. Put it all together, and it is those PURPOSES, those PURSUITS, those PLEASURES, those PRACTICES, and those PLACES where God is not wanted.

It might be religious, it might be cultivated, it might be refined, it might be intellectual, but it is all anti-God and anti-Christ and ruled by Satan. Any my friend, it matters not which world system it is, the religious world system, the educational system, the political, scientific, social, economic system or the world of PLEASURE-Satan is the god and ruler of them all.

Now the question is asked, "How does Satan rule all these systems, thereby deceiving the souls of men?" Listen now! I want you to keep in mind that Satan is the author of confusion! This is his work! It is by working with all power and deceivableness of unrighteousness that he keeps men deceived and tries to keep them from being saved. So every day, mankind moves in this sphere of these world systems, inhaling and inevitably exhaling the atmosphere of these signs and lying wonders with all deceivableness of unrighteousness.

You see, Satan bombards mankind-the men, the women, the young people and the children that make up this world-through the eye-gate, the ear-gate and the mind-gate with his LIES and ERRORS about sin, death, hell and judgment! He bombards them with his INSINUATIONS against God and His Christ, and with his IMITATIONS and COUNTERFEITS in religion. He bombards them with DISHONESTY and FALSENESS about what true happiness is, with LEWDNESS and WICKEDNESS as being the true way of life. He bombards them with CORRUPTION and IMPURITY as the right moral character, and goes about calling evil good, and good evil; putting darkness for light and light for darkness; putting bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter (Isaiah 5:20).

And what means does he use to bombard us with these things? My friend, he uses false preachers, political rallies, the editorial pages of our newspapers, the magazines, the bill boards along our streets and highways, the TV screens, movie houses and radios, and even bombards us with lies from person to person! Satan is working in each and every one of these ways as they all give their THOUGHTS, their IDEAS, their IMPRESSIONS, their OPINIONS, their VIEWS, their BELIEFS, or CONVICTIONS to all the subjects and circumstances that confront mankind.

All of this is controlled by Satan and has his mark upon it, for in most cases they are half-truths! All are passing their JUDGMENTS, their EVALUATIONS, and drawing their CONCLUSIONS as to what is right and what is wrong about the world and how to govern it. This all floats toward us, coming at us at all times TO KEEP US CONFUSED AS TO WHAT THE TRUTH REALLY IS!

We are given all kinds of MAXIMS, MORAL BELIEFS, THEORIES, and PRINCIPLES OF OPERATIONS as to how people should live and work. Each one gives his SPECULATIONS, his REASONINGS and THINKING as to what constitutes happiness. There is no absolute standard; all is relative to the IMPULSES, DESIRES and MOTIVES of the individual as each tells what STIMULATES him, and how you can get what you want, do what you want to do and be what you want to be by POSITIVE THINKING or MYSTICAL MEDITATION.

What confusion! So many voices, all telling of their HOPES and ASPIRATIONS, their DREAMS and EXPECTATIONS! At all times in all places, these things bombard the eye-gate, the ear-gate and the mind-gate of mankind; and they meet with reception in the affections because every man outside of Christ is a child of the devil (John 8:44) and is taken captive by Satan at his will, blinded by the deceitfulness of sin.

So by all these means Satan controls the hearts of men and holds them in his power. He uses all these ways to keep them DECEIVED as to the true state of their never-dying souls before God!

Beloved, I know what I am talking about! It literally amazes me that any man is ever saved! You can turn the dial of a radio on Sunday evening and find a hundred different voices telling you what truth is; and how are you going to sort it out! If God in His sovereign grace and power does not come to a sinner to rescue him from this mass of confusion, sin, and the very clutches of Satan, no man would ever be saved! But in mercy and grace He reveals TRUTH to the soul, freeing his will and giving him power to flee to Christ and His blood for salvation and deliverance from Satan's kingdom.

Oh how I praise Him from the depths of my soul that this is what He has done for me and for all of His people! He has caused us to hear and understand, believe and act upon the TRUTH AS IT IS IN CHRIST JESUS, because God by His Spirit has written that truth upon our minds, in our hearts and our affections. He has set us free in Christ, causing us by faith to overcome this world's system that Satan controls (I John 5:4, 5), that we may follow the Lamb Who is Christ Jesus the Lord. And this is my prayer for you, my friend, that the living God by His Spirit will reveal Christ to your heart, for HE IS TRUTH! (John 14:6). "Hereby KNOW we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error" (I John 4:6).

THE LOOSING OF SATAN

We come now in our study of Revelation 20 to vv. 7-10 which read:

"And when the thousand years are expired, SATAN SHALL BE LOOSED OUT OF HIS PRISON, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the

beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever."

Dear friend, these are the verses we will be studying for quite some time, expounding-by the grace of God as the Holy Spirit enables us-exactly what they mean and how they apply to us today. In order to do this, we will be taking it step by step, phrase by phrase and practically word by word as we go through these verses.

Also, to understand what we will be studying here, we must remember the interpretation of the first six verses: Satan has been bound by our Lord since His first coming for the purpose of keeping him from deceiving the nations any longer as he did in Old Testament times, so the gospel would flow out freely to the nations of the earth. Satan remains bound in his prison for an indefinite period of time, (represented by the symbolic thousand years) **THE PRESENT GOSPEL AGE**, which began at the cross where our Lord spoiled principalities and powers, making a show of them openly and triumphing over them (Colossians 2:15).

Now we refer back to Revelation 20:3 where we are told that after this indefinite period of time-after this present gospel age-Satan must be **LOOSED FOR A LITTLE SEASON**. You see, it is at the closing of this earth's history of sin and sorrow that Satan will be loosed and again allowed free reign over the nations of the earth to keep the gospel from being preached. This loosing of Satan as described in these verses 7-10 of Revelation 10 corresponds to 2 Thessalonians 2:8-12 which will be fulfilled at this time:

"Then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming, even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause **GOD SHALL SEND THEM STRONG DELUSION, THAT THEY SHOULD BELIEVE A LIE**, that they all might be damned..."

Why? Because they "believed not the truth" when it was preached unto them, "but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

My friend, can you see it? Satan has been bound since the cross that the gospel may freely be preached among the nations, yet there are those who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness; they persist in their ungodly ways and sin against light and against knowledge. Then when Satan is loosed and the true gospel is no longer preached, they will believe, but what they believe will be a **LIE** and a **COUNTERFEIT**, for they will be sent strong delusion from God! This will be the awful judgment, when God shall give the nations of the earth over to Satan at the end of this earth's history; they will be given over to reprobate minds as God takes away His grace and the constraining hand of His Holy Spirit. Satan will work through his two beasts described in Revelation 13-his hand and his mind-to keep the gospel from being preached any more among the nations; and they will believe a lie!

Then what is the lie the nations will believe? Having not obeyed the gospel which has been preached "in season and out of season" (2 Timothy 4:2), they will believe Satan's lie of carnal Christianity: that there is no need for bowing to the Lordship of Christ before having Him as Savior, that there is no need for the work of the Holy Spirit in conviction or for a holy life and righteous living!

In his subtlety as an angel of light, (through the second beast of Revelation 13, his mind) Satan deceives them; and my friend he does this SO GRADUALLY, that it is almost IMPERCEPTIBLE. In fact, he is deceiving the religious world today, for even now we see many who "will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lust...they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they...turn away their ears from the truth", and turn unto fables (vv. 3-4 of 2 Timothy 4).

Did you know that this false doctrine of carnal Christianity that is being promulgated in our day is only setting the stage for the loosing of Satan? This is that strong delusion from God, being sent to those who receive not the love of the truth that they might be saved!

With the restraining and convicting power of the truth removed, many will readily believe the lie out of hell that there is no God, no Christ, no life after death, no wrath, and no judgment, so they see no need for salvation or redemption through the blood of Christ. They will believe the lie that "every man is a god unto himself, so do what you want to do and live as you please; eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die."

Then when Satan is loosed, with the marked contrast of the lives of the children of God to those of the openly and religiously profane, he will use his hand to persecute and endeavor to stamp out all vestige of worship of the true and living God in Christ. As a roaring lion, he will bring all the power and forces at his command to try and stamp out all signs of Christianity! And how long this little season will be, we have no indication in the Word of God, but we do know that it will be right down at the end of this age, just before the second coming of our blessed Lord. This will be a time when there will be very few believers upon the earth; for it will be a time of great persecution and martyrdom! Then we will see the answer to our Lord's question in Luke 18:8 when He asked, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" No, there will be very few true children of God left!

And just when it seems that Satan has the victory, and the hounds of hell have seemingly triumphed over the church of the living God, at the height of persecution, our Lord Jesus Christ will be revealed with His mighty angels in His glorious second coming, "in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9).

And when shall this be? "When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe" (vs. 10). All of this corresponds perfectly with Revelation 20:7-9, that at the end of the age, just when Satan and his forces have "compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city...fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them."

If you will study the Scriptures closely you will find that when our Lord comes back in His glorious second coming, TIME WILL BE NO MORE, the judgment will be set up, and this earth and age as we know it will be no more! And my friend, no man knows how much longer we have to wait for His second coming-it could be today, tomorrow, next year, ten years, a hundred years or maybe a thousand years from now-we just do not know. All we know is that He is coming again; and when He does, He will reward His children with an eternity with Him upon the new earth, and the wicked with eternal judgment and damnation in hell.

Listen now! I know it is widely taught and believed today by the majority of Christendom that the loosing of Satan will occur AFTER the second coming of Christ. It will be, it is claimed, towards the end of Christ's supposed thousand-year reign upon the earth. They say our Lord Jesus is to reign on a literal throne in the city of Jerusalem. Then suddenly towards the end of these thousand years, His reign is to be challenged by Satan. They say that Christ and those who remain faithful to Him are to be contained in the city of Jerusalem. He and His army are seemingly helpless against the onslaught of Satan and his hosts, and only the miraculous intervention of God in sending fire from heaven will save the situation.

Do you realize that if this were true, it would mean that Christ would suffer a second humiliation? Even though all power has been given to Him, both in heaven and upon earth (Matthew 28:18), yet they say He must wait for a miraculous deliverance from the Father before He can be saved!

But the Scriptures nowhere speak of a SECOND HUMILIATION for our blessed Lord, for His humiliation ended at the cross. therefore, to believe that our Lord Jesus Christ will again be put into a place of humiliation and need another deliverance, contradicts more than one Scripture which speaks of the second coming of Christ as being the culmination of all and the end of this earth's history as we know it. Instead of His being humiliated, it will be His enemies that will be brought down at His footstool, to confess Him as Lord and be brought into judgment! And as we have already shown you all through this series, Christ is not waiting to reign upon this earth in Jerusalem; He NOW REIGNS OVER ALL, upon the spiritual throne of David (Acts 2) for His reward at Calvary.

No Second Chance for the Sinner

My friend, it is upon my heart to warn you! To believe that there will be a SECOND CHANCE after Christ comes back is a doctrine born in hell! It is the confusion and lie of Satan! It has been a burden upon my heart for years to warn you of God's righteous judgment that is coming upon the wicked at the return of Christ; my friend, there is NO SECOND CHANCE AFTER HIS SECOND COMING! There will be no seven-year tribulation period in which you might be saved after Christ comes! There will be no thousand-year reign of Christ on earth in Jerusalem, so There is no chance for salvation then, God tells us in His Word that "NOW is the accepted time; BEHOLD, NOW IS THE DAY OF SALVATION" (2 Corinthians 6:2), for when Christ comes the second time, He is coming in judgment! This great eternal fact is everywhere present on the pages of Holy Writ; it is not something I have dreamed up.

It is God's teaching; it is God's truth. Our Lord told us about it, and I desire by the grace of God to spell it out to you. Even though I know that this truth of Revelation 20 is diametrically opposed to what is preached from many pulpits today, I cannot waver one iota in the deliverance of the truth of God's Word: When Christ returns the second time, He is coming in judgment upon the wicked and in mercy upon the righteous; and there is no time period between our Lord's second coming and the day of judgment!

"To the law and to the testimony" of God's eternal Word! Let us see what He tells us in Jude 14-15:

"Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints TO EXECUTE JUDGMENT UPON ALL, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." The appearance of Christ here is at the day of Judgment!

Again, listen to 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9: "...WHEN THE LORD JESUS SHALL BE REVEALED FROM HEAVEN with his mighty angels"-and how is He coming?-"IN FLAMING FIRE TAKING VENGEANCE ON THEM THAT KNOW NOT GOD, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be PUNISHED WITH EVERLASTING DESTRUCTION FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day." And this corresponds with Revelation 20:9 which says, "...and fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them."

These Scriptures are very clear that He is coming in judgment upon His enemies (and our enemies), for vs. 10 of Revelation 20 shows Him casting the devil "into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are" to be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Again we see that He is coming the second time "to execute judgment upon ALL" (Jude 15), as the next verses of Revelation 20 tell us about the Great White Throne Judgment.

Then Hebrews 9:27-28 also speaks of our Lord's coming in judgment upon the wicked and in mercy for the righteous: "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but AFTER THIS THE JUDGMENT: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him SHALL HE APPEAR THE SECOND TIME WITHOUT SIN UNTO SALVATION."

The Believer's Hope

Herein is the hope of the believer: the second coming of our Lord in power and great glory for His own. Listen to John 14:3: "...I will come again, and RECEIVE YOU UNTO MYSELF: THAT WHERE I AM, THERE YE MAY BE ALSO." We read further of the believer's hope in I Corinthians 15:51-54: "Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed; in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put

on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory."

I want you to notice that expression in vs. 54: "death is swallowed up in victory." This is the fulfillment of Isaiah 25:8, and corresponds to I Corinthians 15:25-26 where we read: "For he (Christ) must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."

You see, this is not done AT SOME SECRET RAPTURE after which there is a tribulation period and then a thousand-year reign of Christ on earth at Jerusalem, but it is done at His glorious second coming, "AT THE LAST TRUMP" (vs. 52), when He comes in grace for His people, and in judgment against the wicked. Death is swallowed up in victory when at the Great White Throne Judgment, death and hell are "cast into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:14)!

My friend, are you among the many thousands out there who say,

"Well, when Christ comes back for His saints, then I know there are yet seven years left, so all I have to do is refuse to take the mark of the beast and I will be saved"?

Then I pray that the Lord will give you ears to hear, for God's Word takes that hope away from you! As soon as our Lord Jesus Christ comes back, according to Revelation 20:11, He shall set up the Great White Throne Judgment, and then what will you do? His second coming ends it all, and there will be NO SECOND CHANCE.

This doctrine of a second chance after Christ's return is confusion and the lie of Satan to deceive your soul and lull you to sleep until it is too late! The Word of God speaks only of today: "NOW IS THE DAY OF SALVATION, NOW is the accepted time" (2 Corinthians 6:2). Judgment is coming and tomorrow will be too late! You might even die today, and then what? Think about it!

What about your soul today? Do you know Christ? Are you trusting Christ today? Have you obeyed the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and closed in with Him? If He comes today, are you prepared?

Christ is Coming from Heaven

So to say that these verses in Revelation 20 picture Christ again upon earth before the Day of Judgment is to contradict more than one Scripture!

Listen again to 2 Thessalonians 1:7: "...when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed FROM HEAVEN with his mighty angels."

And I Thessalonians 4:16 also tells us, "FOR THE LORD HIMSELF SHALL DESCEND FROM HEAVEN with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first."

His glorious second coming is FROM HEAVEN! So I ask, if what the vast majority of Christendom teaches today is true, how could Christ come from heaven if He were bodily upon earth during the so-called millennium which they say will take place before the judgment?

"Well," you say, "He is coming the first time for His saints and in seven years He is coming with His saints, and then is ushered in the thousand years, and then come the judgment."

No, my friend, neither your Bible nor my Bible reads that there are two or three, or four stages to the second coming of Christ! There were not two, three or four stages to His first coming! He came the first time, born in Bethlehem, to be humiliated for our sins upon Calvary's cross; and the angels told His disciples in Acts 1:11 that thus He would come back the second time: "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, SHALL SO COME IN LIKE MANNER AS YE HAVE SEEN HIM GO INTO HEAVEN."

Oh my friend, my prayer is that God, in His mercy, will undeceive you today, so you will see that this teaching of two, three and four stages to our Lord's second coming is false, and that There is no second chance after the second coming. All of that is wrongly dividing the Word of truth; for all the Scriptures of God's Word that speak of Jesus coming back, or Christ coming back, or the day of the Lord, or the day of God, speak of the same thing: the **SECOND COMING OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST**. He'll only come back one time, and where the second coming of God finds you, eternity will hold you forever and forever.

THE GENERAL RESURRECTION AND JUDGMENT

Now we have given you many Scriptures from the New Testament, proving without a shadow of a doubt that the second coming of our Lord Jesus ushers in the Day of Judgment. In other words, the Scriptures teach that there is to be a general resurrection and a general judgment! Christ is coming at the same time for the saved and the lost; for the saved in grace and glory, and for the lost in righteous judgment.

And my friend, though this may be strange teaching to a lot of people, I am on Biblical grounds and church history grounds. I have made a diligent study into all of this, and have found that all we hear today about the secret rapture, the seven-year period of tribulation and the millennium, has only been in existence for the last 150 years! But we cannot get away from the plain teaching of God's Word.

A pivotal Scripture proving the general resurrection and the general judgment at the second coming of Christ is John 5:28-29: "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which ALL that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

My dear friend, those who reject this doctrine of Scripture which teaches a general resurrection and a general judgment, have truly not set before these Scriptures to receive their clear meaning from the Holy Spirit! For you see, these verses in John 5, more than any others, set at naught the teaching of today, that Christ is coming for His saints at a secret rapture, and then seven years later He is coming with His saints to set up a rule of a thousand years upon this earth from Jerusalem, and then at the end of the thousand years, the wicked shall be raised and judged! They

read that ALL that are in the graves shall be raised at one time! There is no time period between the resurrection of the righteous and the resurrection of the wicked!

But this is not the only portion of Scripture that teaches this! This same truth is set forth in 2 Timothy 4:1 in these words: "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick (or the living) and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom."

You see dear friend, Christ is going to judge the living-those who have been delivered from their sins-and He is going to judge the dead-those who are still dead in trespasses and in sins. And when will He do this? At His appearing, which is His second coming!

Then in Acts 17:31 we read: "God hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."

Again we see this truth: all men, saved and lost, shall appear before the judgment throne of Christ at His second coming.

Also in Romans 14:10 the apostle Paul tells us: "...we shall ALL stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (the saved as well as the lost, the wicked as well as the righteous).

Again, in 2 Corinthians 5:10-11 He puts it a little stronger in these words:

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

And why did Paul put that phrase in there: "knowing the terror of the Lord"? Because we shall ALL appear before that Judgment! You see, the righteous are to stand there to be judged according to their works, that they may receive their rewards and to be witnesses against the wicked. And at the same time, the wicked are to stand there to be judged according to their works that are written in the books, after which they will be cast out from the presence of the Lord, to suffer an eternity under God's wrath in the lake of fire forever and forever.

Sudden Destruction!

Oh my friend, I must warn you! Christ's coming will be sudden; there will be no warning then! All the Scriptures which speak of our Lord's second coming, picture Him coming suddenly; we have no Scriptures that give us any signs of His coming! Listen to God's Word! Our Lord Himself, speaking to His disciples in Acts 1:7 said: "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power." In these words He was saying that the times and the seasons-the signs of His coming-are known only to the Father!

And these are the same words that He spoke to His disciples there in the Olivet discourse in Matthew 24:36: "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only."

Also in that same chapter He said, "Watch therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the Goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up."

And what our Lord said in the gospels, the apostles said in the Epistles, that is, that our Lord was coming as a thief in the night. My friend, a thief never gives you any warning when he is coming! He comes when men are sleeping!

So in I Thessalonians 5:1 Paul tells us: "But of the times and of the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape."

Brother Peter tells us the same thing in 2 Peter 3:10: "...the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."

And then the apostle John in Revelation 16:15 warns us of the same thing: "Behold, I come as a thief, Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame."

Did you notice that Paul, Peter and John all said the same thing their blessed Lord said? They all tell us that His coming will be sudden, as a thief in the night, and that no man knows when that time will be. I do not care how many books on prophesy you have read, or how many signs you have been given; there is no man who knows the day, nor the week, nor the month, nor the year, nor the decade, nor the century, nor the millennium in which the Lord Jesus Christ is coming Back!

My Lord said, NO MAN KNOWETH THE DAY NOR THE HOUR when He is coming again (Matthew 24:36), so I am going to believe My Lord and not the books or words of men! Sudden destruction! What a warning! And is this not the same teaching of our Lord in Matthew 24:37? "...as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." It shall be sudden destruction! As it came suddenly then, it shall come suddenly again when our Lord returns in His second coming.

No Secret Rapture

So you see, all through the Scriptures the believer is told to watch, for we know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh! And this is set forth in so many of our Lord's parables, especially in the parable of the unfaithful servants of Matthew 24, and also in the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25: five were wise and five were foolish!

We are told to WATCH! Why? because the Scriptures nowhere teach that the second coming of Christ is to be in two parts, one in a secret rapture for His saints and then one with His saints to set up a thousand-year reign on earth! Rather, as I trust you have seen in our studies, all throughout the Word of God, the Scriptures teach ONE second coming of Christ, which will be the end of the world as we know it.

For I Corinthians 15:23-26 says, "But every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then -the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.

The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." This is the Great White Throne Judgment of Revelation 20; this is the fulfillment of 2 Peter 3 when "the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (vs. 10). And my friend, seeing that these things are coming, what manner of men ought you and I to be, in all manner of holiness and godliness before Him! Should we not be "looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, (who know Him) according to his promise, look for NEW HEAVENS

AND A NEW EARTH, WHEREIN DWELLETH RIGHTEOUSNESS." (2 Peter 3:11-13).

Oh that I could persuade each one of you outside of Christ today to "FLEE FROM THE WRATH TO COME"! Flee to Christ, for He alone is the safe hiding place from the wrath of God!

Do not believe Satan's lie that you will yet have a second chance after Christ comes! Oh no, dear friend, God is calling you to repentance today; He is calling you even through these feeble lips of mine to be reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:20), to lay down your arms of rebellion, to hoist the white flag of surrender and seek God while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near (Isaiah 55:6), confess your sins before God and cry unto Him for mercy, looking only to the Lord Jesus Christ Who has the power of salvation.

It is only in Him that God will save sinners; it is only by the blood of Christ that we can have our sins forgiven and washed away; it is only in Christ's righteousness that we can stand justified before God. This looking, this coming is by faith, the going outside of ourselves to the only One Whom God has set forth to save us (Acts 4:12).

My friend, I plead with you today! Go to your Bible and search it out; you cannot find anywhere that there is a second chance for you after the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Judgment is coming, oh where will you hide?

Revelation 20

Chapter 3

Dear friend, as we continue our studies in Revelation 20, we again want to look into the LOOSING OF SATAN, as described in vv. 7-10:

“And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.”

WHY SATAN WILL BE LOOSED

Now in these verses, there is revealed the PARTICULAR PURPOSE for which SATAN SHALL BE LOOSED when the thousand years shall be fulfilled: (and remember that this thousand years is not a literal but a symbolic time period, reaching from the first coming of our Lord Jesus Christ to His second coming.) Right before our Lord comes back, Satan shall be loosed for a little season to universally “DECEIVE THE NATIONS” (vs. 8). Just as he was bound at the cross so he might not deceive the nations (vs. 3), here he is loosed that he might deceive them again.

As we have previously shown you, this is in agreement with what the apostle Paul teaches in 2 Thessalonians 2:11-12: “And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

And this loosing of Satan to deceive the nations will be a TOTAL AND UNIVERSAL DECEPTION! Why? So he might gather all the nations together, the number of whom will be as the sand of the sea (Revelation 20:8), to battle against the saints, the church of the living God, pictured here under the figure of “THE BELOVED CITY, THE NEW JERUSALEM” of Galatians 4:26, Hebrews 12:22, Revelation 3:12 and Revelation 21.

Gog and Magog

Why does John, by the Holy Spirit, refer to the nations in this battle as Gog and Magog? Gog and Magog were the heathen nations that were in existence 2500 years ago who fought against the nation of Israel, physical battles of great intensity (Ezekiel 38- 39). But do not confuse Revelation 20:7-9 with these battles of Ezekiel 38 and 39 as so many do today! These verses have nothing to do with what is promulgated from so many pulpits and over the radio today! They say Revelation 20:7-9 pictures how Russia is going to march on Palestine in the near future; but Russia is not mentioned here, nor is it mentioned any place in the Bible!

You see, John refers to the battles of Gog and Magog in Ezekiel 38 and 39 only because they typify the battle here in Revelation 20 in this way: Just as they were physical battles of such great intensity, the Holy Spirit uses them here in symbolic form to illustrate the greatness of the persecution against the saints who will be living at that time just before our Lord's return. Just as Gog and Magog were the last attempt to destroy literal Israel before the first coming of Christ, the Gog and Magog of Revelation 20:8 is the last attempt to destroy spiritual Israel, (the church, every living believer) before the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

My friend, did you know that by using the Gog and Magog of Ezekiel 38-39 to show forth a spiritual truth, John is following the same pattern as our Lord and the other writers of the New Testament? Take your New Testament and look up all the references from the Old Testament that are used in the New, and you will find to your amazement as I did, that these Old Testament Scriptures are always used to show forth some great spiritual truth; in other words, all the Old Testament Scriptures that are used in the New Testament are given a spiritual meaning, NEVER a material or physical meaning!

“The Beloved City”

Now as we go further into our study of vv. 7-9 of Revelation 20, we see Satan and his forces surrounding the camp of the saints: “And they went up on the breadth of the earth and compassed the camp of the saints about, and THE BELOVED CITY” (vs. 9). Here again we see that “the beloved city” is used symbolically, to describe-not the literal city of Jerusalem here on earth-but the new spiritual Jerusalem upon earth. You see, this beloved city is nothing more or less than a picture of the church of God; and the phrase “compassed the camp of the saints about” is figurative language used to express the enmity of the world against the church of the living God.

The Scriptures Themselves

My friend, this is Scriptural truth, verified by the Scriptural use of the term, “Jerusalem”. You see, if I could not find the Scriptures spiritualizing this, then I would be foolish for doing so. But when I come to Scriptures like Galatians 4:22-31 and find the apostle Paul using the Old Testament Scriptures to spiritualize this allegory he was giving of the two Jerusalems, then I am on good ground in spiritualizing this verse of Scripture in Revelation 20 to show that it typifies the church of the living God. For in Galatians 4 Paul uses Hagar, the bondwoman and servant wife of Abraham, to picture the city of Jerusalem on earth as being in bondage with her children; and Sarah, the free woman who gave birth to the spiritual seed, Isaac, to picture the Jerusalem that is from above and is free. Further, he tells us in vs. 26 that she is “the mother of us all.” So we see that this can only be a spiritual Jerusalem, because no future, material Jerusalem can be the “mother of us all”.

Again, in Hebrews 12:22 Paul spiritualizes Jerusalem in these words: “But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem...” And notice that he says, “YE ARE COME.” So this is no future, material city, but a PRESENT SPIRITUAL CITY, which is the church described in Revelation 21 as a bride adorned for her husband. Therefore, it is the saints, the “church of the firstborn” (Hebrews 12:23), that Satan comes against in a final attempt to wipe them off the face of the earth, just before Christ returns. As he moves through

the nations, governments and false religions, he will play havoc with the church, seeking to utterly destroy them. The days of the martyrs will return; for men, women and children will seal their testimonies with their blood! This will be a time of tribulation, so great that there will be only a few left upon this earth who know Christ in true saving faith.

God's Answer to Satan

But my friend, Satan cannot and will not utterly destroy the church of the living God, for our Lord said, "and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). CHRIST IS THE VICTOR AND CONQUEROR, for God's answer to Satan is found in the last part of our text: "Then fire will come down from God out of heaven and devour them" (Revelation 20:9). All throughout the Book of Revelation this theme prevails: Christ the Victor, and His people with Him in all His triumphs.

And dear friend, when you understand that there is but one second coming of our Lord, and that His coming ends it all, then all of the Scriptures in the New Testament are just one blessed pattern woven together; they all speak of the same thing! When He says that fire comes down from heaven to devour them, then we see how 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8 falls into place:

"And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, IN FLAMING FIRE taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

You see, fire will accompany the second coming of our Lord; the testimony of the apostles Paul, John and Peter all agree. For what Peter tells us in 2 Peter 3:10 takes place at the same time!

"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements SHALL MELT WITH FERVENT HEAT, the earth also and the works that are therein SHALL BE BURNED UP."

Therefore we are told we should look for and hasten unto "the coming of the day of God, wherein THE HEAVENS BEING ON FIRE SHALL BE DISSOLVED and the elements shall melt with FERVENT HEAT" (vs. 12). All of this dovetails together!

Again, we see in 2 Thessalonians 2:8 that Christ's sudden second coming in glory shall destroy the wicked one:

"And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall destroy with the brightness of his coming." Then, according to 2 Peter 3:7, He will judge the world of the ungodly; and then He will consummate the redemption of His elect people of all the ages according to 2 Thessalonians 1:10. Then shall be fulfilled all the promises of the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness (Isaiah 65:17; 2 Peter 3:13). You see, all of these verses of Scripture dovetail together and all speak of the same identical second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, when all of this will come to pass.

So you do not need a Philadelphia lawyer to figure out when all of this takes place; it is just as simple as the Bible makes it, with no confusion; When Christ returns, that is the end, that is the day of resurrection and that is the day of judgment. But it is only when you ask God to erase from your mind the false teaching that Christ's second coming is in so many stages, that you will find that the whole Word of God agrees! You do not have to take a portion like 2 Thessalonians 2 and say vv. 5-7 belong to the first stage of His coming, and vv. 8-12 belong to the second stage of His coming! or say that the first stage is for His saints, then seven years later it is with His saints, than a millennium, and then the judgment and resurrection of the wicked-oh no! This is confusion! This is of Satan, to confuse the minds of the people, because the Holy Spirit is not the Author of confusion! (I Corinthians 14:33).

Satan's Eternal Doom

It is blessed to me to know that there is coming a day when our Lord is coming to vindicate His name! For Revelation 20:10 declares: "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." Finally after his long history of deceiving mankind, beginning with Adam and Eve and continuing to the present time, Satan will meet his doom in the lake of fire! Oh what a deserving fate for one who has brought such terrible misery, woe and terror upon the church of the living God for so many centuries! My friends, this is the deepest hell, for there will be no relief from this torment, it is eternal! There is no pause, no rest, no comfort; the suffering is unending, it is everlasting! The devil shall be tormented day and night without end.

What a picture!

But oh, it is sadder yet to know that every one of you who dies OUTSIDE OF CHRIST shall be with Satan in this awful state according to the words of our blessed Lord Himself in Matthew 25:41: "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into EVERLASTING FIRE, PREPARED FOR THE DEVIL AND HIS ANGELS." Oh my dear soul out there today without Christ and without hope, do you hear these words! They are spoken by Him Who now holds out the scepter of grace to all who will bow at His feet in repentance, turning from their sins and wicked ways, laying down their arms of rebellion and seeking His face in believing trust and faith. Again, I tell you in love, TODAY IS THE DAY OF SALVATION, not in some future date; for if you neglect so great salvation, then this same Jesus shall be your Judge! What about it my friend? Are you going to be cast into the everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels? Or will you be with Christ for ever and forever? I have told you the truth today; I have brought before you the truth of God's Word as to what the end times are going to be, as they are pictured in the Word of God.

HOW SATAN WILL AGAIN DECEIVE THE NATIONS

Now this next statement may surprise you, but did you know that this earth is ripe right now for that little season wherein Satan is to be loosed? I am not setting dates, for it could be yet another 100 or 1,000 years, but the nations are now ripe for this very thing. So now as I go into the Scriptures with you, I propose to describe our present condition, and show you how Satan will be able to universally deceive the nations, bringing them to persecute and put to death the church of the living God.

Remember what we have told you from 2 Thessalonians 2:8-12! It is because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved, that God shall send the nations of the earth a strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned. Why? Because they believed not the truth when it was preached unto them but had pleasure in unrighteousness. The constraining hand of the Holy Spirit and His grace shall be taken away, as God gives them up to the deceitfulness of sin, letting them follow their own ways. This will be the awful judgment, for they shall be reprobated; so they shall believe Satan's lie, and easily be led against the saints of God to persecute and put them to death.

But in order to fully understand how Satan can deceive the nations once again as he did before the first coming of our Lord, we must first understand man's natural condition. Follow us very closely now! In the fall of Adam, man, who is a tri-part being, composed of body, soul and spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:23), became lost in his spirit; it was no more in communion with God, so he was a lost soul! His spirit fell to the level of the soul, for according to Hebrews 4:12, in the new birth the spirit is raised or "divided asunder" from its immersion in the soul. So man can never be delivered or saved apart from the distinguishing grace of God worked in the heart by the Holy Spirit.

This is confirmed in Ephesians 2:1 which reads: "And you hath he quickened, who were DEAD in trespasses and sins." This verse of Scripture shows us that man outside of Christ, is a lost, helpless and hopeless sinner; and verse 3 tells us that he is by nature a child of wrath. But these are truths or doctrines of God's Word that are hated by men today (and they have always been hated by natural man, no matter how religious he may be); that is why these doctrines are not preached from most pulpits; in fact they are denied in most all religious circles, which makes man a prime object for the deceiving power of Satan.

Now you may ask, "What doctrines are these that men despise?" My friend, actually there are three teachings of God's Word which, if pressed upon the consciences of men, will make them lash back at you with all the vengeance of their souls. These three truths are: the SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD, the WRATH OF GOD and the TOTAL DEPRAVITY OF MAN, and these are key doctrines of God's Word! Even professed Christians will come back at you with hatred and bitterness when you press home the Word which declares that God is sovereign in all of His operations, that He alone dictates the terms of salvation and gives it to whomsoever He wills, and that grace is in the hands of a sovereign God! The effect of Scriptures such as Romans 9:15,16 and 18 which show our sovereign God to be the God of election and predestination, is always the same upon natural man as it was in our Lord's time (see Luke 4:24-29): "...when they heard these things, they were filled with wrath" (vs. 28).

Further, to say that this sovereign God, the God of the Bible, is a GOD OF WRATH, will bring out the worst in the unsaved. When you press home to the conscience that God has the right, which He exercises to the glory of His justice and the vindication of His holiness, to punish sinners beneath His wrath in hell forever, then you hear this cry: "A loving God would not send a sinner to hell to burn and suffer forever; my God would not do that!" But nowhere does any writer of Scripture under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit try to placate or do away with the justice of God in punishing sinners for their sins! Yet natural man receives not the love of the truth that, he may be saved (2 Thessalonians 2:10), so he is open to Satan's deception!

Then to be told that he is totally depraved, lost, a helpless and hopeless sinner, without any goodness, righteousness or profitableness to commend him to God, is more than natural man can bear! (And this truth of man's TOTAL DEPRAVITY is taught all throughout the Word of God.) Well then, what does the Bible mean by "total depravity", and how will this help us to understand how Satan deceives the hearts of men?

God's Picture of Man

Dear friend, the Word of God teaches that in the fall of man, he became totally depraved-not in his physical, but in all his mental and moral capacities. In other words, every part of man's mental and moral nature is corrupted by sin; therefore his depravity is total. For you see, man in his spirit is made up of all those mysterious intangibles: his intellect, volition, emotions, instinct, desire, motives, his urge, disposition and temper, which live not only inseparably with each other, but WITHIN each other, altogether constituting one indivisible thinking mind. And when man died spiritually through the fall of Adam, all that makes up his mental and moral powers became corrupted and set upon a COURSE OF REBELLION AGAINST GOD.

Listen to God's Word! "The carnal mind" (the natural, depraved mind of man) "is ENMITY against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Romans 8:7). These are not my words, they are God's Words! And I know they're true, because I know a little of my own heart by the grace of God. Because the natural mind of man is not subject to the law of God, nor can it ever be, that is the reason why God in salvation must give a spiritual heart and a spiritual nature, or no man could ever have communion with God.

I trust you can understand what I am saying! I have tried to make it simple, that you might understand exactly what total depravity is. Again, this is what the Word of God teaches, for if you will turn to Jeremiah 17:9, you will find that man's heart by his fall in Adam is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; so he must be given a new heart! (Ezekiel 36:26). In Ephesians 4:18 we read that man's moral and spiritual being has darkened his understanding, and therefore has alienated him from the life of God. In John 3:19, our Lord said that man's affections by the fall are prostituted so men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. Therefore, for God to save a man, He must enlighten his soul, or otherwise he stays in darkness, under the controlling influence of the spirit of the devil; (for as we have shown you in previous messages, natural man bears the mark of the devil in his mind and in his hand!).

Further, Romans 5:6 tells us that man is without spiritual strength and is ungodly, the opposite of God and holiness. Our fall in Adam has polluted the fountain of every man's spiritual life (Proverbs 15:8); therefore "the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth" (Genesis 8:21). Being "shapen in iniquity" and conceived in sin (Psalm 51:5), then man is "a transgressor from the womb" (Isaiah 48:8) and goes astray as soon as he is born, speaking lies (Psalm 58:3).

We could go on and on with the Scriptures, showing you that one after another gives us a picture of man being totally depraved in his mental and moral being; and this is his spirit, because it is in his spirit that a man is God conscious.

And in the fall of Adam, his spirit fell to the level of his soul, therefore it is in rebellion against God. That is why the natural man has no taste or capacity to enjoy the things of the heavenly spiritual realm. He cannot discern them, because they are spiritually discerned (1 Corinthians 2:14). He has no love nor desire after them because his affections are prostituted (John 3:19), and because his will is enslaved by the lust of the flesh (Ephesians 2:2-3).

So we see that the Word of God does not paint a pretty picture of man outside of the grace of God in Christ; apart from the grace of God, man is in an awful spiritual condition (helpless and hopeless). And when you realize the truth of this, you will be convinced that no man could or ever would be saved apart from the SOVEREIGN GRACE OF GOD worked in that sinner's heart by the power of God's Holy Spirit.

The Satanic Spirit of Rebellion

Then as if all this is not bad enough, the Word of God is very clear in 2 Timothy 2:26 that natural man is under the control of Satan, that is, taken captive by him at his will. That is why man walks according to the course of this world; he walks according to the prince of the power of the air (Satan himself), the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience, according to Ephesians 2:2. Listen now! Being the depraved creature that he is and controlled or held captive by Satan, natural man manifests the Satanic spirit of rebellion that we see everywhere today. No matter where we turn, man is in rebellion against God, giving vent to all the deep sinful emotions of his natural heart and mind. Therefore when the restraining power of the grace of God and the Spirit of God is held back and Satan is loosed, it will be easy for him to deceive the nations, for he already controls them by his spirit, the spirit of rebellion.

Left to himself, natural man is capable of committing the most awful, abominable sins. Do you wonder why men act as they do today! Why does a man lie and steal, hate and kill? Why does a father commit incest with his own young daughter? Why do men commit the most revolting crimes such as killing unborn babies? Why do men and women kill in the most inhuman way? Why do mothers leave their babies in garbage cans and locker rooms? Why do fathers leave their children and wives-and mothers their children and husbands-to go off and forget their responsibilities? Why do men and women drink themselves to death, burn themselves out in the most perverted forms of lust or commit suicide? It is because they are depraved sinners, acting out of a heart of rebellion against God, held captive by Satan, deceiving and being deceived.

We are living in a day when God is belittled, cried down, humanized, and minimized because He is dethroned in the minds and hearts of men. The name of our blessed Lord Jesus is rolled in the gutter of man's depraved thoughts and humanized to such an extent that He is thought of only as a man of history and not the true and living God. And we are living in a day of hero worship, for man in turn has been preached up, exalted and deified. We are seeing Romans 1:25 come to pass: Natural man, under the deceiving power of Satan has "changed the truth of God into a lie", and worships and serves "the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever." The mind of man with all its glorious achievements, has been worshipped, praised, and deified instead of the true Deity of the LORD of heaven in Whose hands our very breath is held!

Not only is the MIND of man worshipped, but the BODY is also glorified and served. Especially the female body has been exposed, glorified, and made a national deity by our newspapers, magazines, books, radios, T.V.s and from just about every stage and theater. Our society bows down before her shrine in daily ritual as the heathen nations did before and after the time of our Lord. Everywhere you turn today, in our grocery stores, drug stores, supermarkets, eating places, hotels, motels, newsstands, from the T.V. screens and in the streets, we see and read of the sex-goddess, the sex god, until it is nauseating and sickening. Men and women, to their own shame, have glorified and worshipped the naked body as a thing of beauty, which God says is an abomination in His sight.

Our nakedness is our shame! It shows that we are sinners; that is the reason God made clothes of skins and clothed our first parents in the Garden of Eden! So to unclothe our bodies, and to parade them before man to be lusted after and worshipped, is a slap in the face of God which openly says to Him, "I am not a sinner, and I defy you to punish me; I am going to walk as I please, and do as I please; You and Your Word shall not tell me what to do!"

And my friend, this is what we see on the streets and read of in our newspapers every day! From the oldest to the youngest, from the pulpit to the gutter, from the place of authority at the seat of government to the poor in the streets, there is open rebellion against God! As in the days of Noah and Lot, so it is today: Man no longer has a sense of morality, but his conscience has been seared as with a hot iron, and he has become nothing but a beast like Nebuchadnezzar, roaming in the field of sin, drinking it up like water, and doing what his depraved heart delights to do!

Every medium available today is controlled by Satan to promulgate sin in its raw, disgusting rebellion against God-you know this as well as I do. Magazines, newspapers, radios, televisions, movies and books ALL parade the sensual, the lustful, the devilish and the diabolical; all lift up sin as virtuous. What is it that man hates? It is the law of God! So men say, "throw off all restraint, let yourself go and have a good time; do not you know it is your right to live as you please and do what you please?" And they portray lying, stealing, robbery, adultery, fornication, whore-mongering, wife-swapping, homosexuality, pornography, drunkenness and even murder as acceptable because it is the letting loose of the man that has been held down these many years by the "old puritanical laws". Men laugh at, joke about, indulge in and get their fill of sin out of a heart of rebellion against God!

A Foretaste of the Loosing of Satan

My friend, all of this has led to A SOCIETY OF LAWLESSNESS, and our nation is headed straight for hell just as fast as it can get there. We have sowed to the wind, and now are reaping the whirlwind; we have sowed the wind of promiscuity and have reaped the whirlwind of wrecked lives, suicide and wholesale insanity. Justice goes begging in the streets and man has warped and twisted ideas about the rights of others. Why is all of this happening? It is because God is withdrawing the sweet influences of His Holy Spirit and letting men go, to walk in the ways of their hearts and in the sight of their eyes (Ecclesiastes 11:9) in preparation for the loosing of Satan. (For as we have mentioned in our previous studies, his deception-for which he has been loosed-is so gradual that it is almost imperceptible.)

And 2 Timothy 3:13 tells us that “Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, DECEIVING AND BEING DECEIVED.” So we should not be surprised at what we find in our society. The pulpit as a whole has repudiated the law of God; and when the law of God is done away with, then every man becomes a law unto himself, and sin reigns.

You see, Satan is stirring up the rebellion that has been in the heart of man all the while into an outward manifestation of hatred against God in causing him to defy the law of God. Romans 1 give us the reason this is taking place:

“Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore GOD GAVE THEM UP to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves: who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this cause GOD GAVE THEM UP unto vile affections...and even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient” (vv. 21,26,28).

How has man been deceived by Satan? He has turned the truth of God-His holiness, righteousness, justice and sovereignty-into a lie, saying that God does not exist; or, if He does exist, He does not take knowledge of us, so there is no hell, no wrath, no punishment.

Thus men, being deceived, go on in their sins, worshipping and serving the creature more than the Creator and bringing upon themselves SWIFT DESTRUCTION (2 Peter 2:1).

And these verses of Scripture in Romans 1 ARE BEING FULFILLED BEFORE OUR VERY EYES TODAY! Everywhere men and women are being given over to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves. We are seeing the days of Noah reproduced in our generation (Luke 17:26-27); and God has commentary on them applies to us every imagination of the thoughts of men’s hearts are only evil continually (Genesis 6:5). For “unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled” (Titus 1:15).

Modern Sodom and Gomorrah

But that is not all that is described in Romans 1. Listen as we continue vs. 26: “For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another: men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.”

The Sin of Homosexuality

Oh what a sad commentary on the human heart! We have a picture here of modern Sodom and Gomorrah, for this describes the desires and actions of men and women today! We are presently witnessing the overflow of the wickedness of man controlled by Satan and given over by God to a reprobate mind! We are seeing homosexuality and homosexual sympathizers who have become bolder and bolder today; instead of hiding in the closet as in yesteryear, they have gone public, boasting of their unnatural and ungodly perversion. Is this not reminiscent of the days of Lot?

They are doing the same thing that Isaiah said of ruined Jerusalem and fallen Judah, “THEY DECLARE THEIR SIN AS SODOM, THEY HIDE IT NOT! Woe unto their soul! For they have rewarded EVIL unto THEMSELVES!” (Isaiah 3:9). Are we not seeing this today? And are not men receiving in their own bodies that recompense of this sin? Of course they are!

What about the diseases we are seeing today among homosexuals? Oh my friends, Satan has men blinded to their condition before God! We are in the days of Lot, spiritually speaking, when they did eat and drink, they bought and sold, planted and built, right along with the awful sin of homosexuality. “But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all!”

Oh that we would hear God’s Warning: “EVEN THUS SHALL IT BE IN THE DAY WHEN THE SON OF MAN IS REVEALED” (Luke 17:28,30). Dear friend, all of this is that falling away from divine truth described in 2 Thessalonians 2:3. And as Satan gradually deceives the nations, the apostasy gets greater and greater, so what we see happening today will get worse.

Our Only Hope

But beloved, I cannot leave you without hope in this terrible day when nations and men are being deceived! As the only place of safety was in the ark when the storm of God’s wrath fell in the days of Noah, so the only safe place today when the storm of God’s wrath is about to fall in fury upon us, is the ARK, CHRIST JESUS. HE ALONE IS THE SINNER’S HIDING PLACE. Although my heart is grieved and vexed today because of the exceeding sinfulness of sin manifested all around us, yet it rejoices my heart that in Christ I have a safe hiding place.

He came to save the types of sinners we have been describing, dear friend; for God is able to wash even the most defiled soul clean in the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ! This is the hope that is offered in the gospel: Christ will receive sinful men! While the Bible condemns your sin, whatever it may be, He nevertheless is willing to forgive you if you will repent and turn to Him by faith, crying for mercy.

You may ask, “On what basis is He able to save me, the rebel?” On the basis of the righteousness of Christ, Who gave Himself without spot to God that He might purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God (Hebrews 9:14), cleansing you from the vile and filthy effects of sin, and covering your spiritual nakedness before God.

Praise be unto our God that ...where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 5:20-21).

So my friend, your only hope is that God will work in your soul, that by His Spirit He will quicken, or make you alive, in the new birth and reveal unto you the holiness of God as shown in His Word; that He will grant you repentance to the acknowledging of the truth that you are a guilty, lost sinner, and so work in your heart that you become so sick of sin (of having your own way), that you can no longer continue therein.

Pray that God will give you the Spirit of holiness, the Spirit of righteousness, that by faith you will close in with the Lord Jesus Christ and see that God’s justice has been satisfied in the shedding of the precious blood of His only begotten Son at Calvary’s cross; and that God can be just in justifying even YOU, based upon the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21). God gives and imputes His righteousness only to the account of those who lay down their arms of rebellion, hoist the white flag of surrender, and crown Jesus Christ Lord of their lives, as they look away by faith to Him to save, deliver and have mercy on them in this life and in the life to come!

Satan’s Deception in Religion

Now remember the interpretation of the two beasts of Revelation 13, how Satan operates in two areas to deceive the souls of men: as a roaring lion (his hand in persecution) and as an angel of light (his mind, as he works through imitation). This also corresponds to 2 Thessalonians 2:3 in the falling away from divine truth, which we are seeing more and more in religion. You see, it is because God is giving the so-called civilized and Christian nations over to a reprobate mind, that Satan will be able to enter into them as he did Judas in total deception.

They will be so deceived, they will receive the “man of sin” who will so turn their hearts away from God that they will revolt in open rebellion against Him and seek to destroy all vestige of Christianity and the worship of the true and living God as revealed unto us in the Lord Jesus Christ. And with the restraining power of the grace of God and Spirit of God held back when Satan is loosed, they will compass the camp of the saints (Revelation 20:7-10) to take vengeance upon them since they cannot get to the holy God Whom they hate.

A False Gospel

The Scriptures in 2 Thessalonians give us much light upon the true interpretation of vv. 7-10 of Revelation 20, for they tell us what will happen when the man of sin or the wicked one is revealed; and in this I purpose to show you how religion (and that is what it is, man’s religion, not Christianity) through Satan’s subtlety has fallen away from God in this apostasy.

Keep in mind that Satan’s one aim is to deceive and imitate, making the world religious without Christ.

Let us again consider vv. 9-12 of 2 Thessalonians 2 where we read that the wicked one's coming is "...after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

Look at verse 11 again:

"AND FOR THIS CAUSE GOD SHALL SEND THEM STRONG DELUSION, THAT THEY SHOULD BELIEVE A LIE."

God sends upon them a misleading influence, a working of error and a strong delusion to make them believe what is false! And my friend, as I have previously mentioned, this misleading influence, this working of error, is the false doctrine of carnal Christianity that is already working today, and is bringing in the great apostasy that sets the stage for the loosing of Satan when the nations universally, will believe Satan's lie.

Dear friend, let me sound the trumpet loud and clear today, to warn you of this damning influence of the false gospel that is bringing in the great apostasy! For when I set out to interpret the 20th chapter of Revelation, I did not desire to tickle your knowledge-bone with a little eschatological meaning, just to bring you some things about last times.

I purposed to bring you the whole counsel of God, that you might be forewarned and instructed in the truth of God's eternal Word, and that you might not be deceived when Satan is loosed and the whole world follows after him, turning the truth of God into a lie and being damned.

I must warn you that this doctrine of carnal Christianity that is preached today is a false gospel, for it has no power to save, but only to deceive; it deceives poor sinners into believing that all is well with their souls because they have believed something or other (most do not know what), and they are preached into heaven when they die, no matter what kind of life they have lived!

The False Gospel of Easy Believism

This false gospel is built upon the false foundation of "easy believism", so it knows nothing of Holy Spirit conviction or of heart-felt repentance; it knows nothing of true saving faith or of the demands of the true gospel of the grace of God. For my friend, the great power of the true gospel of God breaks the power and dominion of sin in the sinner's life (Romans 6:14), giving a new heart, new desires and therefore a new life; that is, a holy life (not sinless), holy thoughts and a holy walk by the grace of God before God and man.

You see, our Lord described the way that leads to heaven in Matthew 7 as a narrow way with an entrance into it by a strait gate, but this false gospel leads you to believe that there are two roads to heaven and not only one; it makes a second way, which is the road of carnal Christianity, a way that seems right unto a man, but the ends thereof are the ways of death! (Proverbs 14:12).

Beware of this false gospel that presents the easy way and appeals to the flesh, for it is a road that leads to hell; and it is the working of error that is bringing in the great apostasy when Satan is to be loosed for a little season!

So I say, beware of that false gospel which allows a man to stay in his sins and sow to his flesh, and yet gives him a hope for heaven! Beware of that false gospel that sells you an insurance policy against the flames of hell and yet gives you no power over sin! Beware of that false gospel which lets you go on in your same way of fleshly living and makes no demands for the death of your fleshly nature! Beware of that false gospel that gives you religion without life, and profession without possession!

Let me tell you a little more about this false gospel! It encourages a new and entirely different evangelistic appeal. It does not seek to slay you, the sinner, before you can receive the new life in Christ. Rather it tells you to receive new life and then if you desire to crown Jesus as Lord by and by and destroy the old life, that is fine; but you have believed and now all is well, so you will go to heaven no matter what you do! It tries to pour old wine into new wineskins, and it will not work (Luke 5:37-38)! But my friend, the old must be torn down before the new can be built (which is what God does in Holy Spirit conviction).

Appealing to Thrill Seekers

Instead of slaying the sinner, this false gospel tries to redirect him into a more clever and jollier way of living which saves his self-respect.

It says to the self-assertive, “come and assert yourself for Christ”.

To the thrill-seeker it says, “Come and enjoy the thrill of Christian fellowship!”

Do not mention sin, do not mention the sinner, do not mention that death came by sin; men will get mad at you! So it is not opposed to your flesh; rather it is a friendly pal, and if understood rightly, it is the source of oceans of good, clean fun and innocent enjoyment. It lets you live without interference; it still lets you live for your own pleasure. Because it makes no demands upon you, it never changes your life! Again I say, beware of this false gospel that makes no demands upon you, but shows you the easy way unto salvation, which is but the shortest route to hell!

Missing the Meaning of the Cross

This false gospel misses completely the whole meaning of the cross, for the cross means death. It never breaks the heart of pride! But my friend, if you are ever saved, your heart of pride will be broken before God, for He will do this under Holy Spirit conviction. You see, the gospel of the grace of God in Christ-which is the power of God unto salvation-demands the death, burial and resurrection of YOU the sinner in the Lord Jesus Christ.

It sets forth the cross of Christ as the abrupt, violent end of all that you are by nature, and raises you to new life in Christ with the shackles of sin broken.

It brings to an end your pride and ambition and leaves you at the feet of the Lord God of glory, that holy God, crying for mercy in the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The gospel of the grace of God in Christ does not tell you that you are going to have your life redirected, but that you are going to the place of death; that you will take up the cross of Christ and say good-bye to your friends, good-bye to the world, for you are not coming back the same person.

As Hebrews 13:13 says, “let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.” For there we died to the world! As the Lord Jesus Himself tells us in Luke 14:27, “And whosoever doth not bear this cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple”; and the cross means death!

No Compromise!

Listen to me now! We see from the Scriptures that the gospel of the grace of God in Christ makes no compromise with sin; it demands a coming clean, and coming clear with God or going to hell. It says, “Down sinner, down at the feet of the holy and sovereign God in repentance, fall down at the feet of Christ in faith, looking only unto Him for salvation.”

It will not let you cover, defend or excuse any sin, according to Proverbs 28:13. All sin must be forsaken; all sin must be renounced; all sin must be repented of; all sin must be hated! My friend, you must die to the world, its pleasures and allurements, and the world will die to you (Galatians 6:14).

You must forsake your sin and your way, and then forsake yourself or you will never know Christ in true salvation; for when you die to sin and self, then Christ by His almighty power, the power of the gospel, will raise you to life-new life-and there will be His life abiding in you.

You see, it is that misleading influence which is bringing in the great apostasy that allows a midway ground or compromise between the broad and the narrow way. But I must draw that line of demarcation, for when you come to Christ to set you free from the penalty of sin in hell (which is justification), you also come to Him to set you free from the power and dominion of sin in this life (sanctification).

Justification and Sanctification Remain Undivided

My friend, you cannot divide justification from sanctification any more that you can divide the Person of Christ, for He is our Salvation and Hope of glory! You cannot know Him as Savior without knowing Him as Lord, the One Who breaks the power of sin and sets you free! “...for if the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (John 8:36); and that means free from sin! Romans 6:2 also bears this out, that in salvation we die to sin and its reigning power. My friend, the very nature of faith which embraces the whole Christ demands that justification not be separated from sanctification.

Oh what a subtle trick Satan has pulled on Christendom today, deceiving the vast majority! This is that departing from revealed truth, that misleading influence of 2 Thessalonians 2:11, for it is so subtle, those who are deceived by it cannot see they are deceived, and go on thinking it is possible to be saved without the reigning power of sin being broken!

They believe a Christian can live a life of sin in the flesh, sowing to the flesh, and yet all is well with his soul because he has made a little decision and is doing the best he can. This false gospel of carnal Christianity has so permeated our churches today that no one ever questions his interest in Christ.

No matter how one lives, as long as he has made a little profession, he is given a hope of heaven, and some preacher will preach him into heaven when he dies. That is why I hate to go to funerals, where you are made to think by the preaching that all one has to do to go to heaven is to die!

But this is a lie out of hell! For God's Word teaches differently! When God saves us in Christ, He gives us His holy nature and His Holy Spirit to indwell us, so that His grace reigns and abounds in our hearts and lives, for He has redeemed us from the inward corruptions and sin that was destroying us.

And my friend, this is Scriptural teaching that God does something when He saves us: Christ comes to dwell within us, teaching us by His grace to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world (Titus 2:12).

Something is happening to us: we are being changed and made into the image and likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ! God gives us a hatred for sin, and beloved, the world knows it, our wife or husband knows it, our children know it, our friends know it, those we work with know it; and they will not have to wait until we die for some preacher to tell our loved ones who are left behind that there was another side of us that they knew nothing about, when they preach us into heaven!

Therefore I lift up my voice against this false gospel of carnal Christianity that allows a man to go on and live as he pleases and yet says he is on his way to heaven just because his name is on the church roll or because he made a little profession when he was twelve or thirteen! Oh no!

This is that damning, misleading influence working in our midst today to bring in that great apostasy, preparing the hearts and minds of men, women, young people, boys and girls to receive the "man of sin" spoken of in 2 Thessalonians 2:3!

I pray that God will give you ears to hear and eyes to see it! This apostasy has been coming in for these past decades, and it is going to reach that stage of THE GREAT APOSTASY when the man of sin will be revealed and there will be no turning back!

Beloved, the doctrine that is leading into this great apostasy more than any other that is promulgated by this false gospel of carnal Christianity, is the denying of the Lordship of Jesus Christ in salvation. To deny this divine truth and declare that a man can have Jesus as Savior without bowing to Him as Lord and crowning Him King of kings and Lord of lords, leaves the

poor sinner in a worse fix than he was before, for he is then deceived into believing he is a Christian while he is yet a rebel against the commandments of God's Word that demand separation from sin and the world. But my friend, if you are ever saved, you will crown Him Lord in this life, or you will never find mercy; for Phil. 2:9-11 says:

“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him (Christ), and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.” You see, if you do not crown Him Lord of your life and find salvation in Him now, you will crown Him Lord at the Great White Throne Judgment; but there will be no salvation or mercy then, for time will have ceased for the salvation of the human soul!

Denying the Present Reign of Christ

As we have shown you in previous studies, the Scriptures plainly declare that Jesus Christ is reigning now, “angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him” (1 Peter 3:22), yet there is a flat denial of this today from practically every source. Men have Him reigning in some future date. But to deny His present reign is to deny His bodily resurrection, for it was by His “resurrection from the dead” that He was “declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness” (Romans 1:4), and all power was given unto Him in heaven and in earth (Matthew 28:18).

Denying the Resurrection

Yet this false gospel of carnal Christianity denies the power of the grace of God to save men from their sins, by saying that men can accept Christ as Savior and yet remain in their sins! In this they deny Christ's resurrection, for it is by the power of the resurrected Christ (the power of the grace of God in the gospel, Romans 1:16) that sin will no longer have dominion over us! (Romans 6:14).

By delivering us from the power of sin, our Lord would have us know experientially “what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, WHEN HE RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD” (see Ephesians 1:18-23)

Denying the Regenerating Power of the Holy Spirit

Further, the denying of the Lordship of Christ and the bodily resurrection of Christ is also denying the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit in salvation. For this false gospel flatly denies the convicting, convincing and converting power of the Holy Spirit by saying that the sinner is the captain of his own fate and can repent and believe any time he pleases! This flatly denies John 3:5 where we are told that unless a man is born again, or regenerated by the Spirit of God, he cannot enter or see the kingdom of God.

But, my friend, only the power of the Holy Spirit can quicken a dead sinner and make him alive in Christ (Ephesians 2:1, I Corinthians 6:11), for we are told in John 16:7-15 that the Holy Spirit was sent for the express purpose of bringing the poor, helpless sinner to Christ by His power.

You see, the mystery of iniquity doth already work (2 Thessalonians 2:7), for we are seeing that gradual falling away and the preparing of the hearts for the coming great apostasy when the son of perdition, the wicked one, will be revealed.

The Rise of the “Man of Sin”

Now let us look more particularly at 2 Thessalonians 2 and again see how this portion of Scripture compares with the verses we are studying in Revelation 20, comparing especially the rise of the man of sin with the loosing of Satan. I trust the Holy Spirit will enable you to grasp the setting of these verses in 2 Thessalonians 2, and fix them clearly in your mind, that you may know exactly what is going to happen when the great apostasy sets in and the son of perdition, the lawless one, this man of sin, is revealed.

As we read these verses, ponder them carefully and prayerfully, asking the Holy Spirit to give you an open mind and heart to receive the truths they contain; for I desire to rightly divide them and give you a brief verse by verse commentary on them. Listen as we read!

“Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?

And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle. Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.”

Dear friend, from an overview of this chapter, we see the apostle Paul setting before the Thessalonians the same truths that prevail throughout the entire New Testament, of the two companies of people: the lost and the saved, the reprobate (those who turned from the truth) and the elect (the chosen), those who receive the strong delusion and those who believe the truth; the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction because they received not the love of the truth, and the vessels of mercy whom God has given His salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. He also contrasts and compares two comings: that of the antichrist and that of Christ, of the man of sin and the Son of man, of the son of perdition and the Son of God, of the mystery of iniquity and the mystery of godliness, of the Wicked one and the Holy One, of the working of Satan and the working of the Lord of glory.

Then he closes with an exhortation to stand fast and to hold the traditions which were taught by word and by letter, praying that they would have that good hope through grace that would comfort their hearts and establish them in every good word and work.

I thank and praise my heavenly Father that He by His Spirit gave us this chapter, for it gives us much needed light to interpret these verses we are studying in Revelation 20:7-10. Notice how this loosing of Satan for a little season to deceive the nations coincides with the revealing of the son of perdition in 2 Thessalonians 2. You see, in Revelation 20 we are told who will do the deceiving and that is Satan.

And here in 2 Thessalonians 2 we find who he is going to use, that is, the man of sin, who is also called “the wicked one” or “the son of perdition”. So both Revelation 20 and 2 Thessalonians 2 describe the same scene and the same situation. This man will be energized by Satan to lead the world in open rebellion against God and His Christ; he will have all the power of the two beasts of Revelation 13 to carry out the great persecution against the saints of the living God, setting himself up as God, to be worshipped as God. He will be Satan’s man to try to stamp out all vestige of Christianity.

Now we have been showing you all along that the apostasy or falling away from divine truth which is seen in the religious world today is ushering in or setting the stage for this son of perdition.

We have shown you how men’s hearts and minds have been blinded to their true condition by this false gospel of carnal Christianity that denies almost all the great truths of God’s word. But I especially want you to keep in mind that this falling away has not come in all of a sudden; it has not come overnight, but rather it has been a long, steady decline of Christendom that has been advancing for a long time.

Therefore, men’s minds and hearts are being prepared for the sudden rise of the man of sin, the son of perdition, to come on the scene and set himself up as God. “Well” you ask, “who is this man of sin and where does he come from?” Listen carefully now! You and I must first settle in our minds that he is a man and not an influence or system. For the word “the” before the expression “son of perdition” is a definite article in the Greek and therefore must indicate a person.

Next we must understand that he is an END-TIME personage and not someone who has already lived and died; for he is definitely associated with the end time and the second coming of Christ. Listen to how verse 8 of 2 Thessalonians 2 describes it: “And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.” He is to come on the scene at the end of time right before the second coming of Christ.

Satan Personified

Verses 9 and 10 of 2 Thessalonians 2 tell us that this man of sin will be as Satan personified, for he comes “After the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish.” He is the son of perdition (spiritual ruin and destruction), in every way like his spiritual father, so the words of our Lord in John 8:44 apply very forcibly to him: “Ye are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.” So he will be the great lie that will be palmed off on the professing church, setting himself up as god to be worshipped “above all that is called God”, and fulfilling Satan’s desire from the beginning to exalt himself “above the stars of God” (Isaiah 14:12-14). For that brief moment of time then, seemingly Satan will be in full sway upon the earth, and the whole unregenerate world-religious and profane-will bow to him, following after him to such an extent that they will persecute all who refuse to worship him, those who are the true children of God!

Further, the expressions “the son of perdition” and “he sitteth in the temple as God” (vv. 3, 4), strongly indicate that this man of sin will be an apostate, one who comes out of the professing church. How do we know this?

Dear friend, the expression “the son of perdition” is used in Scripture to describe only one other man: Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve. Our Lord said to His Father in His High Priestly Prayer in John 17: “Holy Father...those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled” (vs. 12). What He is saying is that He had kept all the Father had given Him to be apostles, in the Father’s name, all but one; and the reason He had not kept Judas was that he was the son of perdition, the son of doom the son of Satan; and that the Scripture might be fulfilled that “one that eateth” with Him would “betray him.” Speaking to his twelve apostles in John 6:70-71, He said, “Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve.” And again in John 13:18 at the last supper He said, “I speak not of you all; I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.”

Then vs. 27 of that same chapter tells us that after Judas had received the sop-indicating that he was the one who would betray Christ-”Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him,

That thou doest, do quickly...he then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night” (vs. 30). Judas failed to walk up to the light he had been given, so he plunged himself into utter spiritual darkness.

Believing Satan's lie that Jesus was not the Christ, but an imposter, he went out and was damned! So this man of sin, this antichrist, will be an apostate, like Judas, a religious leader who turns away from the true and living God, coming up out of the professing church. He will be as Satan personified as he deceives the nations and so-called Christian world into believing that he is God and therefore sets himself up to be God.

Now follow me closely as we read verse 4 and look at the other expression that strongly indicates that this man of sin, the antichrist, will come up out of the professing church: "Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that HE AS GOD SITTETH IN THE TEMPLE OF GOD, shewing himself that he is God."

Look particularly at the word "temple". There are two Greek words that are used for "temple" in the New Testament. One word means the building itself, and the other word means the inner sanctuary.

Here in 2 Thessalonians 2:4 the word "temple" refers to the inner sanctuary and not to a building!

Further, when you trace out this word in the New Testament, you will find that in the teaching of our Lord and in the apostolic teachings in the Epistles, it is used metaphorically, that is, as a figure of something else. In John 2:19-21 our Lord uses this word "temple" (the inner sanctuary), to describe His own physical body.

In Ephesians 2:21 the apostle Paul uses it to describe the church, the mystical body of Christ. In I Corinthians 3:16-17 and 2 Corinthians 6:16, he uses it to describe a local church or an assembly of believers. And in I Corinthians 6:19 he uses it to describe the present body of the individual believer; that his body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, or the sanctuary or dwelling place of God. Then in The Revelation, it is used to describe the sanctuary or dwelling place of God.

So since the word "temple" in 2 Thessalonians 2:4 is translated from the Greek word meaning inner sanctuary, and since this word is used by our Lord and the apostolic writers in a figurative way, we must believe that this is the way it is used here; and therefore indicates that the man of sin, the son of perdition, will set himself up in the professing church as God and ascribe to himself authority over God's true people. For it says he exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped. I know that the true believers will not believe him nor will they follow him because our Lord said, "my sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me:...and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand...my Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand...and a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him, for they know not the voice of strangers" (John 10:27-29,5); so therein begins the great persecution, when Satan will try to stamp out the church of the living God. I trust you are following us! I said he will come up out of the professing church, the church being the sanctuary or dwelling place of God; he will be an apostate; for he will turn away from the living God and turn on the people of God. He will not be a saved man, but an apostate!

Now I do not take opposition with those who believe the Jews will build another temple in Jerusalem and will again have animal sacrifices, and that the antichrist may dwell in this temple when he comes on the scene. This they may do in time; they might do anything! But this will not be by God's command; for you will not find one verse in the New Testament that God has purposed for the Jews to build another physical temple in Jerusalem for His dwelling place, for He has completely fulfilled all types and shadows in the Person of Christ (Hebrews 10). For in Christ, Who is the true dwelling place of God, dwelleth the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Colossians 2:9); and we are to worship Him in Spirit and in truth (John 4:24).

Beloved, the gospel, the truth of God has gone out now for centuries, and the cry has been "repent, leave your sins and sinful ways and turn to Christ, God's only Substitute for sinners; be washed by faith in His blood so you may stand before God cleansed and forgiven from your sin." the gospel cry has gone out, "turn from your own righteousnesses which are filthy rags before God (Isaiah 64:6), and be clothed in the spotless robe of Christ's righteousness!"

But you have not heard the good news; you do not want to leave your sins, for you take pleasure in them. You have hardened your heart as Pharaoh; and my friend, when Pharaoh hardened his heart, God hardened Pharaoh's heart (Exodus 7:14; 8:15,32; 9:7,12). When the king of Israel hated God's true prophets, then the Lord permitted him to be deceived by placing a lying spirit in the mouth of the other prophets (2 Chronicles 18:22).

When men continually practice impurity, God gives them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity (Romans 1:24, 26). And when they stubbornly refuse to acknowledge God, He finally gives them up to a reprobate mind and to unclean behavior (Romans 1:28).

The Great Lie

And this will happen to you, my friend, since you have not heeded the warning to turn in repentance to God, since you have no love of the truth that you might be saved, for this cause God shall judicially blind you and send you a strong delusion (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12) that you should believe the lie of the lawless one, that he is God and should be worshipped!

And then you too shall be damned, because you believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness! This is how the lawless one will be able to deceive the nations, their governments and leaders, and the religious leaders of the professing church. They have refused the Truth!

And as our Lord said in John 5:43: "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not; if another shall come in his own name, him you will receive."

And 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10 tells us how he will come: His coming is "...after the working of Satan, filled with all power, and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness"! We see this coming, for the great apostasy is being brought in by this false gospel of carnal Christianity, which is deceiving men's minds and hearts so they will readily accept the antichrist as God, and bow down and worship him.

And beloved, this is coming to pass! So my cry today is that you will hear God's Word, be warned and turn to Him. Listen to me! God is love; He is not a cruel tyrant who deliberately and with inward delight prepares people for everlasting damnation!

On the contrary, He earnestly warns and proclaims the gospel, declaring what will happen if you will believe and what will happen if you do not believe! He urges you to accept the love of the truth; but when you of your own accord and after repeated threatenings and promises, reject His Word and spurn His messages, then and not until then, He hardens you; so you who were not willing to repent, may not be able to repent, but will believe the falsehood that the man of lawlessness is God, the only God, and that everyone should obey him. That is the strong delusion; and this time could be upon us very shortly!

Oh may God deal with our hearts that each one who does not know Him will be turned unto Him by His grace!

A SUMMARY OF REVELATION 20:7-10

Dear friend, I trust you have been able to understand the significance of the loosing of Satan for that little season, as he puts forth that last final effort against Christ and His church in his rebellion and enmity against God: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." (Ephesians 6:12)

By seeing the awfulness of the deep depravity of the human heart as it is pictured in the Word of God and in all we see around us, I trust you have understood how Satan will be able to deceive the hearts of men and nations, that they will fall down and worship the "man of sin" who will set himself up to be worshipped as God.

Then, with this in mind, can you not understand the greatness of the persecution against the true children of God, who will not be deceived and who will not bow down to worship the man of sin? Can you now understand why our Lord asked, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8)? For it will seem as if all true Christianity has been wiped out.

This fulfills Revelation 11 where, under the figure of the "two witnesses", THE TRUE CHURCH will seemingly be non-existent and lie dead for 3 1/2 days (a small period of time), while "They that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets (the true church) tormented them that dwelt on the earth" (vs. 20), that is, by the testimony of their holy lives.

But just as it seems Satan has the victory, and the camp of the saints is compassed about with the forces of evil, the church will again stand upon her feet! (vs. 11). This is the consummation of the battle of Armageddon which has been fought all down through the ages between the forces of spiritual good and spiritual evil.

And at this last “battle of that great day of God Almighty” (Revelation 16:14-16), fire will come down from God out of heaven (Revelation 20:9; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9) at the second coming of Christ and the forces of evil will once for all be destroyed. In that day, in the general resurrection, the whole world shall know that no weapon formed against the church shall prosper, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it!

A WORD TO GOD’S CHILDREN

Dear beloved in Christ, our hope in this dark and perilous day is the resurrection power of God. So let us look to Him and trust Him, for He has declared He will hold us, keep us from falling and present us spotless at the last day (Jude 24). He has promised to come again for us, to take us to be with Him forever, and give us a new body and a new home wherein dwelleth righteousness. He says we have an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us, and that we are “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (I Peter 1:4- 5). So let us look up, for our redemption draweth nigh! And in all of the sin and confusion that is going on around us, let us remember that today our God is on the throne and has everything under control!

Revelation 20 Chapter 4

Dear friend, as we have studied this 20th chapter of Revelation for some months now, I trust you have seen how the key that unlocks the great truths in this chapter is to interpret it in the light of the past, present and future, which takes in the time from the first coming of our Lord Jesus Christ as the conquering Savior at the cross, through this present age in which we are living, unto the glorious second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the future age that is yet to come.

This we have seen in the binding of Satan, which is the first division of this chapter (vv. 1-3); in the reign of Christ and His saints in the second division (vv. 4-6); and in the loosing of Satan for a little season in the third division (vv. 7-10). And I trust you have seen in this chapter the recurring theme of the entire Book of Revelation: Christ as the ALL CONQUERING ONE, the Lord of heaven and earth, ruling and reigning over the kings of the earth and over all peoples; and the saints of God as being more than conquerors through Him that loved them.

This theme, summed up in one verse, is expressed in Revelation 17:14: "These (the enemies of the Lord) shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful."

THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT

We have now come to the last division of the chapter in vv. 11-15. This fourth division brings us to the last great judgment at the end of the world and the end of time. Read these solemn words with me as I endeavor by the grace of God, the Holy Spirit working in me, to open up to your hearts the teaching of these blessed truths.

"And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:11-15).

Dear friend, here we find the last great judgment which takes place at the second coming of our Lord, and there is NO TIME LAPSE of a seven-year period and then a thousand years! No!

When the Lord Jesus comes as described in 1 Corinthians 15:51-56, 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18, and 2 Thessalonians 1:7, 9 - which is the physical resurrection, the resurrection of the bodies of the saved and the lost as set forth in John 5:28-29 - then comes the judgment.

This is the last day spoken of so many times in John 6. THIS IS THAT GREAT AND TERRIBLE DAY OF THE LORD as set forth in Joel 2:31, Acts 2:20 and also in Romans 2:5:

"But after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the DAY OF WRATH and revelation of THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT OF GOD."

This is the fulfillment of 2 Peter 3:10-13 when

"the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."

This is the end of the world spoken of in Matthew 13:36-43 when the tares (that is, the wicked) shall be gathered and cast "into a furnace of fire" where "there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth" and the righteous shall "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

And this is the end of the world as described further in vv. 47-50 when the wicked shall be severed from the just and cast into hell.

All Shall be There

You see, He so plainly tells us, "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which ALL THAT ARE IN THE GRAVES shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:28-29).

So when Christ returns, every man, saved and lost, "small and great", will be summoned to this final judgment. In Revelation 20:13 we are told that "the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works."

And in Revelation 6:15 we see that "the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man", shall be there.

The poor will be there-all the sinners of Adam's race, from every corner of the earth, from every nation and people and kindred and tongue, the red and yellow, the black and white-ALL will be gathered there to be judged out of those things that are written in the books, according to their works (Revelation 20:12).

Two Classes of People

This truth is clearly set forth in the following Scriptures: "The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then shall he reward EVERY MAN according to his works" (Matthew 16:27). "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left" (Matthew 25:32).

Here we see the Lamb of God returning in His glory to sit upon the throne of His glory, and two classes of people are before Him: the sheep, who are His blood-bought ones, and the goats, who are the wicked ones who have never bowed their knees to Him Who sits upon the throne. This very plainly tells us that both the saved and the lost will be there at this judgment.

Among the goats or wicked ones, we see gathered there every type of sinner who is outside of Christ: not only those who are openly wicked, but also the self-righteous and hypocrites who say, "Lord, Lord" and yet are disobedient (Luke 6:46); those filled with all unrighteousness, fornication and wickedness, covetousness and maliciousness; those who are full of envy, murder and debate, haters of God, proud and inventors of evil things; those who are without understanding and are covenant-breakers, implacable and unmerciful (Romans 1:29-31); "The fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars" (Revelation 21:8), ALL shall be there!

And of the sheep of God (those who are in Christ) who will be there, it will be said: "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (I Corinthians 6:11).

These are those who have "Washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Revelation 7:14), of whom it was granted that they should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints, according to Revelation 19:8.

A Throne of Purity and Truth

A great throne is set, a "GREAT WHITE THRONE"; a throne of purity, calmness and truth, of justice, righteousness and authority; a throne unsoiled, untainted, and incorruptible; a throne with no one-sidedness nor imperfection; no bribery nor favor, for all is white and transparent as light and spotless perfection.

Why? Because He Who sits upon that throne is Himself "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (Hebrews 7:26). He is the Lamb of God (Revelation 6:16) into Whose hands has been committed all judgment (John 5:22, 26, 27).

And my friend, "He will not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins" (Isaiah 11:3-5).

My friend, you shall be there, and I shall be there; from Adam to the last man, we shall all stand before Him! And what will we do? Philippians 2:10-11 tells us: "that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Oh my dear friend, I desire to impress upon your heart and mind today that this judgment, this Great White Throne Judgment, is just as sure as death itself. For we read in Hebrews 9:27 that as it is appointed unto men once to die, it is also appointed unto men to appear before this great white throne to be judged according to their deeds upon this earth. Whether you believe it or not, or whether you think it is true or not does not change the Word of God, for He cannot lie! None, none I say, shall escape this judgment, for ALL SHALL BE THERE!

ONE GENERAL JUDGMENT

TIME WILL BE NO MORE! My friend, all the Scriptures of the New Testament that speak of Christ's second coming, the last day and the judgment show that these are one event. Listen as we read some of them!

This is the day He has appointed "...in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:31).

This is "...the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel" (Romans 2:16).

This is the day when "we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ...so then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Romans 14:10, 12).

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord we persuade men..." (2 Corinthians 5:10-11).

This is the day when the Lord Jesus Christ "shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom" (2 Timothy 4:1).

So you see, all of these Scriptures speak of one coming, and one judgment, which is the final day of this world's history when every man shall stand before the Judge and the books shall be opened! (Revelation 20:11, 12).

Then He will "render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness,"

What is reserved for them?

"indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile."

Then what?

"But glory, honour, and peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile. FOR THERE IS NO RESPECT OF PERSONS WITH GOD" (Romans 2:6-11)

My friend, how are you going to stand in that day? In what class of people are you? Have you bowed to the Judge, the Lamb of God, in mercy now while there is yet time? Have you laid down your arms of rebellion, hoisted the white flag of surrender in repentance, with a change of mind about sin and about God? Have you bowed your knees unto the Lord Jesus Christ and surrendered your all up to His Lordship, crowning Him Lord of your life? Have you by faith closed in with Him, believing Him through grace as Savior and obeying Him as Lord? Have you counted God as faithful and true in giving His Son for your redemption?

Or, will you be among the kings of the earth, the great men, and the rich men, the chief captains and the mighty men, and bond and free men of Revelation 6:15 who seek to hide themselves in that day, crying to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb"? For if you die without Christ, you shall stand there without hope and without God! Oh that you will turn unto Him in repentance before it is everlastingly too late!

The Great Day of His Wrath

You see, none shall escape, no hiding place will be found for any man, for the heavens and the earth shall flee away from the face of Him Who sits upon the throne, and there will be no place to stand except before God as He begins to judge in the Person of the Mediator, the God-Man, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Listen again to Revelation 20:11: "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them." Revelation 6:14 enlarges upon this: "And the heaven departed as a scroll, when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their place."

Why?

"For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" (v. 17).

And this corresponds with Peter's prophecy in 2 Peter 3:10: "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."

My dear friend, have you ever stopped and considered that all which you see around you today is one day going to be taken away, destroyed? This earth and atmospheric heaven shall be renovated by fire and all the elements of sin and its destroying influence shall be burned up!

Have you ever stopped and really considered what the Scriptures teach, that the world passeth away and the lusts thereof (I John 2:17), and that the things which are seen are temporal? That is, everything that you see around you today is transient, it is fleeting, it is only momentary; it has no lasting quality, it is short-lived.

Have you ever considered this? And you are going to pass away! One day you are going to die! The death angel is going to knock at your door! And then what?

It was said of Moses in Hebrews 11:25 that he chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."

And that is what I am trying to get over to you today! The pleasures of sin are just for a season! They will soon pass away, and then what of your never-dying soul?

Have you ever stopped and considered where you will spend eternity? For when you pass away in death, eternity will hold you where death will find you! If it finds you in Christ, you shall enjoy His presence and be held in Him for ever and ever; if death finds you outside of Christ, eternity will hold you in judgment and under the wrath of God for ever and ever! Oh stop and consider, my friend, **WHERE ARE YOU GOING TO SPEND ETERNITY?**

When the Great White Throne Judgment begins, all that you hold dear and near to you in this life—all that you have on this earth—will flee away, and you shall stand before God a naked soul! If you are outside of Christ, my friend, you will have nothing to cover you and no place to hide! All that you have had pleasure in shall flee away.

All your stocks and bonds, your houses and your lands, all your places of amusement shall flee away.

All you have prided yourself in as you have moved up in the social world order will be gone, and the small and great shall stand before God with no distinction.

All in the political world order will be swept away: the statesmen and the politicians, the kings, the potentates and the dictators shall stand before God with those they have ruled and judged; all shall be on the same level!

The educational world order shall be swept away, and the wise and learned men of the earth shall stand with the unlearned and the ignorant to be judged out of those things written in the books.

The economical world order shall be swept away, and the rich men and the financiers shall stand there with the poor and the beggar, with nothing to hide them from the face of Him Who sits upon the throne!

Think of it my friend!

The world of pleasure will pass away, and everyone who has made pleasure his god, who has had pleasure in unrighteousness, shall receive his wages, which is eternal death in hell!

And the religious world order shall pass away, including every man, woman, young person, boy or girl who has not brought forth true repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

You who have stopped short of true saving faith in Christ, by resting in your religious works and your decisions, or in your religious experiences and your feelings, or even in the letter of the law without the application of the Word by the Holy Spirit, do you know that all of these things will be swept away, and you too will stand naked before God with no covering for your soul?

My friend, your little religious experience will do you no good then. All you have had that is not in Christ will pass away! You shall hear those awful words: "Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity, for I never knew you" (Luke 13:27).

You see, every hope that is not anchored in Christ shall be swept away. Every work which has not had the glory of God as its motive, and faith in Christ as its object, shall be burned up and shall be destroyed!

Oh that you would hear what the Word of God says! The world with all that is in it and the lusts thereof shall pass away (I John 2:16-17), and you shall have no hiding place in that day! Will you listen? If you stand there that day without Christ as your Friend, you shall have no friend; if you stand there that day without Christ as your Savior, you shall not have a savior; and if you stand there without Christ as your Righteousness, you will have no righteousness to cover you! If you stand there without Christ as your Hiding Place from the storm of God's wrath, you shall not have a hiding place!

As you stand before this holy and righteous Judge, you shall have an unavoidable view of His unsullied holiness. And you will have to gaze upon Him Who you hate and abhor, with nothing in the world to distract your mind and affections. Down here now you can turn me and God's message off, you can drown yourself in pleasures of every kind; you can turn to your friends, to a book or to a bottle or to a thousand and one things to take away the displeasure of thinking upon God, His Christ, His holiness, and upon your condition, and hell and the next world.

But as you stand at that Great White Throne Judgment, there will be none of these things there! There will be nothing to distract you, so all you will be able to do is to look at Him Who sits upon the throne in that holiness, and in that light to see your own sinfulness without anything to hide you from His face and from His wrath.

What an awful day that is going to be! Oh my friend, what a day that is going to be!

You who are listening to me today, have you ever considered how you are going to stand before this thrice holy God in that day? How are you going to stand before the One of Whom it is said: "Our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:29).

How are you going to stand before Him Who said, "Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord"? (Hebrews 10:30) Surely it will be "a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31), to Whom you have never trusted your never-dying soul!

I ask you my friend, do you hear the Word that is spoken for your learning and for your obedience to the truth? Listen to it again!

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God without the blood and righteousness of Christ to cover your never-dying soul!

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the One you hate, curse and blaspheme, the One from Whom you flee like Adam did as he fled from God and would not face his sin.

You too flee from God because you dare not face your sins. You dare not come to Him now, lest your deeds should be reprov'd (John 3:20). But my friend, you had better face them now, for you will come to Him in that day, and none shall escape!

This glorious, majestic Being, this holy God before Whom you shall stand in judgment in that day, declares in Deut. 32:39-42 His sovereign, righteous prerogative to punish you for your sins.

Listen as He speaks! "See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no God with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand. For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever. If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me. I will make mine arrows drunk with blood and my sword shall devour flesh; and that with the blood of the slain and of the captives, from the beginning of revenges upon the enemy."

My friend, do you hear these words? This is the Word of God!

A Glimpse of Divine Glory

Have you ever traced out in your Bible what the saved souls did and said when they had just a glimpse of the holiness and glory of God?

Abraham

When Abraham saw the glory of God, he cried, "I am but dust and ashes" (Genesis 18:27).

Job

Job cried, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:5-6).

Isaiah

Isaiah said he saw the Lord sitting upon the throne high and lifted up and His train filled the temple. Above it he saw the angels or seraphim as they stood around the throne, crying to one another, saying, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory." Then Isaiah cried, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts" (Isaiah 6:1-5). You see, Isaiah could have never stayed in the presence of this thrice holy God, if God in His marvelous, matchless grace had not condescended to interfere and to cleanse Isaiah from his iniquity and from his sin by His Own precious blood.

Oh my friend, how can you ever expect to stand before God in that awful Day of Judgment without being cast into hell, unless you stand in the righteousness and merits of the Son of God Who loves us and gave Himself for us?

Only faith in Christ and a new heart can protect us from the damnation of our souls when we come to stand before God in that day.

Only by the grace of God can we stand there justified in the blood and righteousness of Christ.

Only if we have come to love the holiness of God down here as we lay in repentance at His feet, will we love His holiness in that day and desire the heaven of holiness which He has prepared.

Only if our hearts have been broken because of the sight of His eternal love and our own unworthiness, will we be able to stand before Him in that day of His wrath.

Again I say, only as we are brought into faith in Christ by the Holy Spirit is work of grace in our souls, will we be able to abide the fire of His judgment when His throne is set and we stand before the Lamb to be judged!

Only by the grace of God can we say with the apostle Paul: "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (2 Timothy 1:12). And of what day is he speaking? It is that Day of Judgment, when we shall all stand before the great Judge! It is the great day of God's wrath (Revelation 6:17), when every man will be judged out of those things that are written in the books according to his works.

THE BOOKS OPENED

Let us read this again from Scripture: "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works" (Revelation 20:12). Now you will ask, "Pastor, what are these books that are going to be opened, out of which we will be judged?"

The Book of Nature

First of all, there is THE BOOK OF NATURE. For we read in Psalm 19:1-3 that "the heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard."

So day after day, nature, this world which God created, speaks of the glory and majesty of its Creator. And this book of nature will be opened; for every man will have seen God's handiwork. Listen to God's Word in Romans 1:18-21 where this truth is brought out so clearly: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse."

You see, every rational being is without excuse, "because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations and their foolish heart was darkened." My friend, one day you will stand and acknowledge the living God, for the Book of Nature which you read tells you that there is a God and that you should bow to Him! My friend, this Book of Nature, whose syllables are constellations and whose letters are stars, has been read by all men, so that in that great day of God's wrath all shall be without excuse; and each man shall be judged according to the light which he received from this Book of Nature. Listen to Acts 17:24-28: "God...made the world and all things therein...seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: for in him we live, and move, and have our being..."

Did you know that there will be no atheists in that day? No, there will be men who claimed to be atheists while upon earth, but when they stand before that judgment, they will no longer be atheists, because they will be made to confess before God that they saw His handiwork in all of His nature upon the earth, and yet they kept on saying, "No God for me." Then they will have to confess there is a God!

There will be no evolutionists there, for they will have to acknowledge that they saw the handiwork of God in His great creation, but went on in their pride and rebellion saying, "No God did this! We are more educated and enlightened than to believe that God spoke all these things into existence; they just came into existence by chance!" But they will not say that then, for they shall bow, and confess that God is the great Creator! They will find no mercy then, because they did not bow to the Lordship of Jesus in the day of His grace and mercy!

The Book of Conscience

Then the second book that will be opened will be the BOOK OF CONSCIENCE! My friend, we read in Romans 2 that every man who has come into this world has this Book of Conscience put within him by the God of the universe. Listen to Romans 2:14-16: "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another."

What is he saying here? He is saying that the heathen and the pagans in the four corners of the earth who have never read the Bible nor have ever known the ten commandments and the law of God, yet have that very law written upon their hearts and upon their consciences. For in bygone days, our missionaries have gone into the very heart of the heathen lands and found that men there went by the law, forbidding murder and adultery. When a man committed adultery with his neighbor or took another man's wife, he was put to death. You see, God had written that law upon their hearts and gave them a conscience to convict them of sin!

You too, my friend, have that law written upon your heart, and your conscience bears witness of this! Ah, you try to get away from it and hide from it, but you cannot and your thoughts either accuse or excuse you. But in that day, the Book of Conscience will be opened, and you will have to give an account to God for the many things that conscience has told you and the many times your conscience has pointed out to you that you have sinned against the great Creator.

In what day? In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to His gospel (Romans 2:16). Then your conscience will bear witness that you knew the law, but you did not obey it. Yes, when God will open the Book of Conscience, He will judge you; and your own conscience will attest that God is true, that you have sinned and come short of the glory of God, and that you abide under His righteous judgment. Oh my friend, what grace, to have our conscience cleansed from dead works that we might serve the true and living God down here by the grace of God (Hebrews 9:14), this side of eternity and this side of judgment! Oh what grace, to have the conscience cleansed by the blood of Christ (Hebrews 10:22) that it will not accuse us in that great day of judgment!

The Book of the Gospel

But there will be a third book that will be opened there, and it will be THE BOOK OF THE GOSPEL, the inspired Word of God from Genesis through the Revelation, the 66 Books of the one GREAT BOOK, the Holy Scriptures. You see, when this Book is opened, it shall judge every man guilty who has ever heard the proclamation of the gospel, read or preached, and has refused to come to God in true repentance and to Christ, the Substitute for sinners, in true faith. For this is what Romans 2:16 tells us: "...God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel."

Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself said, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48).

Yes, the more light a man has in the Holy Scriptures, and the more he has heard the proclamation of the gospel, the more he will be punished in hell for his rejection of such light and such knowledge! Our Lord expressed this same truth in Luke 12:47-48: "And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will shall be beaten with many stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."

Oh my dear friend, what an awful day that will be for you who are outside of Christ, to stand there before the Judge and have everything which is written in the inspired Book of God to witness against you! Not only that you have not kept the law of God in all its precepts and commandments, but you did not seek the Lord Jesus Christ whom God had sent to keep that law for you. You were never covered with the precious blood of Christ which He shed at Calvary's cross for the remission of sins.

Listen my friend, all the gospel messages which you have heard will be there to condemn you because you did not think them worthy of your notice and of your taking time to repent and believe the record that God gave of His precious Son. You let the so great salvation which had been preached to you upon earth, slip away, and you were hardened in your unbelief. And then all these gospel messages will come before you, but it will be too late; your day of grace will be past and you will stand before God with no covering for your never-dying soul!

Can you picture yourself there? Oh beloved put yourself there! Oh my dear wife, my dear children, my dear friends, my dear loved ones, my dear friend there in radio land, put yourself there! You have heard the gospel of the grace of God, and many a time the messages tugged at your heart. You said, "Later, later I will repent, later I will believe, there is yet plenty of time. When I feel more like it; when God's done more of a work in my heart, I do not believe He has done enough work there yet."

And you have not cried after Him; you have not sought Him or pled for Him; you have not believed Him; you have not taken the Word of God and searched it out as a drowning man for a promise that you may lay hold of it. And all those times that you heard the offer of the grace of God will come back to you, but it will be too late then. You'd rather read other books than the Book of God now, wouldn't you? You'd rather find your pleasure someplace else now, but then you will stand before God and this Book of the Gospel, the inspired Book of God, the Holy Scriptures, shall stand to condemn you!

How many messages have you heard on tape? How many messages have you heard from the pulpit? How many messages have you seen by watching the holy lives of the people of God day after day? And yet you have not heeded them! You see, 2 Thessalonians 1 not only tells us that the Lord Jesus Christ shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, but that in flaming fire He will take vengeance on them that know not God "and that OBEY NOT THE GOSPEL of our Lord Jesus Christ."

My friend, have you obeyed that gospel? Have you bowed to the authority of the gospel? Have you ever fled to Christ for refuge? Have you ever been washed in the blood of the Lamb? Or has your heart been so hardened that you will not seek His face? You lay down at night and go to sleep with eternity facing you! This Great White Throne Judgment is coming, and you lay down at night with no heart to seek God!

Oh that God would stir up your heart, causing you to cry unto Him even this day for your never-dying soul! Oh that you would seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul, because that awful day is coming when every offer of the gospel you have refused shall come up before you, and every message and every verse of Scripture shall condemn you because you did not believe the eternal Word of God which cannot be broken! Then it will be too late!

And what are you going to do then, with no covering for your never-dying soul? I plead with you: Cry unto God for mercy today! Oh sinner, turn unto God in repentance, lay down your arms of rebellion, seek the face of God while there is yet mercy, call upon Him while He is near, and cry: "God be merciful to me, the sinner, lay hold of me, oh Lord, and do not let me go until Thou hast worked in my soul, that which only Thou canst work!"

The Book of God's Providence

Now there is another Book that will be opened in that day, and every man shall be judged out of it. There will be opened the BOOK OF GOD'S PROVIDENCE. Oh my dear sinner friend, will you listen to this solemn warning today? For in this Book of Providence will be written the many times God in His providence has called you unto Himself, and you would not come to Him that you might have life (John 5:40).

How many times has God in his providential ways spoken to your heart that you were running from God as a lawbreaker? How many times has God met you in providence to teach you to stop and listen in your mad rush toward hell? Have you not heard God's voice speaking to you? Has not God spoken to you by the death of a friend, saying to your soul, "It is time to get right with God, for you may be next"? But God's providence meant nothing to you!

Or are you one of the many to whom the Lord has spoken in the near death from an accident or on the battlefield in His providentially sparing of your life? Do you remember how you promised Him that you would turn from your wicked ways, seek His face in repentance and trust His only begotten Son Whom He had sent to reconcile you back to Himself?

But the time of conviction fled away and you did not come to Him! Then in that day when this Book is opened, it will be too late; the Book of Providence will judge you guilty, for you had a time to repent and you repented not! Perhaps God met you in His providence in a message from the pulpit when He dealt with your heart.

Although you did not want to hear, yet the Word pierced your heart and you said, "You know, I have got to go home and read the Word and pray and get right with God"; but you did not! And my friend, it is recorded in the Book of Providence which will be opened in that last great day, that God spoke to you then and you heeded not!

Maybe a friend went out of his way to speak to you and give you a word of warning. That too was the providential hand of God. Maybe in your mad rush to hell a verse of Scripture that your mom had read to you in devotions one night came to your mind, but you would not heed it; you went on and sinned against light, against knowledge and against God.

And the Book of Providence witnesses against you that when God's call came, and the moment to act had passed, you had settled in again against the mercy of God and would not heed His voice. You sinned against God's love and against God's warnings; but then there will be no more voice to heed only the voice of the providence of God saying, "I called and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and you regarded not" (Proverbs 1:24).

I could go further and say that in a thousand and one ways, God's providence has spoken unto each and every one of you under the sound of my voice today; but how many of you have heeded that voice of providence and turned to God through faith in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, with a broken heart and a contrite spirit?

Oh my dear friend, this Book of Providence shall be opened in that last great day of judgment to prove how many times God spoke to you and you heeded Him not! I say in love to your soul, you will have nobody to blame in that day but yourself, and your own heart will indict you before God that you stand guilty of much sin committed against light and knowledge, because you did not turn when God gave you that call.

The Book of Memory

There is yet another book which will be opened in that day, and it will be the BOOK OF MEMORY, a book that everyone outside of Christ will desire not to be opened! They will say, "No, no, not THAT book!" But my friend, it will be opened! Because you see, more than any other, this book will convince you before God that you are a sinner and a sinner worthy of death and hell! And you say, "Why?" because every secret thing will be brought to light from that book (Mark 4:22). By two infallible things God keeps a record of all that you and I do: one is by the book of our deeds, thoughts and motives which is kept in heaven; and the other is the Book of our Memory recorded upon the tape recorder of our minds.

You see, the Word of God abounds with Scriptures showing that God knows the hearts of men and is keeping a record of all our thoughts, deeds and motives.

God "knoweth the secrets of the heart" (Psalm 44:21).

"The LORD knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity" (Psalm 94:11).

"O LORD thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my down sitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether" (Psalm 139:1-4).

"For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, and he pondereth all his goings" (Proverbs 5:21).

"...I know the things that come into your mind, every one of them" (Ezekiel 11:5). "Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance" (Psalm 90:8).

"Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Hebrews 4:13).

So in the light of this array of Scriptures, we know that God's judgment shall be correct in that day, for He knows all about us; and our own conscience and memory shall bear witness that what He has written down about us is true!

Did you know that everyone who dies outside of Christ shall in the Day of Judgment give glory to God and confess that His judgments are true and righteous altogether? My dear friend, if you die outside of Christ, you will stand convicted by the things recorded on the tape recorder of your own memory that you are a sinner before God and deserve God's unending wrath because of your rebellion and unbelief toward Him; you will confess that what you receive as your portion forever-suffering in the lake of fire (Revelation 21:8)-has come upon you justly!

You will hate Him forever because of His holiness and your sins; yet you will relieve God of all responsibility for your damnation, bringing the blame upon your own head, and this before the assembled universe!

Why? because God will open this Book of Memory (Luke 16:25), recalling instant playback of all your thoughts, words, deeds and actions, bringing out into the open that which was done in secret (I Corinthians 4:5), even that which you thought was concealed forever and ever; and the tape recorder of your mind will witness that all of these things are true!

That murder you committed that nobody ever knew anything about will be brought to light in your mind, in the tape recorder there, and the memory shall say, "Yes, that is true, I was there, I pulled the trigger, I did the deed."

You will remember that time when you sinned against God and your wife and your children in committing adultery, that day when you secretly rebelled against home and against authority, because it was indelibly recorded upon the tape recorder of your mind, and God will bring it into light. There will be instant recall, as every thought, every word you have ever spoken, and every deed you have ever committed shall come out into the open, and you will say "Yes, I thought those things, I was the one that did those deeds; I was the one that sinned against God."

There shall be no escape then! My dear friend, have you ever stood before God guilty? Has the Holy Spirit ever started that tape recorder in your mind and replayed your past life before you? And as that replay has come, have you said, "Yes, Lord, that is my heart, I said that, I did that, that was me, oh Lord, I stand guilty before Thee."

If not, how are you going to stand in that day? You are either going to stand guilty before God now, or you are going to stand guilty before God in the day of His wrath! If you will stand guilty before God now, admitting that all the things that have been written in the Book against you that you have committed are true, there is time for mercy, because the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses from all sin (I John 1:7).

And God calls you to repentance, giving you the opportunity to confess unto Him that all of these things are true, before it is too late. He is giving you the opportunity to bring forth "fruit meet for repentance", to turn away from your evil thoughts and to turn unto Him in God-given repentance and hatred for sin.

He tells us in I Corinthians 4:5: "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart: and then shall every man have praise of God."

Therefore your only hope is that the tape recorder of your memory would begin to play, bringing you before God as a guilty, lost soul now saying, "That is me, that is me; those are my thoughts, God, You know all about me; I can't hide anything! But I run into Your arms crying for mercy, mercy in Christ, mercy in the blood; I plead that You would have mercy upon me."

For there will be no more mercy in the great day of His wrath when you must stand before Him in your sins and plead guilty and then hear those awful words: "Depart from me, I never knew you, you workers of iniquity, -depart from me, ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Luke 13:27; Matthew 25:41).

Oh my friend, how shall you stand in that day? That is what I am concerned about! Will you stand in Christ or will you stand in your sins?

The Book of Life

"...and another book was opened, which is the BOOK OF LIFE."

Yet there is another book spoken of here in Revelation 20:12 which shall be opened at the Great White Throne Judgment and it is called the BOOK OF LIFE. You see, this Book which God Himself has written, is spoken of in many places in Scripture.

It contains the names of all the elect of Adam's sinful race who have been saved by the grace of God, washed by faith in the Lamb's blood, clothed in the Lamb's imputed righteousness, made like the Lamb in holiness, and accepted in the Lamb, the Beloved, by God Himself.

Yes, the name of every individual from Abel to the last man who is saved by the grace of God, is written in that Book. None shall be missing in that day.

Beloved, I had nothing to do with this! I bow before the sovereignty of God and God's distinguishing grace, that God has done this out of free love to sinners. For by the grace of God, and the grace of God alone has any man's name been written in that book.

And only by the grace of God shall these blood-bought ones stand righteous before God in that day of judgment, absolved of all their sins, to hear those blessed words, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34).

Again I say, they will stand there only by the grace of God, for you see, salvation is of the Lord; it is wholly and completely of God's grace worked in our hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit and the reign of grace in our souls. And the Scriptures plainly teach that it is in this Book, called the Lamb's Book of Life, that God wrote the names of His people before the foundation of the world. If He had not done this, no man would be able to stand there in that day absolved from all his sins!

Now I want to show you how clearly this blessed truth is written upon the pages of Holy Writ. Will you listen to God's Word? When our Lord's disciples came back from their first missionary journey rejoicing that the devils were made subject unto them through His name, He told them, "In this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20).

Oh that men and women would hear that verse of Scripture today! We are not to rejoice in what we have done, or that we can cast out demons, or speak in tongues or that we have had this great feeling or these emotions! Oh no! We can only rejoice in the exceeding grace of God, that our names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life in heaven!

Also in Philippians 4:3 the apostle Paul encouraged the church at Philippi to help all who were fellow-laborers with him in the gospel. Why? Because their names are in the BOOK OF LIFE.

Yes, there is a Book of Life, and those who have embraced the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and who know Him in that experiential salvation that God gives in Christ, can rest assured that their names are in that Book of Life.

Then in Hebrews 12:23 the apostle Paul tells us that all the members of the "general assembly and church of the firstborn", those who are in the household of God, have their names written in heaven in this Book of Life.

So my friend, it makes no difference whether we have our names written upon the church roll or denominational assembly here in this life and in this world! But it does matter whether or not we have our name written in that BOOK OF LIFE, and that we are a member of the general assembly and church of the firstborn!

The BOOK OF LIFE is mentioned in many places in the Book of Revelation. In writing to the church at Sardis in Revelation 3:5 our Lord said, "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment: and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life; but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels."

Is not that precious! None of those whose names are written in the BOOK OF LIFE shall have their names erased or blotted out! Why? Because they have been clothed in the righteousness of Christ. And He said, "I will confess their names before my Father, and before His holy angels."

Again in Revelation 13:8 we see those whose names are not written in this BOOK OF LIFE, those who are apostates, who are the children of the devil and worshippers of the beast. Listen!

"And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him" (the beast, the dragon, the devil) "whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb, slain from the foundation of the world."

The BOOK OF LIFE is used in this same connection in Revelation 17:8: "The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is."

And in Revelation 20:15 we read: "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

Then in Revelation 21:27 we have this great truth of God's Word clearly expressed: "And there shall in no wise enter into it"-into what? Into this new city, this new earth, the final abode of the children of God-"anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."

So the Scriptures clearly teach that God has a book called THE BOOK OF LIFE, the Lamb's book of life; and that the name of every one of His children are written in it from the foundation of the world, according to His great elective purpose, His grace and love in Christ Jesus.

Again, we see from this BOOK OF LIFE, as we have brought out in our past messages, that the God of the Bible is a God of election and predestination. We see this written throughout the pages of Holy Writ, that the great and glorious God of the universe has a right to do with His creation as seemeth good in His own eyes (Romans 9:12-24; Matthew 11:25-26); and that "salvation is of the Lord" (Jonah 2:9), coming to us wholly and completely of grace, based upon the imputed righteousness of Christ, and worked out for us in the life, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 3:21-26; 4:4-8,23- 25; 5:6-10).

When we consider this BOOK OF LIFE, can we not say as Paul, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out" (Romans 11:33)? For the names of those who are written in the BOOK OF LIFE are not written there because God looked down through the ages and saw that they would believe.

Oh no! That would be works and not grace! And Ephesians 2:8-9 says it is by grace and grace alone that God has saved us, so no man has whereof to boast. The children of God whose names are written there were by nature no different from any other sinner! They had no claim upon God or His salvation. This is clearly set forth in Ephesians 2:1-3, that those whom God has quickened and made alive in Christ Jesus were once dead in trespasses and sins and walked in times past according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air; that in times past they had their conversation in the lusts of their flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

And what made the difference in those who were called out of darkness, sinfulness and wrath, unto the glorious liberty of the sons of God? Nothing but the distinguishing grace of God! For Ephesians 2:4-5 says, "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ."

What marvelous grace to sinners, that out of free grace and love He would choose us and give us to Christ before the foundation of the world! And why? I can only tell you that it pleased Him, that is all! Listen to God's Word in 2 Timothy 1:9: God "...hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works (any foreseen faith in us) but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."

And every man, woman, young person or child who stands there in that day justified before God in Christ, absolved from all of their sins, whose names are read from the BOOK OF LIFE, will rejoice only in Christ, and only in the great redemption that God has performed because of His distinguishing grace.

They will know that they were no different from those who will be cast into eternal perdition because of their sins; they will know that they are there only because of the distinguishing grace of God! He was the One Who saved them when they were ungodly sinners! You see, it was in time that He effectually called them by His Holy Spirit, not because they desired it, but "according to his own purpose and grace".

He brought them out of nature's darkness into His marvelous light, and gave them repentance unto the acknowledging of the truth that they were hell-deserving sinners, bankrupt sinners before God, causing them to mourn over sin and plead for mercy. Why? He showed them their helplessness and hopelessness to deliver themselves from the power of Satan and from his kingdom.

And He gave them that grace to come to Christ and declared them righteous in the Lord Jesus Christ! He was the One Who took away their stony hearts of unbelief and put within them a spiritual heart and spiritual nature of grace, making them new creatures in Christ and enabling them to walk as children of light in the midst of this wicked and sin-cursed world.

So in that day all of these will say, "Not unto us, O God, not unto us, but unto thee O Lamb of God, belongeth blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, for ever and ever" (Psalm 115:1; Revelation 7:12) "...for thou was slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth" (Revelation 5:9,10).

They will say, "Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb (Revelation 7:10) for it is He that hath made us and saved us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of his pasture" (Psalm 100:3); we are glorified because He justified us; we are justified because He called us; we were called because He predestinated us to be conformed unto the image of His dear Son; we were predestinated because He loved us in Christ."

But, my dear friend, this is as far as we can go, for we will never know why He loved us; He did it for His own pleasure and for His glory. So throughout eternity all of God's people shall love and worship Him in adoring love and praise, singing the song of the Lamb, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints" (Revelation 15:3).

This wonderful scene will be glorious and marvelous for those who have bowed the knee to Christ in their day of grace, having confessed Him as Lord before men, and followed Him in a life of self-denial and holiness-all because of His marvelous, efficacious grace given to them out of free love! But my dear friend, what about you?

Have you been saved by God's grace? Are you among that number who will testify of the matchless grace of God in that day when this Book is opened? He tells us in His Word to give diligence to make your calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:10). Will you stand there in that day washed from all your sins by the precious blood and clothed in the perfect righteousness of Him Who sits upon that throne? Or will you stand there naked in your sins, speechless, and unable to rejoice because you neglected so great salvation and did not bow your knees in repentance to Christ? Oh, if you do not know Him, I urge you seek Christ now while there is mercy, for when He comes, there will be no more mercy, and He shall become your Judge!

HALLELUJAH, WHAT A SAVIOR!

"Man of Sorrows!" what a name!
For the Son of God who came,
Ruined sinners to reclaim!
Hallelujah! What a Savior!

Bearing shame and scoffing rude,
In my place condemned He stood;
Sealed my pardon with His blood;
Hallelujah! What a Savior!

Guilty, vile and helpless, we:
Spotless Lamb of God was He;
"Full atonement!" can it be?
Hallelujah! What a Savior!

"Lifted up" was He to die,
"It is finished," was His cry;
Now in heav'n exalted high;
Hallelujah! What a Savior!

When He Comes, our glorious King,
All His ransomed home to bring,
Then a-new this song we'll sing:
Hallelujah! What a Savior!"

Revelation 20 Chapter 5

What a scene comes before us as we contemplate the last verses of this 20th chapter of Revelation! The Son of Man, Christ Jesus the Lord, has returned in His glorious second coming to sit upon the Great White Throne as the Judge of the Universe, with all men before Him—from Adam to the last man, both small and great; and at His coming all that are in the graves have come forth, the righteous unto the resurrection of life, and the wicked unto the resurrection of damnation (John 5:28-29).

The sea and death and hell have delivered up the dead which were in them, and the earth and heaven have fled away, so there is no place for the wicked to hide—no place to stand except before God as He begins to judge in the Person of the Mediator, the God-man, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Books have been opened, and every man judged out of those things that were written in the books, according to their works.

The Book of Nature was opened, and every man was judged according to the light given from nature (Psalm 19 and Romans 1); the Book of Conscience was opened (Romans 2:14-16); the Book of the Gospel (Romans 2:16; and 3,4,5); the Book of God's Providence (Acts 17:26; Psalm 139:1-5) and the Book of Memory, as God has brought to light the hidden things of darkness and made manifest the counsels of the hearts (1 Corinthians 4:5). Time is no more and eternity has begun; the BOOK OF LIFE has been opened and God acknowledges His own (Matthew 10:32; 25:34-40; Hebrews 2:13); the judgment of all men has been finished: the final separation of the righteous and the wicked has come!

Dear friend, picture the scene with me! The righteous Judge of all men, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, is to pass sentence to which there can never be any repeal! On His right hand stand those who were redeemed by His marvelous grace. On His left hand stand those who have died in their sins, who had neglected so great salvation offered in the gospel, and who had not obeyed the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 25:31-46). It is the time of Revelation 11:18: "...thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets and to the saints and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth."

Do you see the scene? Listen closely, and you will hear the sentence passed, for you and I will be there, and our ears shall hear the same thing that all of Adam's race shall hear. We hear it today, and we shall hear it then; will you listen? To those on His right hand, whose names are written in the Lamb's BOOK OF LIFE, and who by the grace of God have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, the King—their precious Lord—shall say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34); for these in time were brought by the Holy Spirit to repentance and faith, and by His grace turned their backs upon the world, sin and self and followed the Lamb unto death.

They have been absolved from all their sins because of the eternal work of redemption performed for them by the Lord Jesus Christ, so they cry with a loud voice, "...Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth...Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty, just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Therefore, let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready" (Revelation 7:10; 5:9, 10; 15:3; 19:7).

THE ETERNAL ABODE OF THE WICKED

And what about those on His left hand? This brings us to the verses of Revelation 20 that picture the eternal abode of all those who die outside of God's provided Refuge for sinners, Who is the Person of the One and only Mediator between God and men, the Man, Christ Jesus. Read the last two verses of Revelation 20, verses 14 and 15, and then verse 8 of chapter 21 with me, for they go together:

"And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire...But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."

Now here we have a scene so solemn that we are told the wicked of the earth will cry to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of his wrath is come; And who shall be able to stand?" (Revelation 6:16-17).

For here are all the wicked sinners who have never bowed to the scepter of mercy once held out to them in the day of grace, nor would they have "this man"-the God-man, Christ Jesus the LORD-to rule over them (Luke 19:14); and who had despised the free offer of grace in salvation in time-can you see them? There they stand, naked before God and naked before the world in all their sins and shame, having been judged according to their deeds and now awaiting their sentence.

None shall escape hearing his sentence passed on that day, and there will be no appeal from that court, when the highest tribunal, the highest Judge of all the Universe, God Himself in the Person of His Son, the Lamb, shall pass sentence-listen! "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41); "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity, I never knew you" (Matthew 7:23). What a word of damnation! What words of judgment, of woe and despair! Brother Paul vividly pictures this scene for us in Romans 2:5-11.

Listen for your life, for you are going to be there, and you do not want to miss a word given now about this last great scene, when the final separation of the righteous and the wicked shall take place!

"But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; but glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: for there is no respect of persons with God."

You see, just as the ark was the only refuge when God's judgment by water fell upon men in Noah's day, so the Lord Jesus Christ, the One Who bore our sins in His own body upon the tree, shall be the only Refuge when God's judgment by fire falls on the wicked in the day of His wrath after the Great White Throne Judgment. For they will be confined to the lake of fire forever and forever, when God's righteous sentence will be carried out against them.

God's Gracious Warnings

My friend, did you know that our God has never judged until He came down first? Yes, He came down to see the tower of Babel in Genesis 11:5; and again in Genesis 18:20 and 21 He said, "Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous, I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know."

So He Who sits upon this throne of judgment and tells the wicked to depart from Him into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels, is the same One Who loved sinners so much that He came from heaven's heights to earth's depths to tell us of the wrath from God that would surely fall upon the wicked. More than any other speaker of the Bible, He came and declared the awful judgment that awaits the sinner who dies outside the great grace and mercy of God.

And God tells us that in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son (Hebrews 1:2), and "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven" (Hebrews 12:25). He spoke in that day and He still speaks from heaven; we must hear His voice!

Listen to the way He warns over and over again of the final doom of the wicked! Speaking at the close of His Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7:13-14, I believe He cried out from the depths of His soul to His hearers: "Enter ye in at the strait gate".

Why?

"For wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat."

Oh my friend, enter in at the strait gate because "strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and FEW there be that find it." Destruction awaits those who follow the broad way!

Then in that same chapter, He warns those who build a religious life upon the wrong foundation, anything other than Himself. He tells them to look for a great fall and a great destruction in hell, for "every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it"! (Matthew 7:26- 27).

And so will be the fall and destruction of every soul who builds his religious life upon the sinking sand and does not know the Lord Jesus Christ in true saving faith.

Oh my friend, do you know Him? On which side will you be in that day, on the right hand or on the left? You cannot escape it; you are going to be there for "it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27).

Will you be in Christ, washed by faith in His blood, clothed in His righteousness, so you will hear those blessed, blessed words: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

Or will you be with those on the left, standing there in all of your sins, naked before Him and before the world, to hear those awful words: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels"?

Oh that you would face this solemn scene today and make your calling and election sure! (2 Peter 1:10).

Oh that you would cry to God in Christ for true repentance and true saving faith-which He alone was exalted to give (Acts 5:31)-falling at His feet in obedience, with purpose of heart to follow Him all the days of your life!

Again a bold warning falls from the lips of Him Who loved sinners with such a love that He died for them, but Who will sit upon that judgment throne that day: "I warned you, I told you not to fear them which can kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul, but rather to fear Him Who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell!" (Matthew 10:28). Listen to His Word in Luke 12:5: "But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you Fear him"!

Then listen to His warning of the coming judgment and eternal punishment to the nations and cities of those around Him, for their not repenting when He preached the gospel to them:

"Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein the most of His mighty works were done, because they repented not: Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the Day of Judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which are exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the Day of Judgment, than for thee" (Matthew 11:20-24).

What was He saying here? My friend, He is telling them that the punishment for sin in hell will be a lot less for those who have had only the light of nature to go by than it will be for those cities wherein walked the Light of the world; and the same applies to the inhabitants of the United States who have had the light of God's Word to go by, and have turned from it to go their own way (Romans 2:1-16).

But let us make this even more personal: It will be more tolerable for the world in that day than it will be for those who are members of Mt. Zion Bible Church here in Pensacola who have not repented, because I know you have sat under the whole counsel of God which by the grace of God has been preached to you these many years. It will be more tolerable for those who sit under false preachers than it will be for you, if you do not turn unto God and come to know Christ in the forgiveness of your sins!

Again in Matthew 13:40-43 the Lord tells us what will happen when the wicked shall be separated from the righteous in the day of judgment: "As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear."

Oh dear friend there in radio land, do you have ears to hear? The same One Who pronounces these awful words at that Day of Judgment is here speaking to us, to warn us of the wrath to come!

Then in Luke 16:19-31, our Lord opens the door and lets us look into the other world, that world of eternal punishment, where we may see and hear a soul damned forever because of sin. In verses 22 and 23 we read, "The rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments."

Dear friend, the rich man did not go to hell because he was rich, but because he lived and died without God and apart from His Christ Who had come to die for sinners. If we will follow this rich man, we will know that he had not ceased to exist, but had found out what the wisest man on earth who is outside of Christ has never learned: that death does not end it all; and be sure your sins will find you out (Numbers 32:23).

We find here that the rich man was far from ceasing to exist, for our Lord said, "And in hell, he lift up his eyes, being in torments."

So our Lord Jesus never failed to warn us, did He? Here we have a conscious being, a conscious person, in a definite place; and he was there suffering, for he was in torments.

So great was his anguish, that he begged for one to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool his tongue. He was conscious, because the verse is clear that he could feel, he could see, he could think, he could hear and he could remember his five brethren that were still on earth; he did not want them to come to this place of judgment and eternal damnation and woe with him, for he knew he had set the wrong example before them; he remembered!

Oh, do you understand what it means for a soul to go to hell? Just think of the preacher who is in hell right now! He deceived his own soul and his congregation by living for self and not for God! He is in hell right now, begging the Lord to send somebody to tell them not to come there and add to his torment! Thanks be unto God for leaving us this message of warning!

And I could give you Scripture after Scripture from the four gospels to show you that the very One Who sits upon the Great White Throne Judgment of Revelation 20 and says to the wicked after they have been judged out of the books, "Depart from me, ye cursed" is the One Who came Himself to warn sinners over and over of this coming judgment and punishment in hell, during His days upon the earth.

Fifty Divine Warnings of Hell

Did you know that He spoke of this judgment in hell over 50 times in the four gospels? So my friend, you and I are without excuse! Instead of turning away in unbelief and prejudice, we should hear this message and flee to Christ from the wrath to come, crying like the jailer in Acts 16, "What must I do to be saved?" or like the publican in the temple, "God be merciful to me, a sinner"! (Luke 18:13). For we neglect these warnings to our own peril!

The Meaning and Description of Hell

One of the most searching warnings given by our blessed Lord, Who is the eternal Word come down from heaven to declare unto us a holy, sin-hating God, is Mark 9:43-49. Listen to His Word!

"If thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt."

The word "hell" here is GEHENNA, the name of a ravine starting from the northwest of Jerusalem, which sweeps around the southwest angle of the city then meets the brook Cedron below the pool of Siloam. This valley is the traditional site of the fire worship which began in the reign of King Ahaz; and after its desecration by King Josiah, it became a common receptacle for the refuse of the city. Later in Jewish thought, it became a symbol of the place of future punishment. So our Lord used this place-the city dump, where worms gnawed and fires burned continually-as a vivid picture of everlasting punishment, because the people of His day knew about this place.

Also GEHENNA is the word used in the New Testament to designate the place of the final abode of the wicked dead, which is the Lake of fire of Revelation 21:8! You see, the worm, like the fire, is undying and is the conscience of the inhabitants of hell! Their consciences will be revived to gnaw at them for eternity because of their foolishness for neglecting God's so great salvation and spending their time here on earth in sin and pleasure when they should have been preparing themselves for eternity by bowing at the feet of the holy God!

Also, in the expression "salted with fire" (Mark 9:49), our Lord gives us the clue as to how the bodies and souls of men in hell shall be preserved. Salt is a preservative; therefore when we are told that "every one" who is cast into Gehenna shall be "salted with fire", we learn that the very fire itself so far from consuming, shall preserve.

If it be asked, "how can this be?" we answer, "because that fire is prepared by God Himself." We read this in Matthew 25:41: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

He Who kept the burning bush from being consumed before Moses, and He Who kept the three Hebrew children from dying in the fiery furnace of King Nebuchadnezzar can also keep the bodies of those in hell from being destroyed!

So you see, our Lord faithfully warned us of the consequences of yielding our bodily members as members of unrighteousness, of the yielding of our bodily members to sin. Let those who dare deny these words of our Lord give answer to Him. I dare not refuse them, soften them, tone them down or explain them away; but must faithfully declare unto you these solemn words: that if you die without Christ, you shall live without Christ in a never- ending eternity of suffering and woe!

For I would not be true to my charge before God to preach the whole counsel of God if I did not preach on this subject; nor would I be true to your souls if I did not tell you there awaits a lake of fire and an unending eternity for all those who die in their sins. Even with the promise in John 3:36 is the warning: "he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

But what a promise, what a blessing He has given us in that first part: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." To those who hear His warning and come to Him, casting themselves upon Him and turning from their way, believing, trusting and relying upon Him, what a deliverance! Oh my friend, will you come to Him today? For it is only to those that the Lord will say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

The "Lake of Fire"

We are told in our text that "Death and Hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire".

How do the Scriptures describe this lake of fire into which the wicked will be cast after their sentence has been passed? I want you to listen!

Banishment from God's Presence

First of all, my friend, hell, the lake of fire, and the second death are places of banishment from God's presence; that is, the wicked will be forever excluded from enjoying the radiance of the face of the God of all grace, and the Father of all comforts. They will be banished from ever seeing the blessed face of the One Whom God has provided as a Substitute for poor sinners, because they never repented.

Instead, they will hear these awful words of banishment from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself: "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity, I never knew you as my own " (Matthew 7:23); and "depart from me, ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41).

And what must they do then? He tells us in verse 46: "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment".

Oh beloved, these are not my words! They are the words of the Lamb of God Who shall sit upon that throne as Judge in that day! And I have cried to God to give me a broken heart that I could deliver this in the pathos of my soul, for I love you!

Again, see this same truth brought out in very graphic words that cannot be misunderstood in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9: "...when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."

Banishment from the Glory of God's Power

And we see in this that the lake of fire, which is the second death, is not only the place of banishment from God's presence, but also from the glory of His power for ever and ever; that is, banishment from the glory of His grace, the glory of His mercy, and the availability of His power to save precious souls. For once you have been banished from His presence, He will not exercise that power of salvation. And though you will be banished from the presence and glory of His grace and mercy, and the power of His availability to save, you will not be banished from the presence of His holiness, or the power of His wrath to punish you forever and ever!

Oh my friend, this is very, very solemn, sober and serious to my soul, to think of knowing nothing but the banishment from God's grace and mercy, banishment from His power to save, and that forever and ever; and then to have the knowledge of the hopelessness and helplessness of it all, that this banishment from the presence of God will never end! And there will never be one ray of hope or one light of God's grace and mercy, and not one word of encouragement to seek the face of God in repentance and to cast your soul upon Christ in faith. That day will be gone, and gone forever!

God Punishes Nothing but SIN

Why will sinners be banished from the favor and love of God, to suffer in the lake of fire for ever and ever? Are the woes of hell a species of undeserved suffering, that God, having certain helpless and innocent creatures in His power, visits them with His wrath and the exercise of an arbitrary sovereignty, as some teach? Or that this is a willful and capricious infliction on the part of God?

Oh no, my friend! This was not the teaching or doctrine of our Lord Jesus, nor is it taught anywhere in the Bible! You see, God punishes nothing but SIN! There is no suffering inflicted in this life or in the life to come upon anything but unrepented sin. So if you die without Christ, the only reason you will be banished from the favor and love of God forever and suffering in the lake of fire, is because you are a sinner; the principle source and well-spring of all your future torment will be your sins. What saith the Scripture? Think with me now! I must declare unto you the eternal wrath of our sin-hating, righteous God, Who must punish sinners for their sins, for He declares in His Word that the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23), which is the second death in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:14).

These wages will be paid to you because of sin-your sin, not somebody else's sin-because you did not repent, you did not seek God's Substitute for sinners! The Bible also declares that what a man takes into eternity with him will either be the source of his everlasting damnation and suffering, or the source of his everlasting joy and peace with the Lord. Listen to God's Word! "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy let him be holy still" (Revelation 22:11).

What Will You Take into Eternity?

So if you take a new heart and a new nature which loves God and His holiness into eternity, you will stay in that righteous and holy state forever and ever, because you love God and His holiness. This will be your state of joy and happiness and peace as you behold this holy and righteous God in Christ forever. But oh dear friend, if you go into eternity without a new heart and a new nature, and without love for God and His holiness, you will stay in your filthy, vile, wretched and miserable state forever! The source of your suffering and pain, and your gnashing of teeth will come from your own wicked heart as you behold God in His holiness and in His righteous wrath forever and forever.

And since you never took time to seek the Lord, and come to know and love Him and His holiness here on earth, you will find nothing within you or outside of you to love Him and His holiness there in hell; your unrepentant state of misery and woe is fixed forever and forever.

Oh listen to me, my friend! Because all of the misery of hell will spring from your own soul, entirely from your own sin, therefore you will have no one but yourself to blame in hell. Why? because for the first time in your life, you, the sinful creature, will be compelled to look at yourself and to know your sin in the same manner that it is known by the sin-hating God of the universe. You will hate yourself and you will hate God! And there will be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. I ask, "Is there any injustice in this?" NO! For God is just and righteous in all that He does.

You see, a man cannot think of a holy God and enjoy sin, so he shuts Him out of his thoughts down here. So if a sinful being cannot bear the sight of himself and a holy God, how could it be as some teach-that this holy Deity could step in between this sinful man and his sins so as to ignore them and so that man could be happy in his sins forever?

Away with such folly and wickedness! For it is the height of wickedness to desire that some method should be invented and introduced into the universe of God whereby the wages of sin should be life and joy, and whereby a sinner could look into his own wicked heart and be happy. He cannot do it, here or in eternity, unless the blessed Lord Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses from all sin, which can only happen in time as you, the sinner, cast down your arms of rebellion in repentance and seek the face of Christ in mercy!

Why are the Wicked in this Place?

Now let us again read Revelation 21:8 and notice the eight classes of sinners who shall be there in the lake of fire:

"But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."

And why are they there? They are all there because they are sinners, and they are suffering for nothing but sin, UNREPENTANT SIN! And if you are among this number who die unrepentant, my friend, you shall know that you are cast into this lake of fire and are suffering the second death because of sin, your sin! Yes, then shall you know, even as you are now known by the righteous and holy God of the universe (I Corinthians 13:12).

You see, no man shall ever escape the knowledge of sin and the effects it has had upon God and upon man. Every man, from Adam to the last man, shall come to acknowledge his sin-either in this life by the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit, or in eternity when it will be forever too late and there is no more covering for sin.

Either he will hate and repent of his sins now, confessing and turning from them, or forever he will hate himself and God because of his sin. Oh what hope there is for you who turn and repent of your sins, fleeing from and mourning over them in this life, my friend! Yes, you will hate yourself now because of them, but then by faith you will be enabled to rest your sinful soul in the hands of God's Substitute, the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, Who will cleanse you by His blood and justify you before God in His righteousness, thereby setting you free from the power and penalty of sin, and making you a righteous man, to walk in a righteous way.

But for those of you who refuse to turn from your sins in this life, there will never be any covering for your never-dying soul! Forever in eternity you will know what sin is, but you will never be able to get away from it! With all the pathos of my soul I warn you, oh listen to me! It will be pure living torture as you view your sins (which you covered while on earth) in the light of God's holiness!

For you will be compelled to look at the wickedness of your heart, your character, your nature and your acts of sin, and all you will see, hear and experience is the awfulness of your sins against the holy God Who inhabits eternity!

Oh my friend, this is the reason I am pouring out my heart to you today, that peradventure God, in His great grace and mercy, will open your heart and give you repentance to the acknowledging of the truth about yourself now, so as you see your sinnership, you will cry unto Him to cover your sins by the blood of Christ that they will not appear before you in eternity! I pray that God by His Holy Spirit will be pleased to take this home to your heart before it is forever too late!

THE ABODE OF THE WICKED DESCRIBED

How do the Scriptures describe this awful place wherein the wicked will suffer eternally for their sins against God? We are given a graphic description of the intermediate state of suffering and woe in hell, wherein the wicked will remain until death and hell are cast into the lake of fire which is their final abode. And my friend, their agony and suffering will not be lessened in the lake of fire, for as we have told you before, when a man dies, his state is fixed forever (Revelation 22:11; Ecclesiastes 11:3).

Listen now to God's Word! 2 Peter 2:4 tells us that the wicked angels were cast down to hell and delivered into "chains of darkness", so we gather from this that the final abode of the wicked is a dark imprisonment and a place of bondage. And our Lord confirms this truth in Matthew 22:13 with the parable of the man who came to the wedding without a wedding garment:

"Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

So we see from this that this place of banishment from God's presence is not only a dark imprisonment, but it is a place of outer darkness, a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth! And why are these in this awful place of darkness and misery? Because they never repented of their sins against God; they were never clothed by faith in the garment of Christ's righteousness; and never having submitted themselves to the righteousness of God, they came to knock at the door and endeavor to enter by their own works.

A Place of Darkness

You see, these precious souls have lived in the inner spiritual darkness of their souls, so they are now cast out into outer darkness, that is away from God's presence. All the while they lived on this earth, there was the possibility of hope, the possibility of the light of God's grace shining into their souls, but they remained in the inner darkness of their souls, and are now cast out where there is no hope!

Just think, ALL HOPE GONE! There is darkness within the soul and darkness without, and they're forever banished from the presence of a good and gracious God. It is like a blind man who can neither hear nor speak, but is shut up within the darkness of his own self, and all he has is his mind, which works constantly. So it is with the sinner who is cast forever into this dark imprisonment and place of bondage; no wonder it will be a place of weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth!

A Place of Burning

Also many places in the Scriptures tell us that the final abode of the wicked will be a place of everlasting burning and devouring of fire.

Listen to Isaiah 33:14: "The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?"

And in Mark 9:44 our Lord warns us that it is a place, "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

What is the one thing that kindles the fire of hell and keeps that fire burning, from which the wicked shall never be free? It is their sin against God! And my dear friend, let wiser theologians than your speaker figure out if this place is actually fire and brimstone, or if this is only symbolic; but I do know this: what our Lord is teaching us in all of this is that the guilt of one sin upon a man's conscience is like one drop of fire burning in his conscience and soul!

Certainly there is a fire for the soul if there were no fire for the body, for when a man is made to face sin and its consequences, there is that guilt, and that burning, that horror and that suffering, that mental anguish; THIS IS HELL ITSELF, as the man is devoured in his guiltiness before God forever and ever as he sees his sins. And his sins and sin nature burn within him, keeping the fires of hell going continually!

A Place of Torment

Then we can see from the example our Lord gave in Luke 16:23 that the final abode of the wicked is a place of torment, for He said of the rich man who died: "And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment"; And his torment was so great, in verse 24 we hear him crying, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame."

Oh what a fire there was in his soul! So much so that he did not want his five brothers to come to this place and accuse him.

My friend, I know what a little sin does to my conscience now! I cannot rest until I come in confession and repentance to the Lord, applying the blood of Christ by faith to my soul and my heart. But if a man dies in his sins, he takes hell into hell with him, and **THAT IS TORTURE!**

A Place of No Rest

You see, this place which is prepared for the devil and his angels and those who die unrepentant, is a place where there will be no rest for the wicked day or night forever and forever. Listen to Revelation 14:9-11: "...If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name."

A Place of Unrepentant Sinners and Their Description

Now remember, these wicked who suffer in this place of torment forever are there **ONLY** because they refused to lay down their arms of rebellion against their Creator and their God.

They refused to give allegiance to the King of glory and bow in submission to the Lord Jesus Christ.

They refused to turn from their wicked ways and seek God's face in repentance so they could find rest in the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ, Who alone is God's Substitute for sinners.

They are there **ONLY** because they are sinners who would not heed the gospel call of salvation to their souls.

They are suffering **ONLY** because of their unrepentant sin, the essence of which is "the right to do with my life as I please, when and where and how I please, so I will not have this Man to rule over me!" (Luke 19:14).

But we have been warned! For it is clearly stated in Romans 1:18-19: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness. Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them."

Oh my friend, do you see that? The righteous wrath of God is revealed from heaven against you the sinner, because of your ungodliness and your unrighteousness! Because of your vertical sin (against God), your sin of ungodliness, you will be punished in the lake of fire in your own body.

And you ask, "What sin is that?" Listen to Mark 12:30: "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment."

You have not loved God supremely, and that is the greatest of all sins! You have SELF on the throne of your heart, and you have worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, Who is blessed forever (Romans 1:25).

Also because of your horizontal sin of unrighteousness-that which is against your neighbor-you abide under God's righteous judgment and wrath. You have not loved your neighbor as yourself (Mark 12:31), but you always put SELF first; therefore you have sinned against God and your neighbor.

You hold the truth in unrighteousness-you depress or hold it down; you will not walk in the light of it. In other words, you know more than you perform, so you stand guilty before God; you are without excuse, because God can be known by you, but you have not sought Him nor glorified Him by trusting and obeying Him. Therefore your sin is nothing less than war on God and demands condemnation! That is the reason you will be punished in the lake of fire in your own body.

You see, either you, the sinner, are justified in setting up your will against God's will, or God is justified in condemning you, the sinner, for committing such an outrage and bringing your defiance unto eternal defeat. And since God's honor is at stake in the attack of your sin upon Him, He must and will punish you for your sin in the lake of fire. You will be among those eight classes of sinners listed in Revelation 21:8 who "have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."

Listen as I describe them in the love and pathos of my soul!

Eight Classes of People in Hell

THE FEARFUL. Here are those who were afraid, fainthearted, cowards, for they would not face the requirements of the gospel, repentance and faith. Nor would they face the requirements of the strait gate and the narrow way, or the requirements of a life of holiness and purity in a climate of ridicule and persecution from family and friends. They would not face the much tribulation that is required for a soul to enter into the kingdom of heaven, as those in John 12:42: "...but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue", they were just fearful to trust the Lord with their never-dying souls!

THE UNBELIEVING. These are those who were skeptical, doubters, disbelievers, who were suspicious of God. They were not willing to believe that God would not accept their works and righteousness, their "good" life and "good deeds" for salvation, but went about seeking to establish their own righteousness; so they would not submit themselves unto the righteousness of God. They would not believe that Christ is the only righteousness that God would accept for their salvation. So my friend, these morally upright, proud sinners, who would not bow to the

authority of Christ, will be in the lake of fire, right along with the abominable, those who live in the most loathsome, vile, disgusting and nasty sins!

THE ABOMINABLE. These individuals are described in I Corinthians 6:9: those who participated in homosexuality and lesbianism, who abused themselves with mankind or practiced sodomy. The Amplified Bible describes these loathsome sins and sinners like this: "Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their own hearts to sexual impurity, to the dishonouring of their own bodies among themselves, abandoning them to the degrading power of sin. For this reason God gave them over and abandoned them unto vile affections and degrading passions. For their women exchanged their natural function for an unnatural and abnormal one; and the men also turned from natural relations with women and were set ablaze-burned out, consumed-with lust for one another, men committing shameful acts with men and suffering in their own bodies and personalities the inevitable consequences and penalty of their wrong doing and going astray, which was their fitting retribution. And so, since they did not see fit to acknowledge God or approve of Him or consider Him worth the knowing, God gave them over to a base and condemned mind to do things not proper or decent but loathsome" (Romans 1:24,26,27,28).

THE MURDERERS. These are the hateful, the violent, the brutal, and slayers of mankind. Oh what blood will be upon the hands of millions and millions in that day when the wicked shall pay for their sins in hell and the lake of fire! Just think of the women and teenage girls who have premeditatively had their babies killed in their wombs! Think of the midwives and the nurses and doctors who have had a part in these murderous acts! Think of the judges on the Supreme Court who have given consent to such butchery! Yes, all of these shall be in the lake of fire, paying for their sins of murder and hatred because they did not turn to God in repentance and confession of these sins before it was everlasting too late.

THE WHOREMONGERS. This class of sinners includes all the fornicators, whores and prostitutes who have died in their sins, along with all those who have taken the members of their bodies which were meant to be used for the glory of God, and have yielded them as members of unrighteousness to satisfy their lustful desires. Now they are in a place where no sin is ever satisfied-forever!

THE SORCERERS. Here are all the cults and spiritists, the miracle workers and magicians; and all who have tried to pry into the future but have not believed God's Word. Even the drug addicts, rock musicians and their rocking fans are included in this class of sinners, who have changed the truth of God into a lie and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator (Romans 1:25).

THE IDOLATERS. These too have worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, Who is blessed forever, for they have set up themselves or someone or something else as an idol to worship; and they did not make God in Christ their only refuge.

LIARS. This covers every man who has died in his sins, for all men are by nature born liars (Psalm 58:3; 116:11).

So we see all kinds of unrepentant sinners righteously sentenced to that place of darkness in the lake of fire, to be punished forever and ever because of their sin against the most high and holy God. All of these lived and died without Christ, in rebellion against God and His authority. Like the rich man in Luke 16, they have not ceased to exist but have now experienced the truth that death does not end it all. They are not annihilated, but they are conscious. They still have their senses, for they can feel the pain and torment in the flames. They can think and remember, and their conscience continually accuses them and "their worm dieth not"! They have an eternity to remember all the opportunities they had to turn to God, for the Books have been opened and they have had to agree that all things written therein are true, but now their soul is eternally separated from God, so it is forever TOO LATE!

BIBLE CHARACTERS IN THE ABODE OF THE DAMNED

Now in our mind's eye, let us walk down the corridors of this abode of the wicked, based upon the Biblical description of the characters who died in their sins. Let us hear them speak and tell us why they are there and what opportunities they had to escape such a place. Think with me now!

Balaam the False Prophet

The first man we meet is Balaam, who turned out to be a false prophet. The Scriptures in Numbers 22, 23 and 24 tell us of his marvelous prophecies, his blessings upon Israel, and his great promise that, "God is not a man that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" (Numbers 23:19).

We also hear him crying,

"Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" (23:10).

But did he die the death of the righteous? Let us listen as Balaam himself answers!

"Oh no, I did not die the death of the righteous; I died the death of the wicked. I came to this place of never-ending torment because I loved the wages of unrighteousness! (2 Peter 2:15). I loved my own way, and used my gifts as prophet to feather my own nest and to get rich. This was my error (Jude 11); I ran greedily after reward and did not care for the souls of men. I was only concerned for the applause and popularity my position would bring me, and the authority I would have over the people of God. And as if that was not enough, I am here in this place of torment because I led people astray! You see, I caused the people of Israel to corrupt themselves with the women of Moab, which brought the curse of God down upon them and upon myself as well (Revelation 2:14). I preached and practiced the "carnal Christian" theory; and I know it was just a theory, it was not the truth of God's Word! So I came here myself and brought all my followers down to hell with me."

My dear friend, as we hear Balaam the preacher talking, I wonder how many such preachers will be in hell with their congregations whom they have deceived? I wonder how many preachers there are like Balaam, and Diotrephes there in 3 John 9-10, who are using their gifts to bring people under their control and authority, and who are using their position as a cloak under which to hide their sins of pride and lust and covetousness, and of hatred and unbelief?

I wonder how many preachers will be in hell because while they preached to others, they themselves became castaways (1 Corinthians 9:27), for they did not keep their bodies, their lusts and their pride under control? Yes, this is sobering, my friend! For if you are like Diotrephes who loved to have the preeminence, my dear fellow preacher, though you exalt yourself as the eagle and set your nest among the stars, saying in your heart, "Who shall bring me down to the ground?" (Obadiah 3), if you die in this state, you too will find, to your shame and confusion like Balaam, that God will bring you down to the pit where you will be shut up to everlasting burnings forever and ever!

And like Balaam, you too will walk the corridors of the pit with your congregation, crying, "Woe is me! I am undone! For I loved the wages of sin, the popularity and the applause of men instead of God and His holiness, so I was not true to the Word of God nor to the souls of men! And here my sin has found me out (Num. 32:23). Though I had a desire to die the death of the righteous, I find that the Word of God is true: THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH! (Romans 6:23) - ETERNAL DEATH, always dying and yet fully conscious!"

Judas the False Apostle

But as we move on through the corridors of the abode of the wicked, we see another character whose name is Judas. Let us hear him speak! "I was numbered with the twelve (Acts 1:17), and daily I walked and talked with the Lord, and listened to Him teach. I had many opportunities to believe and trust Him; even when He washed my feet the night I betrayed Him I had an opportunity to turn to Him in repentance, but my covetous heart brought me to this place of torment. Even though I went back to the priests and told them I had sinned and betrayed innocent blood, and then gave back the money, it was too late; I had passed the line of no return, so I went out and hung myself in despair (Matthew 27:3-5). Now I am experiencing the truth of Hebrews 12:29: "For our God is a consuming fire", apart from His mercy in Christ Jesus the Lord!"

And I must ask you who are listening to me today, how many of you are numbered among the people of God as was Judas, but your heart is far from Him? How many of you are like those described in Ezekiel 33:31-32? "And they came unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not." For you love your sin, your way, your lusts and your money more than your God! And shall you not fall into perdition along with Judas?

King Herod and his Mistress-Wife

Then as we walk a little further, we see two more characters in the corridors of the wicked. These two individuals heard the gospel from the lips of John the Baptist of whom our Lord said, "Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater" (Matthew 11:11). But they hated this messenger and his message because he was true to their souls: he had told them "It is not lawful for you to live in adultery; it is not right for you to live in sin!" (Mark 6:18). Their love of sin, as well as hatred and revenge drove them to murder, although Herod had heard John gladly (6:20). Yes, they had opportunity to repent upon hearing John's message, but they preferred their pound of flesh, so now they are in the torment of this awful place, abiding under the wrath of God. Herodious got her revenge, she got the head of John the Baptist on a dinner plate, but it cost her and her lover their souls! Hear them as they weep and wail and gnash upon each other with their teeth, and still curse God and His messenger because they could not have their sin and get away with it! They have found out now that "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" in your sins, unrepentant enemies of God and of His Christ! My friend, vengeance belongs to God, He will recompense! (Hebrews 10:30, 31). And this you too will find to be true, if you do not repent and turn to Him while it is yet the day of grace!

Lot's Wife

Let us go further, and we see a signpost placed on the way to hell to warn us: "Remember Lot's Wife"! (Luke 17:32). "Mrs. Lot, why are you here?" Listen as she speaks! "Because my heart was still in Sodom! I seemed to be fleeing, but I really wanted no part of a life of separation from the world, or of self-denial. My heart was still in the world; I loved it, even though I knew we are told to "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15). Yes, I had the opportunity to escape-God took me bodily out of Sodom-no man made me turn back; I just had to have one more fling of the world, and I got caught in the judgment. Oh woe is me, for I am without hope and without God forever!"

And in Luke 9:62 our Lord warns us: "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

Oh, my friend, "Today if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts"! (Hebrews 3:7-8).

Is there a man listening to me today who says, "I have to have this woman; I am going to live with her and have my fling, no matter what!?" My friend, I warn you, you are going to get caught in the overflow!

I remember sitting beside the bed of a man one night and telling him, "Brother, you are living in sin; the woman you are living with is not your wife; you are living in adultery!"

But he laughed at me and said, "If I go to hell, I am gonna have her!"

And this is where he went, for he died unrepentant! Oh my friend, is it worth it? Just think, you will walk the corridors of the damned forever, eaten up with lust and yet never satisfied!

Demas, the Friend of Paul

Then we hear another voice with the same cry as Lot's wife. His name is Demas. Listen to him as he weeps and wails! "I came as far as a man can possibly go, for I went to hell from the very gates of heaven! I was the companion of the great apostle Paul for years; I saw the great work of God manifested in place after place in the Roman Empire. I suffered hardships right along with Paul, and even stayed with him to his last days on earth; I heard him preach his last sermon. But I left him, having loved this present world (2 Timothy 4:10). I apostatized so greatly that I became a priest in a heathen temple! Oh how hot and how great is my punishment, for all the light that I had in the Word of God, and here I am, an apostate! Woe is me, for I am undone!"

Yes, my friend, what John Bunyan said is true, men do go to hell from the very gates of heaven, because they do not know Christ. They only have a name to live but are still spiritually dead (Revelation 3:1), and they, like the five foolish virgins, fail to make their calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:10). Oh, dear friend, God has left us many warnings in His Word against apostasy; will you heed them?

Esau the Profane Man

But who is that, weeping over there? He seems to find no place for repentance. I know his name, it is Esau, the brother of Jacob and the son of Isaac. Again our God warns us, that we be not like him and our last end be like his! Listen to God's Word! "Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears" (Hebrews 12:16-17). We see here that since he lost the opportunity for repentance and mercy, he could find no place for it on earth or in hell! For in hell there is no repentance; there is nothing there but darkness, where the wicked will gnaw their tongues for pain and blaspheme the God of heaven because of their pain and their sores, yet they "repented not of their deeds" (Revelation 16:10, 11).

Unbelieving Israelites

As we walk a little ways further, we see thousands upon tens of thousands there in the corridors of the wicked, and they look like they all came from one period of this world's history. Who are they? They are that generation of Israelites who came out of Egypt with Moses but did not enter into God's rest because of unbelief. Listen to their mournful cry!

"We saw God's work for 40 years, but we were fearful and unbelieving and would not enter into that land God had promised us, even though we had the fruit of the land in our hands! We saw the miracles in Egypt; we saw the Red Sea held back by God's power while we walked across on dry land; we saw the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night; we saw manna fall from heaven for bread; quails came in on an east wind for us to kill for meat; we saw the rock that followed us every day in the wilderness, from which gushed forth the water that kept us alive; and yet for all this we still would not believe! Our hearts were hard and then harder, so we perished in the wilderness; and now we are in this place of misery and woe where there will never be any rest! Oh unbelief, bitter unbelief, that brought us to this place!"

Oh my friend, will your end be like Balaam's or Judas', or King Herod and his mistress'? Like Lot's wife's or Demas' or the unbelieving Israelites'? Will you go on in your sins and deny your never-dying soul the opportunity of closing in with Christ in repentance and faith before it is everlastingly too late?

I wonder how many of you to whom I am speaking today will not yet believe the Word of God?-especially you of Mt. Zion Bible Church, who have seen the precious works of God in our midst and in your homes! For it is not my word that I have brought before you in these messages-it is God's Word! Are not some of you like the chief rulers in John 12:43 who loved the praises of men more than the praise of God? You go on in your unbelief, and wonder and will perish eternally! (Acts 13:41). Are there not some of you, like the Pharisee in the temple, justifying yourself before God and still saying that you are not as other men? Yet you will drop into hell and the second death in the lake of fire because of your unbelief!

Maybe I am speaking to some who are like Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5? You are lying about your never-dying souls when you tell yourself you are all right, for if Mr. or Miss so and so who does not walk uprightly makes it to heaven, you will too. But oh no, my friend, you shall both drop into hell because of your unbelief! And you will suffer for your sins forever under the righteous judgment and wrath of God!

Oh that you will heed Isaiah 55:6 and 7! "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD; and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." I pray that you have heard God's Word today by the hearing of faith and by God's Holy Spirit, and that He will convince you of your sin and your need of turning to God's only way of deliverance from hell and the second death-the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh that you would turn to Him, that you may repent and believe; for HE ALONE is the deliverer of your precious, never-dying soul!

DAY OF JUDGMENT

Matthew 12:36 * Matthew 25:31-46

“Day of judgment, day of wonders!
Hark! The trumpet's awful sound,
Louder than a thousand thunders,
Shakes the vast creation round!
How the summons
Will the sinner's heart confound!

See the Judge our nature wearing,
Clothed in Majesty divine
You who long for his appearing,
Then shall say,
'This God is mine!'

Gracious Saviour,
Own me in that day for thine.

Under sorrows and reproaches
May this thought our courage raise;
Swiftly God's great day approaches;
Sighs shall then be changed to praise!
We shall triumph
When the world is in a blaze."

John Newton

COMING OF CHRIST TO JUDGMENT

MATTHEW 25:31-46

“Lo! He comes, arrayed in vengeance,
 Riding down the heavenly road;
 Floods of fury roll before him;
 Who can meet an angry God?
 Tremble, sinners;
 Who can stand before his rod?

Lo! He comes in glory shining;
 Saints, arise and meet your King!
 ‘Glorious Captain of Salvation,
 Welcome, welcome,’
 Hear them sing!
 Shouts of triumph
 Make the heavens with echoes ring.

Now, despisers, look and wonder!
 Hear the dreadful sound,
 "Depart!"
 Rattling like a peal of thunder,
 Through each guilty rebel's heart!
 Lost for ever!
 Hope and sinners here must part.

Still they hear the dreadful sentence;
 Hell resounds the dreadful roar;
 While their heart-strings rend with anguish,
 Trembling on the burning shore;
 Justice seals it;
 Down they sink to rise no more.

How they shrink with horror,
 Viewing Hell's deep caverns opening wide;
 Guilty thoughts, like ghosts, pursuing,
 Plunge them down the rolling tide!
 Now consider,
 Ye who scorn the Lamb that died.

Hark! Ten thousand harps resounding!
 Formed in bright and grand array;
 See the glorious armies rising,
 While their Captain leads the way;
 Heaven before them,
 Opens an eternal day.”

Revelation 20 Chapter 6

Dear friend, we have now completed our commentary on Revelation chapter 20, and yet our commentary is not complete. We have been studying the Great White Throne Judgment and the final abode of the wicked in the lake of fire which is the second death; but what about the righteous? Where will they spend eternity?

THE FINAL ABODE OF THE RIGHTEOUS

So today we desire to consider the final abode of those who will be standing on the right hand of the righteous Judge of the Universe. In our mind's eye, let us picture them as they stand there, absolved of all their sins upon the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God Who came and paid their sin-debt in full; and clothed in the righteousness of the Lamb; **ONLY BECAUSE OF THE DISTINGUISHING GRACE OF GOD** Who wrote their names in the Lamb's **BOOK OF LIFE** and called them by His grace into fellowship with His Son; Who justified them by His blood through faith, kept them in the narrow way of sanctification by His indwelling Spirit; and now has presented them faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy (Jude 24), that they may share His glory in this glorified state forever and ever-and this in answer to His request to His Father in His High Priestly Prayer of John 17:24. To these He speaks the blessed words: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34).

Notice now that verse 1 of Revelation 21 begins with the word "And...", for it is a continuation of the same scene found in verses 11-15 of chapter 20; if there were no chapter division, these first eight verses would belong to chapter 20, to complete the story by showing us the final abode of the righteous. Let us read verses 1-7 together:

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son."

Now let us hear what these verses are teaching us; John, the writer of this Book of Revelation, has seen the wicked cast into the lake of fire which is the second death; and then he sees the new heaven and new earth "wherein dwelleth righteousness", the fulfillment of God's promise to His people (2 Peter 3:13).

Then he sees the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, and hears the voice out of heaven reminding the people of God that God, their Father, has kept and was now fulfilling the promises He had made to all His children in Christ from Genesis to Revelation, that He would come down on this NEW EARTH and dwell with them and be their God.

A Perfected State

You see, although God indwells His people, His church, now, this eternal state will be more glorious, for then we will have finished with sin; and He will dwell with us in that perfected state on the new earth, wherein dwells righteousness! Oh, praise the Lord that one day we will be finished with sin! For Revelation 21:27 tells us that “there shall in no wise enter into it (the holy city) anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life.”

Former Things are Passed Away

Listen closely now! It seems that after the Holy Spirit had given John those first three verses, He began to impress upon him that the first century Christians and all the people of God down through the ages needed to be encouraged to wait, pray and live for this glorious day which was coming for them: for He says, “God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (verse 4). Dear child of God, think of this when you are in the midst of sorrow or pain, affliction, trials, suffering or dying: there shall be a day when these things will no longer affect you; they shall all pass away when you are given your new body, and you will dwell upon the NEW EARTH with your blessed Lord and with the dear people of God forever!

Oh beloved, that precious Scripture in which you have often delighted will then be fulfilled: “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (1 Corinthians 2:9). Remember that there is a day coming when these things shall surely be yours, when God shall make up the jewels for His crown.

Then to confirm all of this, the voice of the One Who sat upon that judgment throne-the Lamb of God-was heard to say, “Behold I make all things new! Just as I made you a new creation in Myself by My Holy Spirit in the new birth, and just as I fulfilled all My promises unto you day by day in your walk upon the earth, then surely I will make all things new for you in this golden age. I make a NEW HEAVEN and a NEW EARTH, a new order of society wherein dwelleth nothing but righteousness! And I will also give you NEW BODIES-glorious bodies like unto Mine-so you will enjoy and share My glory forever and ever!” (Philippians 3:21). Beloved, is not that precious? It is to my soul today!

Spiritual Thirst is Satisfied

And to give greater encouragement to our hearts, in verse 6 the voice of God in Christ, the Lamb, cries, "...these words are true and faithful, for I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. Write these words, for I will surely give all these things to him who thirsts after Me: I will give him the water of life from the fountain of life to quench his thirst, and I will give it freely. Write these words, encourage the people of God, for these words are true and faithful."

Oh my dear weeping, sorrowing, thirsting child of God today, hear these words and wipe away your tears, for He said freely He gives this water of life to the thirsty, to those who long and thirst after Him! Do you cry like David in Psalm 42:1, 2: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" Or like the Psalmist in Psalm 63: "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary" (vv. 1, 2)?

He freely gives the water of life to all those who have this thirst in their souls. Oh how gracious and merciful our God is to thirsting souls and to all His children, to give us His life and His grace, thus fulfilling His precious promises to us, for He has said, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses" (Isaiah 44:3-4). And as surely as He answers the prayers of all those who cry and thirst after Him now in this life, so forever our souls will be satisfied throughout eternity!

Do you have a thirsty soul, my friend? Are you one who is longing to see His face and thirsting to be filled with His presence and His glory? Are you crying out in your soul, "I want Him, I desire Him, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" (Job 23:3)?

If this thirst is in your soul, come to Him by faith today and be filled, for He says, "I will give unto him who is athirst of the water of life freely." Bring Him your empty and thirsting soul, and look to Him to give you of this water of life freely to satisfy your soul. Cry after Him as the Psalmist did, for He will quench that thirst; He will give you a foretaste of His glory here, and when He brings you into that eternal state, He will fill you with that water of life forever and ever! Oh beloved, what a blessing and what a joy! We can bring Him the empty vessel and He fills it, just as He commanded the filling of the empty waterpots at the marriage feast in John 2, when He turned the water into wine! (Vv. 1-11).

Then in verse 7 of our text, our Lord Jesus confirms the same promise that He gave us in verse 3: "...they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God"; for He says, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." And this promise He has given us all through Scripture! (See Exodus 4:22 and 2 Corinthians 6:16-18). What encouragement to press on, thirsting soul! You shall have your heart's desire, so do not give up or turn back; remember, we are "more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Romans 8:37). The day of triumph is coming, and we shall be like Him in all things!

The Meek Shall Inherit the Earth

And what about verse 8 of Revelation 21? What a contrast! John looks for the last time at the wicked in their fearful abode: "...but the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." Yes, my friend, "evil doers shall be cut off..." (Psalm 37:9). This is God's Word, and it is true and faithful! "-but those that wait upon the LORD, THEY SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH."

And all of God's promises to His people down through the ages are fulfilled when the Lord makes all things new as He says in Revelation 21:5, and gives them a NEW EARTH as their final abode. You see, over and over He has promised them in His Word, "...the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace...For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth; ...The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever. ...Wait on the LORD, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it" (Psalm 37:11, 22a, 29 and 34). And when He was upon this earth, again He said, "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5). Then before going back to heaven, He told his disciples, "...I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:2).

THE NEW EARTH

So now has come the fulfillment of all these promises made to the children of God over the centuries, that they shall inherit the earth; and also the fulfillment of the prayer our Lord had taught us to pray: "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). We see Him now bringing His bride out of heaven to the NEW EARTH John saw in Revelation 21:1, and confirmed by the angel in Revelation 21:9-11: "...Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God..."

Yes, the holy Jerusalem is the bride, the church, coming down from heaven and dwelling upon the NEW EARTH with her blessed Bridegroom, the Lord Jesus Christ, Who gave Himself for her "that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:26, 27).

The questions are asked, "Why a NEW EARTH, and why so much emphasis put on it here, that the righteous will inherit it and dwell upon it with Christ forever and ever?" Well, to answer these questions and to fully understand why and how the righteous shall dwell upon a new earth as their final abode with the Lord Jesus Christ we must go back to the beginning and begin with God and His eternal purpose.

Now I desire that you would listen intently to these next studies, for I want to set before our hearts some very great and glorious Biblical truths from the Holy Scriptures. These truths on which we must be clear and for which we must have spiritual understanding, for they affect our entire life and destiny. So I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, will

give unto us the spirit of wisdom and knowledge of Himself, that the eyes of our understanding may be enlightened, and that we may know the things that God has made for our peace. Follow us now!

Seven Great Biblical Truths

First, we will look at the earth as it came forth from the hand of God in creation, in its perfect beauty and perfect glory.

Second, we will look at man as he came forth from the hand of God in creation as a free moral agent in the image and likeness of God.

Third, we will look at man as a sinful, fallen creature in a cursed state in body, soul and spirit.

Fourth, we will look at this earth in its cursed state now because of man's sin.

Fifth, we will look at the eternal purpose of God in planning and carrying out His great redemptive work in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Sixth, we will consider our Kinsman-Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, and what He has done in redeeming fallen man from this cursed state in spirit, soul and body.

And, seventh, we will see the final act of God's redeeming work in Christ in giving His redeemed people all that they lost in Adam—a completely restored earth on which to live forever in that blessed state of holiness and righteousness, and in their glorified bodies which are made in the image and likeness of their blessed Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Now some of you may be wondering why we must go all the way back to eternity past and to creation in speaking upon the NEW EARTH and the final abode of the righteous. But you see, dear friend, we must start with God in eternity past, to end with God in eternity future! In other words, we must understand the beginning to understand the end.

You see, it is this failure to start with God in the study of Christ and the End Times, that has led to the mass confusion today in regard to sin, salvation, death, heaven, hell, the intermediate state; and also in regard to the work of Christ in all of His offices of Prophet, Priest and King, His present reign in His kingdom now, His glorious second coming, the Great White Throne Judgment, the final abode of the wicked in the lake of fire, and the final state of the redeemed children of God!

Keeping this in mind then, follow us as we begin with God's eternal purpose in creation and trace out the results of the fall, and then see the great redemptive purpose of the Lord Jesus Christ in acting as the Kinsman-Redeemer, to restore all that man lost in the fall, even completely restoring this earth on which man will live forever and ever.

Creation: the Earth in its Perfect State

Turn with me to the first chapter of Genesis, where we find a description given of the creation: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth”...and then follows the account of the six days of creation. Then in Genesis 1:31 we read: “And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.” reading on into chapter 2, we find these words: “Thus the heavens and the earth were finished and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.” (vv. 1-3).

Beloved, this world came into existence by way of direct creation! Let everybody in the world argue about evolution and creation, but I will take the Biblical account of it, and it must be by faith: “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God-” (Hebrews 11:1). And that is the only way we will ever know it, because you see, only God was there, and He had to reveal it to us. It came as a revelation from God to Moses, and he wrote it down in the Holy Scriptures, God’s Book, and by faith God has revealed it to my soul; that is why I believe it.

So in these Scriptures by faith we see God producing a complex, diverse and intricate world that is perfectly harmonious; for “God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.” And He made everything upon this earth so it would be perfectly suited for His crowning act of creation, which was the creation of man-a perfect man, clothed in His own moral image and likeness-perfectly suited for that perfect earth; and as Isaiah 45:18 tells us, God formed this earth to be inhabited, and that forever and forever. Neither was His purpose thwarted by the fall of man, for this truth is not only stated in Genesis 1 and 2, but runs throughout the entire Bible, concluding with a redeemed earth on which dwells redeemed man, clothed and made in the image and likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Creation: Man in the Image & Likeness of God

Now in our second thought, we see man as he came forth from the hand of God in creation as a free moral agent-a free moral creature-made in the image and likeness of God. This we read in Genesis 1:26-28 and 2:7. Listen to how God revealed it to us! “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth”...”And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”

Then follows the Biblical account of how God made the first woman, who was also perfect like the man-Listen! “And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make an help meet for him-And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed” (Genesis 2:18, 21-25).

Dear friend, from these Scriptures, we see that the God of the universe created man to inhabit the earth for His own pleasure and glory. Here in the midst of that complex, diverse and intricate but yet harmonious environment, He put a perfect, upright, intelligent and responsible man and woman, and told them to replenish the earth and subdue it. And what did He mean by that? He meant for them to discover its laws and harness them to use for God’s glory and their own good.

Can you imagine a world in which all is harmonious? A world without sin and sorrow, heartache and suffering? Without strife and bitterness, hatred and murder, war and famine, sickness and pain? Can you imagine a world like that, where the man and the woman walked with God in the cool of the day in perfect love and obedience, and where all creation moved about in peace and tranquility? Yes, this is hard to imagine, but it was so! That is the way the earth and man came forth from the hand of God, and that is the way it shall be again when God’s children come to be upon the restored earth, all because of God’s grace and mercy towards sinful man in Christ.

Remember now that the account we have read today in God’s Word is God’s account of creation: both of the perfect earth and heaven, and of the perfect man and woman. And he who would deny this creation as being the very work of the triune God, also denies the eternal Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, for He Himself quoted these words to those around Him: “...Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Matthew 19:4-6).

So you see, Christ our Lord put His stamp of approval upon His own creation; therefore, he who would deny Christ and His Word, also denies the God of the universe, and abides under His curse.

I ask, “Why does man deny the Biblical account of creation?” And I answer, “He hopes to rule out God because he does not want a God to rule over him; for you see, he thinks if he does away with the Biblical account of creation, saying that it came into being by chance or evolution, then he doesn’t have to abide by God’s authority!” But you cannot put God out of His universe, my friend, and you cannot put Him out of your life! Even though you may say “no God for me”, God calls you a fool (Psalm 14:1), for you know there is a God!

There is no true atheist living upon the earth today, nor ever has there been; this fact is plainly stated in Romans 1:19-21. Although you may try to do away with the Biblical account of the creation of this universe, including the starry heavens and the earth, and also of man, thinking that by so doing you do not have to bow to the authority of the God Who made you, yet you cannot get rid of God that easily; one day you must give an account to Him, your Creator. Though you have fallen in Adam, yet you are responsible to Him Who created you.

Then from Genesis 2 we see that not only did God make man and woman in His own moral image and likeness, but He gave them free moral choice: “And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (vv. 16-17).

You see, when the Lord put man in the Garden of Eden to dress and keep it, this was the only stipulation that God put upon him: he was not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil or he would die, both spiritually and physically; he would be cut off from the presence of the true and living God forever!

Keep in mind now, that everything God had made was very good (Genesis 1:31); there was nothing lacking! There was a perfect environment for two perfectly holy and intelligent beings, made in His own moral image and likeness, to inhabit, to “be fruitful and multiply, and replenish...and subdue” (Genesis 1:28). And He told man to dress and keep the beautiful Garden of Eden, giving him that mental capacity and responsibility to obey and walk with Him as a free moral agent.

Now how long Adam and Eve stayed in this place of perfect tranquility and harmony, the Scripture does not say, but I would venture to say it was the same amount of time our Lord was tempted in the wilderness after His baptism, forty days.

We know from the Scriptures in Genesis 3 that the first Adam disobeyed the commandment of God and lost all he had in the fall; and that we fell in him (which will be the next truth we will study); but praise the Lord that our blessed Redeemer, the second Adam, the perfect God-man, did not fall, but passed every test and stood for us as the perfect man, taking that perfect body, and offering it upon the alter at the cross where He poured out His life’s blood, that we might be redeemed by His marvelous grace! For God’s eternal purpose to have a people made in His own moral image and likeness, and a perfect environment in which for them to live and walk with Him forever, He will carry out!

The Fall: Man in a Cursed State

But my friend, that which left God’s hand in a perfect condition and which was blessed of God, soon came into a sad state of chaos and ruin, utter confusion and death (Genesis 3). What happened? Man, who was made in the moral image and likeness of God, and given free moral choice with only one stipulation-not to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil-disobeyed the commandment of God and brought immediate death and the curse upon the earth, himself and his posterity, for God had said, “...in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”

Yes, now he is forever banished (separated) from the presence of God, experiencing immediate spiritual death, as Romans 3:23 tells us, “**the wages of sin is death.**” And in Romans 5:12 we read, “...by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” Then 930 years later, Adam experienced physical death, and so do we.

But why did death pass upon all men because Adam sinned? You see, Adam stood as a representative for the whole human race, as we read further in Romans 5; so when he sinned and fell, so did we. We are sinners because we fell in Adam. Listen to these brief sentences from this chapter: “Judgment was by one” (that is, Adam) “to condemnation” (vs. 16); “...by one man’s offence death reigned by one” (vs. 17); “...as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation” (vs. 18). Therefore, verse 21 tells us “...sin hath reigned unto death”; and sin yet reigns and will reign until the Lord Jesus Christ returns, for the last enemy He shall put under His feet is death (1 Corinthians 15:26).

We also see that this fall into sin, judgment and death was complete in all the faculties of man; in other words, in the fall, man became a totally depraved sinner before God. Listen to the description given of this complete fall of man-every man-in Romans 3:10-18: “...There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace have they not known: **THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES.**” And verse 23 sums it all up: “All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”

Dear friend, we should read and re-read the account of our fall in Adam found in Genesis 3, and meditate upon it, for therein we find the awful state of men and women, the animal kingdom and the earth in sin and misery-all came under the curse of God because of man’s sin. Here we find the animal and inanimate creation cursed for man’s sake, and remaining so to this very day. And we see man and woman trying to run away and hide from the face of the Lord, with Whom they had walked and talked in sweet fellowship.

Listen to verse 8: “And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.” Why did they hide? You see, as soon as they had disobeyed God and sinned by eating of the forbidden fruit, their eyes were opened, and they knew that they were naked; so they tried to make themselves aprons of fig leaves to cover their naked bodies, and they did as all of their posterity has done since then-they tried to hide themselves from the living God.

Why? Because they were sinners and could not stand in the presence of a holy God; the light of His holiness only made them feel their sinfulness and shame and guilty condition all the more. Although they did not take the blame, they understood that they were guilty before God and felt their guilt.

And so man yet tries to disregard the account given in the first chapters of Genesis wherein we find the awful curse that fell upon man physically and spiritually, for it tells him that he is in a sinful condition and abides under the curse of God unless a ransom is found for his never-dying soul!

Let us continue reading God's account of the just curse that fell upon sinful man and God's perfect earth because of man's sin, in Genesis 3 beginning with verse 9: "And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. And he said, Who told thee that thou was naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? And the man said, The woman who thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat." And so man has been passing the blame for his sin ever since then, and only takes the blame himself as God the Holy Spirit works miraculously in his soul. You see, Adam and Eve never saw themselves to be guilty or took the blame before God; that is the reason they were never saved!

But I want you to notice from vv. 14-15 that before God brought the curse upon the man and woman for breaking his law, and before He cursed the earth for man's sake, He gave it promise of redemption! "And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

Yes, this is the very first promise in the Bible, that God would restore what Adam had lost, and that this restoration would be by the woman's seed, Who was to be Christ Jesus the Lord. He would restore all things by defeating Satan's seed (the seed of the serpent) at the cross. Thus by the redemptive work of Christ, the Eden which was lost in the fall would be restored. For you see, the fall of man did not take God by surprise; it only gave Him the opportunity of showing forth all His gracious and glorious attributes in carrying out what He had purposed and planned by redemption: to have a perfect man upon a perfect earth, and that forever!

Then in verse 16 of Genesis 3 we read, "Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." And I say, no wonder the feminist movement of today hates the first chapters of Genesis! For therein we are told that the husband is to rule over the wife, and that because of her sin, she shall have pain and sorrow in childbirth.

Also from this we can understand why man in His rebellion tries to do away with childbirth by the awful sin of murder-killing millions of unborn children in their mother's womb. They want the pleasure of lust without the sorrow of childbirth, so they try to do away with the curse upon their sin! But you cannot do away with God's curse that way, my friend; it is murder and be sure your sin will find you out! God holds you accountable; and every mother, doctor, nurse or midwife who is responsible for these abortions is also accountable for their sin. The only way God's curse can be set aside for you is in the work of the lord Jesus Christ, for the curse fell upon Him at the cross.

Now listen as God speaks to Adam: “And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field, in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return...and the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever: therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.” (Vv. 17-19; 22-24).

The Fall: The Earth in a Cursed Condition

Dear friend, again we want to put you in remembrance of the truth that at all times the earth must correspond to the state of man who lives upon it, so a perfect man, as he came forth from the hand of God, necessitated a perfect earth, which God had provided; but when perfect man sinned and came under the judgment of God, then a sinful and cursed man necessitated a cursed earth, as we read in Genesis 3:17: “...cursed is the ground for thy sake.”

So it is because of our sin that we now live upon a cursed earth; and the curse will not be removed until Christ returns and removes it for the sake of His glorified people. And this our blessed Lord will do for His people, because paradise regained is part of the salvation God gives us, based upon the redemptive work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Did you know that because of the curse upon the earth, all creation groans and travailes in pain, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God at the second coming of Christ? Yes, even creation knows there is a day when the curse will be taken off the earth, and it will be completely restored to a perfect state. Listen as we read this from Romans 8:18-23:

“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.”

I understand that it is generally believed that this portion refers to a partially restored earth in a so-called millennium, but this has nothing to do with that. These verses of Scripture call for the complete restoration of the earth, which will take place at the second coming of Christ. For we see in verses 22-23 that the groaning of creation for deliverance from the bondage of corruption is inseparably connected with the groaning of the children of God for deliverance from their bodies of this humiliation.

Yes, we who are the children of God have been delivered from the corruption and the bondage of sin, but because our bodies have been left in this state of corruption, “even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (vs. 23).

You see, these verses are a source of encouragement to the children of God, for the apostle says that the sufferings of this present time “are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (vs. 18). So we can expectantly await that glorious day of our Lord’s return, when He will complete that which He started in our souls (Philippians 1:6), completely removing the curse of sin from our bodies and from the earth in glorification. This is why all of God’s creation waits for the manifestation of the sons of God: for then it too will be glorified with them!

Let us look a little further into this subject! What does the apostle mean when he says that “the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him that has subjected the same in hope”? Well, because man had become cursed and needed a corresponding environment in which to live, God subjected the earth and all creation to emptiness and void and vanity—all the irrational creation with the material creation, animate and inanimate, organic and inorganic; the animals, the vegetation, the flowers, the grass, the rivers and the streams, and the mountains and hills—all of these were subject to the curse. Even the oceans and tides, the winds and clouds—everything that goes to make up our weather, were cursed for man’s sake. And all were subject to vanity; that is, they became futile and empty and could not fulfill the function for that which they were intended. For when the creation came forth from the hand of God, it was meant to be perfect, and it was.

But when God had to curse it for man’s sake, now creation does not measure up to that for which it was meant to be; it does not attain to self-realization, but its potentialities are cribbed, confused and confined. It is subject to arrested development, and though it aspires, it is not able to achieve. It may be compared to a very powerful man, a world-champion boxer or wrestler, who is chained in such a manner that he cannot make use of his tremendous physical powers. Thus it is with the present universe which lies under the curse. Everywhere we see disease and death. Every variety of organisms seems to be working at cross purposes, so it cannot be truly said that nature is to any extent man’s willing servant. Fear and dread rest heavily upon the various conflicting domains of this universe; there is warfare everywhere.

So we see that creation is in a state of bondage, of physical corruption, putrefaction, decay, and there seems to be something destructive which reduces everything to that which is null and void and empty—to vanity; nothing is stable. And beloved, death and destruction are alien things to the creation that God made; this all came about because of man’s sin! And try as it will, creation cannot free itself from its corruption; it cannot rid itself of this element of decay and corruption that renders it ultimately vain and utterly futile.

The oceans, the tides and the winds try their best to tear loose from this bondage by hurling their forces against the land masses in hurricanes and tornadoes, blizzards and rain storms, hail storms and droughts—all nature is in revolt against man’s sin! And it looks like every spring nature is going to come out of this bondage as it waits for that bondage to be fulfilled; it comes into the beauty and glory of summer, but then comes fall and bleak winter...no, it did not come out of bondage this year, but it may next year...so it keeps waiting for that day when it shall be

delivered from that bondage of corruption to which it was subjected because of man's sin. For all creation knows that it "shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (vs. 21).

And this brings us again to verse 23: "And not only them, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."

Why does the child of God groan within himself? Because he knows the condition of his body and of the world. He knows that because sin is in the flesh, he will continue to have the problem of his body in this life; and that there will always be a conflict between the flesh and the Spirit (Galatians 5:17), so he groans within himself as he awaits the redemption of his body. And what makes his groaning more meaningful is that he has already tasted of the first fruits of the Spirit, and having tasted, he wants more, so he anxiously waits and longs for that day when he shall be made like unto his blessed Lord. So until that day of complete restoration, he reckons himself to be dead indeed unto sin, and alive unto God through Jesus Christ his Lord (Romans 6:11), as he awaits the redemption of his body.

Yes, I know that the children of God would like to believe as some do, that provision has been made in the atonement for the redemption of our bodies now, and that sin can be eradicated from the life and body in this life, but we cannot go against Scripture and actual experience. For nowhere do the Scriptures promise that the body will be redeemed in this life. And neither can we do away with the problem of sin that has cursed this earth, or change the world situation with all of its corruption, so we do not try; and we do not put any confidence in man's remedies or what he says he can do by legislation, etc. to do away with the problem of sin; we continue to hope and long and wait for that change which God has promised that day when God will complete the salvation He has given His people by the redemption of their bodies and the complete restoration of the earth.

Dear friend, do you not see from these verses in Romans 8 how the redemption of this earth is bound up with the redemption of the children of God, and both groan and travail and awaits that day-their eternal state-with earnest expectation?

Further, these verses teach that God will not leave creation nor His people in a state of corruption and bondage. His glory and His honor, and His very character-that which He is, the all-powerful great Creator, with all rule and authority at His command-all make it impossible that He should leave creation in bondage and vanity, as it is at the present time; nor will He leave His children as they are, but He tells us "we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (1 Corinthians 15:52-53).

And this corresponds with our text in Revelation 21 where we read: "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful" (vv. 4-5).

Also in Revelation 22:3-5: “And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: and they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.”

In all of this we see a complete restoration of all things, and not a partial restoration for 1000 years as some would have us believe today.

THE ETERNAL PURPOSE OF GOD REDEMPTION

Now as we go further into the study of this subject, we see from the Word of God that God’s eternal purpose was for the new earth, the restored earth, which Adam had lost in the fall, to be populated by the sons of Adam who would be saved by His sovereign grace, and that the Head of that redeemed race would be the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God. In this again we see that the fall of man did not take God by surprise; so I desire that you would listen and ask the Holy Spirit to take these precious truths home to your heart.

The Apostle Paul tells us in Ephesians 1:9-11 that which the Lord had revealed to him, that it was His great eternal purpose for all things to head up in the last Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, and not in the first Adam who was made from the dust (see also 1 Corinthians 15:45). Listen to God’s Word: God would “according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself...gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him...according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.” And Paul said this was a mystery hid from the foundation of the world, but was revealed to the children of God to show forth the great grace of God (Ephesians 1:13-14).

Also in the letter to the Colossians this same truth is set forth in 1:19: “For it pleased the Father that in him (that is, Christ) should all fullness dwell.”

Listen to the preeminence given to the last Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, as He was set up in God’s eternal purpose as Head over all things!

“Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.”

Also in Colossians 2:9-10 we read: “For in him (Christ) dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.”

Now this is the heart of our message, dear friend! The Scriptures are clear that the eternal purpose of God in creating man and letting him fall into sin, thereby losing all he had been given-spirit, soul and body, even this earth and paradise-was that God might display all of His glorious attributes to the sons of men which He had made for His own pleasure and glory; and these glorious attributes would shine forth in His eternal Son, Who would be Head of the redeemed race, those who would be called and redeemed by His own precious blood.

We find this truth set forth in 1 Peter 1:18-20: “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold...but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot”.

And when did this plan of redemption take place? “Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.” Yes, all of this-the salvation of His people, the headship of Christ over all things, and the setting up of the redeemed race upon the restored earth in Christ-all was purposed and planned before the foundation of the world!

Also this same truth of God purposing redemption for His people in Christ is brought out in Peter’s message on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:22-24: “Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know. Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, (that is, by the definite and fixed purpose of God according to His foreknowledge) ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.”

You see, dear friend, “known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world” (Acts 15:18), so with the fall of Adam and all his unborn posterity with him, the stage was set for the great redemptive purpose of God to be unfolded, whereby He Himself in the Person of His Son, incarnate as Jesus of Nazareth, would buy back all that His elect people of the sons of Adam had lost in the fall; and this He would do as their KINSMAN-REDEEMER. In other words, God did not intend that the first Adam would get any glory for anything he ever did by working out his own righteousness, but He Himself is the Author of eternal redemption for the sons of men, and would give all the glory to His Son for working out a perfect righteousness for His redeemed people to make them His very own.

Oh the grace, the mercy, and the glory of it all! That God Himself would desire to buy back all that His people lost in Eden and restore them to fellowship with Himself! For by His redemptive grace He cleanses them from all of their sins and clothes them in His own righteousness so they can stand before Him, holy and without blemish, spot or wrinkle; He adopts them into His family as His children that He might fellowship with them, and gives them of His Spirit so they might be made like Christ; and then He prepares for them a sinless, glorified body made like unto the glorious body of His eternal Son, and a new earth restored to its original, pure and uncorrupted, unsoiled condition for His people’s inheritance and eternal abode, there to dwell with them in

fellowship forever-He with them and they with Him, the living God, as He is manifested in the Lord Jesus Christ. No wonder the apostle cried, “Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!...For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.” (Romans 11:33-36).

Redemption: Our Kinsman-Redeemer

Now let us look at this great work of the Lord Jesus Christ as our Kinsman-Redeemer in buying back all we lost in Adam-spirit, soul, body and this earth; and see if by the Holy Spirit’s operation in us, we can open up this blessed truth. Turn with me to Leviticus 25, where we will read of the law of redemption by a near kinsman.

First we see that the Kinsman redemption was of persons, of inheritance and land. Verses 47- 48 tell us that if an Israelite sold himself to a stranger or to a neighbor, he may be redeemed again by one of his brethren, a near kinsman, who may be “either his uncle, or his uncle’s son...or any that is nigh of kin unto him of his family...; or if he be able, he may redeem himself” (vs. 49). And in v. 25 we read, “If thy brother be waxen poor, and hath sold away some of his possession, and if any of his kin come to redeem it, then shall he redeem that which his brother sold.”

Then we find in Ruth 4:4-6 that the kinsman-redeemer must be willing to redeem as well as able; that is, he must have the money with which to redeem. And so we see how Boaz, a near kinsman of Naomi and Ruth, was able and willing, and as their kinsman-redeemer, he bought back everything Naomi and Ruth had lost, paying in full all that was owed.

According to the law of redemption by a near kinsman then, one must be found who could redeem us and our inheritance which we had lost. And the Scriptures are filled with the story of the blessed Lord Jesus, the eternal Son of God, coming and acting the Kinsman-Redeemer’s part, to pay for and buy back by the price of His own precious blood all that we had lost in Adam’s fall, including this cursed earth on which God’s redeemed people will live with Him forever.

Listen to Galatians 4:4-5: “But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” We were “sold under sin” (Romans 7:14) and could not redeem ourselves, but God’s only Son came as our Kinsman-Redeemer, to redeem us from the curse of the broken law.

Ephesians 1:7 tells us it is in Him that “...we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.”

And in Ephesians 1:11, 13-14 we see that He paid the price to buy back all we had lost through Adam, including our inheritance of this earth: “In whom also we have obtained an inheritance...” and “...after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.”

Next, according to the law of redemption, the one who did the redeeming had to be a near kinsman. So we read in Hebrews 2:14-15 that our Lord Jesus became a near kinsman so He could redeem us; listen! “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”

The law of redemption also required that the near kinsman had to be able and willing to redeem. And how precious is the thought that our Kinsman-Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, was able; because in Him was no sin. He was the spotless Lamb of God, the One “...who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens” (Hebrews 7:26).

So the blood He shed at Calvary’s cross for the redemption of His people was God’s blood (Acts 20:28), pure and sinless. And was He willing? Listen to what He Himself said in John 10:11, 17-18: “I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep”...”I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.” Yes, He was not only able, but willing to redeem us and buy back all we had lost in Adam.

And then last, the law of redemption said that the kinsman- redeemer must pay the full price demanded by the law. And our blessed Kinsman-Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, paid our sin debt in full; listen to Galatians 3:13: “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.”

What a Redeemer! He bought us from off the slave market of sin and the world, bringing us back to God as reconciled souls; and He has given us “an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:4, 5). So as in Ruth 4, our praise will forever be “Blessed by the LORD, who hath not left thee this day without a kinsman (or redeemer) whose name is famous in Israel, who shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life” (vv. 14-15).

Redemption: A Completely Restored Earth

Now to show that there is to be a complete and actual restoration of this whole earth, there are many Scriptures in the Old Testament, as well as those verses in Romans 8 which we have studied, that speak of this, proving that God will not leave this creation or His people in a state of corruption and bondage. “Because the creature itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God” (Romans 8:21). For when the children of God are resurrected at the last trump and receive their new bodies of glory, they will have a restored earth on which to live, which also has been delivered from the curse of sin, just as they have been.

And it will be an earth that has gone through a baptism of fire which burns out all the taint and marks of sin, and is restored to its pristine beauty as it came forth from the hand of God. This is to what Isaiah 35:1-2 refers, for we read:

“The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing”...When? in that day when the glory of the Lord and the excellency of our God shall again be upon this earth, for “...the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the LORD, and the excellency of God.”

Then in symbolic language, Isaiah 11:6-9 tells us of the peace and quietness, the love and the obedience, that shall be upon the new earth, inhabited by the glorified people of God; listen! “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice’ den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.”

And again in Isaiah 55:12-13 we read of the joy and happiness of the eternal state upon the redeemed earth, again in symbolic language: “For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.”

Dear friend, the whole Bible calls out to the believing children of God to believe and understand that they have a completed salvation when the Lord Jesus Christ comes back to earth again; and it is for this they are to look and wait expectantly; listen to 2 Peter 3:13: “Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” What could be more plain? This refutes the error that is promulgated today of the partially restored earth after the second coming of Christ, which causes such confusion. For those who preach and teach this error say we must give vs. 4 of Revelation 20 a literal, physical and material meaning, saying that Christ will return to reign on a physical throne in present Jerusalem temporarily-for only 1,000 years-with the Jewish nation being the principal people and having dominion over the Gentiles.

They claim that upon the earth at that time not only will there be believers with their new bodies but there will be believers still in their bodies of humiliation; also, sinners who will be saved sometime during this 1000-year period, and sinners who will never be saved but only await a time when they can rebel against Christ and try to tear Him from His throne. For they say, this day will come after the 1,000 years, when the devil will be released to make war against Christ and His people, wherein will be a state of conflict, sin and confusion-while Christ stands helplessly by, until fire comes down from heaven to aid Him! And they say that the portion in Romans 8:18-23 refers to this partial restoration, and that the glory of which the apostle speaks is only a temporary glory. But God is not the Author of confusion! (I Corinthians 14:33).

Scripture plainly teaches the complete restoration of all things at Christ’s return, as we have shown you; the curse shall be removed from this earth and the creation of God, and all vestige of sin will be burned out so the children of God can dwell with Him in their glorified bodies on a glorified earth, under the glorified heavens. For remember what we have told you before: a

redeemed, glorified body demands a redeemed, glorified earth—a new earth; at all times the earth must correspond to the state of man who lives upon it.

Now the question is asked, “How will the restoration of this earth take place? and how are we to understand 2 Peter 3:7,10-12 and Revelation 20:11?” Listen as we read these verses of Scripture, looking to the Lord to enlighten our spiritual eyes to see the truths contained therein. “But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men...But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?” “And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.”

Again we must compare Scripture with Scripture to determine just what the Holy Spirit is giving us so we may rightly divide the Word of Truth. I believe the key is found in 2 Peter 3:5-7; listen! Speaking of the mockers in verses 3 and 4, “For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.” Here we are told that the world went through a judgment by water in the days of Noah (Genesis 6,7 and 8), as the deluge of the flood overflowed the earth and destroyed all living things except those eight persons in the Ark. The earth was not annihilated but was purged of all vestige of sin and wickedness that was upon it; and this changed the face of the earth to a great degree, but it was the same earth.

So in like manner, fire shall be used of God to purge this earth of all its sin and wickedness and the curse; the works of all men shall be burned up (I Corinthians 3:13), and all ungodliness shall perish as God by His power restores the earth to its pristine beauty as when it left His hand as recorded in Genesis 1:31. So again it will not be annihilated, but shall undergo that change spoken of in Matthew 19:28 called the regeneration. In Acts 3:21 it is called the restitution of all things and in Romans 8:21, a deliverance from the bondage of corruption.

Beloved, it is the same as God saving His people. We are made a new creation, but we are in bodily form the same individual. We will have new bodies and be perfect, but they will be likened unto our old body in identity. So when we read that the heaven and the earth shall pass away, it means that all the works of sin and wickedness that marred and cursed the earth because of man shall flee away, because God shall purge the earth with fire.

I want you to note that there is one difference between the purging effect of the flood in the days of Noah and the purging effect of the judgment of fire at the last day. You see, whereas Noah and his family were spared from the judgment by water, they still had their Adamic bodies and sin in the flesh; they were not changed. But in the judgment and purging by fire, all the children of God shall pass through this fire because they are in Christ, and at His coming “in a twinkling of an eye at the last trump” they were changed (I Corinthians 15:52); so they have no sin in or

upon them, therefore the fire shall not touch them, and they shall pass on to the new and restored earth as sinless beings. This, dear friend, is grounds for praise and thanksgiving!

So we see that God has put a RESERVE SIGN upon this earth to judge it by fire, and man cannot destroy it today or at any time with all his nuclear weapons! Let the great powers of the earth with their great arsenal of weapons threaten all they please; God will not allow them to destroy the earth, for He Himself has reserved it for His judgment of fire! But the question is always asked, "How can God burn up the elements with fervent heat using the fire of judgment, and not destroy or annihilate this earth?"

Dear friend, our God has all varieties of fire for His purposes: the fire to burn wood; the fire of the lightning bolt that strikes through the sky in an instant; the fire that burns in the sun; the fire to change the heavens and the earth at the last day; and yet another most terrible-the unquenchable fire for the devils and the damned in hell. He tells us in Exodus 3:2 of the bush in the desert that burned with fire and yet was not consumed, as the angel of the LORD appeared unto Moses "in a flame of fire" out of the midst of the bush. So also the earth can be burned with fire and yet not consumed.

Further, if man can invent an instrument such as the laser beam and use it to destroy just a small portion of the eye to remove a cataract, and not destroy the whole eye, cannot God create the fire of His design that will burn out all vestige of sin and wickedness from this earth without annihilating it? Of course He can! For the judgment by fire is to renovate, to renew and to purify this earth that it may again be that perfect habitation for His people, where they will dwell in their glorified bodies forever with their blessed Kinsman-Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ. And remember, the Scripture cannot be denied, for those found in Psalms 78:69, 104:5, and Ecclesiastes 1:4 show and teach the perpetuity of the earth; and as we have shown you before, our blessed Lord Himself said, "the meek...shall inherit the earth." It is then, by God's grace and the redemptive work of Christ, that heaven shall come down to earth and the prayer of Matthew 6:10 shall be completely answered! - "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

A WORD OF APPLICATION

Now beloved, what effect should these great truths have upon us who know the Lord? Let us go back to 2 Peter 3 for our answer: "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (vv. 11-13).

Yes, dear children of God, it should encourage our hearts that there shall be a complete restoration of all things in the resurrection-including the glorification of our bodies, which we will consider in more depth in our next studies. And all of these marvelous truths should inspire us to live for Him Who died in our place to purchase for us SO GREAT SALVATION, as we read in verse 14 of 2 Peter 3:

“Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, BE DILIGENT that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.” For He not only delivered us from the penalty of sin in justification, and is delivering us from the power and pollution of sin in sanctification, He also holds out the hope for us that He shall yet deliver us (2 Corinthians 1:10) from the very presence of sin in glorification, and for this I praise Him!

Also, these truths should make us search our hearts to see if indeed our groaning is because of sin still in the flesh, and not only because of sickness or old age, poverty or world conditions: do we really groan because of hatred for sin and because of our longing to be free from its presence and memory forever? How about you, my dear sinner friend? What hope do you have? Should you not long for and desire Christ, the provider of that good hope through grace? For although these great truths encourage the people of God, they can hold out no hope for you unless you are in Christ, having trusted your never-dying soul into His hands. Oh how I pray that even today the Holy Spirit might work in your heart that work of grace that only He can work, to bring you down at the feet of our glorious triune God in repentance and faith!

A City Which Hath Foundations

“From Egypt lately come,
Where death and darkness reign,
We seek our new, our better home,
Where we our rest shall gain.

To Canaan’s sacred bound,
We haste with songs of joy;
Where peace and liberty are found,
And sweets that never cloy.

There sin and sorrow cease,
And every conflict’s o’er;
There shall we dwell in endless peace,
And never hunger more.

There in celestial strains,
Enraptured myriads sing!
There love in every bosom reigns,
For Christ himself is King.

We soon shall join the throng
And all their pleasures share;
And sing the everlasting song
With all the ransomed there.”