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"The Book of Revelation"

by

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About the Author

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Born on 19 April 1938 and born-again in October 1954, Rev Khoo was called to full-time service in the Lord's vineyard on 30 October 1980. His past pastoral ministries in Singapore were with Calvary Pandan Bible-Presbyterian Church (Associate Pastor, 1987-1992) and Life Bible-Presbyterian Church (Assistant Pastor, 1994-1997).

GOD'S REVELATION TO JESUS CHRIST

The Book of Revelation was penned by the Apostle John. It was a revelation of things which must shortly come to pass. These things were revealed by God the Father to Jesus Christ, who then committed them to John by His angel. So John was given the task of writing down all the things which had been told to him so that you and I and many others can read and be spiritually blessed (Rev 1:1). Some people may say that we do not have the actual original manuscripts which were written in Greek. Nevertheless, we thank our Almighty God who was not careless but had providentially preserved copies of the original, so that we can have in our hands today the very Word of God. And because of this truth, we are very much encouraged to know about the future, so that we can plan accordingly with regard to our life here on earth and beyond the grave.

Although Revelation is a book of prophecies, the central personality is the Lord Jesus Christ. All things are created by Him and for Him, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible. He is before all things when there was nothing. By Him all things consist. He takes centre-stage in everything that we do. No man can escape from Him here on earth or beyond the grave in the spiritual realm. Only the atheist who does not believe in God and Jesus Christ, His Son, is a fool (Ps 14:1).

The life of Jesus Christ (from the day He was miraculously conceived in the womb of virgin Mary, born of virgin Mary, lived a holy life, crucified by evil men but resurrected on the third day and ascended to heaven promising to return to earth again) is not a fairy tale of an imaginative story teller. His life from manger to the empty tomb and resurrection, locked in space and time, is a historical fact. So we cannot escape from Him. You must either be for Him or against Him. There is no neutral ground.

THOUGHT: What do I think of the Lord Jesus Christ?
PRAYER: O Lord, let me be always available for Thy use.

THE RECORD OF THE WORD OF GOD

One of the most valuable and precious things that the LORD God has given to Man is His infallible and inerrant Word! We call it the Bible. It contains only sixty-six books, from Genesis, the first book, to Revelation, the last book. Although the ancient original manuscripts are no more in existence because of extensive usage and age, nevertheless God has providentially preserved His Word through the copying of them by godly and able scribes (Ps 12:6-7; Matt 5:17-18). And we believe that the copies of the original language manuscripts (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek) on which the English King James Bible is based, are true copies. Therefore, we can say that we have the Word of God in our hand, *"... a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts"* (2 Pet 1:19).

John testified here that he was imprisoned in the Isle of Patmos *"for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ"* (Rev 1:9, cf. Rev 6:9). Why are people against those who preach and teach the Word of God? The real reason is that the Word of God reveals the true nature of men, their rejection of God, the personality and redemptive work of Jesus Christ, men's desperate wickedness and their ultimate and inescapable damnation in the Lake of Fire forever. They rejected Jesus Christ and crucified Him. If we are faithful and loyal to our Lord Jesus Christ, preaching and teaching the truths of the Gospel of salvation, we will face the same rejection as the Lord Jesus Christ. The servant is not greater than his master.

This is another sure evidence that the Holy Bible we have in our hands is truly the Word of the one living and true God. The Lord Jesus Christ came to reveal Him. Let us therefore study the Word so that we can be rightly instructed as to our nature, character and conduct, and what the way of deliverance and salvation is.

THOUGHT: What do I think of the Holy Bible?
PRAYER: O Lord, create in me a passionate desire for Thy Word that I may live my life to honour and glorify Thee.

THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS CHRIST

John bore record of the *written* Word of God. He also testified of the *living* Word, who is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, whom he wrote of in the fourth gospel which bears his name. Here, John testified that he and many faithful Christians had been persecuted, imprisoned and killed. Many more will receive the same treatment in the future nearing the glorious return of the Lord Jesus because of their faithful testimony for Him and the Word of God. From this, we will learn as he has prophesied in this last book of the Bible that many faithful Christians will face trials and tribulations. Already we are seeing that the world has become a more troubled place than in the past in terms of natural calamities, political, cultural and social instability, moral degradation and spiritual bankruptcy. You can experience these things in your country and read about them through the mass media.

We are reminded of the prophecies of our Lord Jesus Christ that at the nearing of His glorious return, the world will experience a time of great tribulation, sorrow and deception. And those who endure till the end shall be saved (Matt 24:2-41). This is a very sobering warning to all Christians. Will we remain faithful to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in accordance with His Word? The Lord Himself calls us to be watchful and ready so that we will not be caught unawares. The wise servant will steadfastly remain faithful and occupy himself in the Lord till He comes.

The Christian faith is unlike other human religions. The striking feature that makes the Christian faith unique and incomparable is that it is not just a religion but a relationship with the Almighty God and Jesus Christ, His Son, the Creator of this whole Universe and Man. Christianity is a daily walk with God!

THOUGHT: How is my relationship and daily walk with God?
PRAYER: O Lord, let me walk in all Thy ways to love and serve Thee with all my heart and soul.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF KNOWING GOD'S WILL

"Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand." This blessedness is the first and most appropriate declaration at the beginning of the Book of Revelation. Six other beatitudes follow. The word *"blessed"* means happy, but it encompasses a deep sense of pure delight, joy and gratification.

The Word declares *"for the time is at hand,"* yet that time has stretched for more than two thousand years. It seems like a long time. But God is not bound by time. One day when we are with Him in eternity, we too will also think, speak and do things in a continuing present time – NOW. That time will happen when our Lord Jesus comes to take all His born-again disciples and change their bodies like unto His, and they will be with Him forever and ever in the New Heaven and New Earth. What a wonderful and blessed hope!

The second blessedness is: *"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth"* (Rev 14:13a). All those who have confessed, repented of their sins and accepted the redemptive work of Christ and received Him into their hearts will die with this eternal blessing. The third blessedness is: *"Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments"* (Rev 16:15). Christians are called to long for the return of Christ and be holy as God is holy. The next blessedness is: *"Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb"* (Rev 19:9), during which Christ will be present bodily. The fifth blessedness is: *"Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection"* (Rev 20:6a). This first resurrection is only for believers. The sixth blessedness is: *"Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book"* (Rev 22:7b). This echoes the first beatitude. Finally, the seventh: *"Blessed are they that do his commandments ..."* (Rev 22:14). All those who say and do the will of God shall enter into the gates of heaven.

THOUGHT: Should I not be watchful till Christ comes?
PRAYER: O Lord, may I be more like Christ with each passing day.

JESUS CHRIST WASHES US FROM OUR SINS

Jesus Christ is introduced to the seven churches in Asia as *"the faithful witness, and the first of begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth"* (Rev 1:5). These titles are very significant. Our Lord Jesus Christ is a faithful witness for He does not lie. In His earthly ministry as He went about preaching and teaching, and healing the sick and those who were possessed with evil spirits, He did not lie. He was true to His word and works. In spite of His goodness towards men, they crucified Him because He claimed to be the Son of God, and indeed He is. But God raised Him from the dead the third day, and Jesus was the first God-man to be clothed with the glorious body. Finally when He returns, He will be exalted and crowned as the Prince of the kings of the earth. Every one shall kneel and confess that He is Lord and King!

Three more significant things about Him are mentioned to us. First, He loved us. This love is not a sentimental or emotional love which we are so familiar with. The Greek word is *agape,* which is in John 3:16a – *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son."* It is the kind of love that makes sacrifices to help another. This godly *agape*-love is the same love that Christ showed to His disciples and He explained: *"he washed us from our sins in His own blood."* He gave His life to die on the cross, shedding His precious blood to atone for the sins of the world, and on the third day God raised Him from the dead. He made that ultimate sacrifice for the world and whosoever confesses and repents of his sins, and accepts His death on the cross and receives Him into his heart, shall not perish but have everlasting life and be with God in heaven. Our sins have been washed by His blood and we are His disciples and our home in heaven is assured. Indeed we are kings because Jesus Christ is the King of kings and we, as priests, have the word of reconciliation between God and men with the gospel of Jesus Christ (2 Cor 5:18-20).

THOUGHT*:* Have I become a disciple of Jesus who loves me?
PRAYER: O Lord, be merciful to the many who are still unsaved.

JESUS CHRIST IS FROM ETERNITY TO ETERNITY

The word *"begotten"* which is used of the Lord Jesus Christ is a profound declaration. John used the word five other times, four times in the fourth Gospel (John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18) and once in his first Epistle (1 John 4:9). In these five verses he refers to Jesus Christ as *"the only begotten"* of the Father. He means that from time past in eternity even before the heaven and the earth were created, Jesus Christ was there with God and was God (the Second Person of the Triune God). Jesus Christ was God even before the Virgin Mary gave birth to Him. God does not have a wife or a mother, like as we do, to give birth to a son. To think He does is a theological error of astronomical proportion and dimension. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the *"I AM THAT I AM"* (Exo 3:14), was with God the Father from the beginning that has no beginning! Now when John uses the phrase *"the first begotten of the dead"* here, he means that Jesus Christ was the first to be resurrected with a glorified body, a body which all believers of Christ Jesus will have at Christ's second coming for all eternity! Are you one of them who will have the glorified body?

Another thing to note is the description that the Lord Jesus Christ is *"the faithful witness"* and *"the prince of the kings."* Our Lord Jesus lived a sinless life and all His preaching, teaching, prophecies and promises are all true and will happen. We can trust Him absolutely with all our heart, mind, spirit and soul. He is faithful and we ought to have faith in Him. Faith = **F**ully **A**lways **I** **T**rust **H**im. When He returns, He will be the Prince of all the kings on earth, unlike when He first came, born in a manger, wrapped in swaddling clothes, was crucified, and died a shameful death for the sins of the world.

THOUGHT: Have I made peace with God through Jesus Christ?
PRAYER: O Lord, help my unbelief that I might trust in Thee fully.

BEHOLD, CHRIST WILL COME AS PROMISED!

Another comforting truth about our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is His sure return to planet Earth to take all His disciples to be with Him forever and ever! When He comes *"every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him."* Our Lord has promised during His earthly ministry: *"I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also"* (John 14:3). When He declares that He is *"Alpha and Omega"* (the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet), *"the beginning and the ending,"* He reveals that the history of mankind is an open book to Him. Nothing is hidden or unknown to Him. He knows the end from the beginning! This is our Lord and Saviour and we should praise and glorify Him and testify of Him to others. And here again His Almightiness is attributed to Him, an attribute that is given only to God (Hebrew *El Shaddai*, Gen 17:1).

Every eye shall see Him when He comes, even those who pierced Him. But the latter ones have died long ago. This means that they will be resurrected like all believers, who had died long before the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. The believers will be resurrected to glory whereas the unbelievers and the rebellious will be resurrected to be judged and cast into the Lake of Fire. It is also revealed to us here that all the people of the earth will *"wail"* (cry aloud and beat their breasts) because of Him. Why? They realize that they have rejected and rebelled against Him during the time they were living on earth. They worshipped mammon instead of God through Jesus Christ. The unbelief of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ's redemptive work is a great and terrible sin against God. How many times have the Lord Jesus Christ sent His messengers to urge them to confess and repent of their sins and to accept the Gospel of salvation in Christ Jesus, and each time they brush the warnings aside and do not care. They now suffer the consequences of their actions.

THOUGHT: I must confess my sin and repent, and accept Christ as my Saviour.
PRAYER: Have mercy, O God, for I will repent of my sin against Thee.

BEING PATIENT IN TRIBULATION

The phrase *"I John"* is the third time the elder Apostle identified himself in this first chapter (vv 1, 4, 9). It emphasizes the fact that the record of the book is not a product of man's imagination but a divine revelation given to him by God, and the record is true. John next called himself *"your brother."* This is interesting and it confirms the biblical truth that all born-again and blood-bought believers in Christ are members of the family of God. Our Lord Jesus taught us to call God, *"Our Father which art in heaven"* (Matt 6:9). Christians everywhere should learn to live together in love, harmony and peace in the truth according to the Word of God because we serve a common Father in Heaven and one day we will all be together with Him forever.

John also mentioned that he was a *"companion in tribulation."* At that time which was about A.D. 100, he was in prison in the island of Patmos east of Greece in the Aegean Sea (find the place in a map). He suffered persecution because of his uncompromising stand and faithfulness to the Word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ, his Master and Saviour. Many other fellow Christians also suffered persecutions for the same convictions. In fact, throughout the history of the Church, Christians have been persecuted and some faced martyrdom for the same reasons. And it is uncommon even today for Christians who stand squarely on the Word of God and the testimony of Christ to be free from ridicule and persecution politically, religiously, socially and economically.

John also mentioned that we are all in the kingdom of Christ because Christ presently rules in our heart – Christ is our king and we His subjects. And in the midst of tribulations, he called on his readers to endure them with *"patience."* The word *"patience"* means "remaining under," having the sense of persevering. So Christians, when faced with persecutions from the enemies of God, are to patiently persevere and remain unwavering, faithful and loyal to Christ.

THOUGHT: Resist the enemy and be steadfast in the faith.
PRAYER: O Lord, may I be strong and faithful to Thee till the end.

CHRIST EXALTED AND GLORIFIED

In yesterday's reading, John testified that he suffered persecution and imprisonment because of his faithfulness to the preaching and teaching of the Word of God and the testimony of Christ. But what gave him the strength and stamina to remain faithful and courageous? In this section, John straightaway wrote about the exalted and ascended Jesus Christ. Indeed his Lord and Saviour was crucified and died a shameful death but He was resurrected the third day and, having ascended to Heaven, He now sits at the right hand of God awaiting the signal of God the Father to declare the time of His glorious and triumphant return.

John beautifully described our exalted Jesus Christ as being *"in the midst of the seven candlesticks"* (1:13), which symbolize all the churches, and Christ being in the centre of them. Christ is girded *"with a golden girdle"* and He is the *"Alpha and Omega, the first and the last,"* indicating Christ's sovereign royalty. That His *"head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow"* should command our respect and honour, for it displays His splendor and righteous wisdom (Prov 16:31). His *"eyes were as a flame of fire"* would suggest His penetrating all-seeing sight that knows everything. His *"voice as the sound of many waters and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged-sword"* speak of His authority and power. He *"had in right hand seven stars and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength."* These images show that Christ has authority and control of the churches. At the same time, the right hand suggests power, protection and comfort towards His Church.

John was so overwhelmed with this exalted and glorious image of Christ that he fell at the feet of Christ *"as dead"*! Christ comforted him saying: *"Fear not; I am the first and the last."* He is in control.

THOUGHT: O Lord, may I never lose sight of Thy glory and honour.
PRAYER: Lord, let me always look to Thee for help and strength.

CHRIST IS THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

The Lord Jesus Christ is alive! He died *"for our sins and not ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."* We serve a living Saviour and Lord who will one day return to take all His disciples to be with Him and God the Father forever and ever. Furthermore, our Lord Jesus declares that He has *"the keys of hell and of death."* It simply means that He has the power to judge and cast every unrepentant sinner to hell-fire forever. He told His apostle, John, to write the things which he had seen, and the things which were, and the things which should be hereafter.

What John had seen or witnessed concerning the life, death, resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ are true. The facts that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that He came and died for the remission of your sins and mine, and rose again from the dead are undeniably true. And what John saw then were the characteristics of the seven churches; namely, Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea. The Lord will shortly evaluate these churches; then *"the things which shall be hereafter."* This is a reference to future events. These future events will happen prior to the glorious return of the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, our Lord revealed to His people what will happen to people and places at the end of the world. And if we are His people, having been cleansed of our sins by His death and resurrection, we shall have nothing to fear, for our salvation is forever and firmly secured by Him. What a great comfort and encouragement to us to serve Him!

We are a blessed people for we have been *"chosen"* by God and we are His *"peculiar treasure"* (Ps 135:4). Here, we are warned so that we will not fail Him and fall away but be faithful and strong. We are given the knowledge and understanding of the future till our Lord Jesus comes. Shall we not live for Him? Let us live by faith in Him and do the things that glorify and honour Him.

THOUGHT: Do I know who I am and where I am heading?
PRAYER: O Lord**,** help my unbelief and keep me faithful and true.

THY FIRST LOVE

The first letter which Jesus wrote was to the Church of Ephesus. The city was located in the western part of Asia Minor. It boasted of a harbour which attracted trading ships from other places in the region. Ephesus became one of the most thriving and prosperous cities in the Roman Empire. Religiously, it was well known for its temple to the multiple-breasted fertility goddess Artemis, also known as Diana.

"These things saith he" introduces the Lord Jesus Christ who wrote to the Christians there. *"He that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks"* highlights the Lord's authority and centrality in the church. The Lord Jesus commended them for the zeal of their labour and patience, their distaste of evil, their persevering and untiring labour of faith, their examination and exposure of false preachers and teachers in the church, even for their hatred for *"the deeds of the Nicolaitans"* who were guilty of works of lawlessness and impurity. These Nicolaitans were a small but influential group in the church.

But the Lord Jesus condemned the church for having left *"thy first love."* There was a serious absence or lack of their initial fervour for the Lord when they first encountered and accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour. That first love with enthusiasm and joy was missing. They had doctrine but there was a serious lack of life that was God honouring.

The Lord Jesus called them to remember their first love and repent of their present sin which He charged them with. And if they would not repent, the Lord Jesus warned them that He would *"remove thy candlestick out of his place,"* i.e. their witnessing status as a church of Christ would be removed. The salt has lost its savour and is now useless, fit only to be cast away. The light has been covered by a canopy of unrighteousness.

THOUGHT: Always abounding in the work and love of the Lord**.**
PRAYER*:* O Lord, let my love for Thee ever grow and glow for Thee.

BE THOU FAITHFUL UNTO THE END

Smyrna was another great commercial city situated on the western coast of Asia Minor (modern Turkey). Today, it is called Izmir. It boasted of a good natural harbour about 65 km north of Ephesus. Jesus introduced Himself as *"the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive."* This is significant because Smyrna was once destroyed by the Lydians in 627 B.C., but the city was rebuilt and, when it was under Roman rule, it flourished and became a great port. So, the city was once dead but rose up again and prospered.

Jesus expressed that He knew *"thy works, and tribulation, and poverty."* Jesus knows all about our service in His name and the sufferings and difficulties we go through for His sake. And straightaway, He comforted and encouraged the inhabitants that they were in fact not poor but rich. They might be poor materially, but as far as Jesus was concerned, they were rich spiritually. He predicted that they would face persecutions in the future for *"ten days."* The early church suffered under ten Roman emperors, who persecuted the Christians by burning them at the stakes and making sport of them by casting them to the lions in the sporting arena. If they remained *"faithful until death"* or faithful unto the end, the Lord Jesus will reward them with *"a crown of life."* They were faithful and true believers. We can say that they are in heaven now with the Lord.

Their persecutions came from within the church where a group of so-called professing Jewish believers were actually the enemies of Christ. These Jews had rejected Jesus as the Messiah, and thus persecuted all who believed in Him. Jesus called on His faithful believers not to fear them for it was inevitable that they suffer for His sake. The servant is never greater than his master. Even if they were killed, they would live as Jesus is the resurrection and the life. Just as He was resurrected and now has the glorified body, they too would have the same experience when He returns. This truth is also applicable to us.

THOUGHT: Be faithful and do the will of God the Father.
PRAYER*:* O Lord, may I never doubt Thee**.**

THE SIN OF COMPROMISE

Pergamos was about 80 km north of Smyrna. It was a strong and well-known Roman city. Jesus mentioned that the Christians were *"where Satan's seat is"* meaning that they were living in the midst of pagan worship. Jesus was introduced as He who has *"the sharp sword with two edges."* This *"sword"* is undoubtedly a reference to the Word of God, which *"is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit ... a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart"* (Heb 4:12).

Jesus commended the Christians in Pergamos for their faithfulness to the extent that one of them, Antipas, was martyred. In contrast, Jesus condemned the Christians (probably a majority of them) for being compromising. They embraced *"the doctrine of Balaam"* where for the sake of wealth and riches they ate food sacrificed unto idols and committed sexual immorality. Moreover, there were some among the Christians who held to the antinomian doctrines of the Nicolaitans.

Jesus called them to repent, if not, He would judge them with the Word of God. The faithful ones would be given *"the hidden manna"* and their name engraved on *"a white stone."* The faithful ones were the born-again who desired the sincere milk of the Word to grow spiritually. To have one's name engraved on a white stone is to have the assurance of being admitted into the kingdom of God. We see the devastating effect of compromising our faith in God with the teachings of false prophets who follow the doctrine of Balaam, craving for wealth, riches and fame. Jesus has already warned that we cannot serve God and mammon and live. In His letter to the Christians in Pergamos, Jesus plainly indicates that those who compromise with the world will be rejected. We cannot call our Lord by mouth only without doing His will (Matt 7:21).

THOUGHT: (Read 2 Corinthians 6:14.)
PRAYER: O Lord, deliver me from temptation; keep me faithful.

REAPING WHAT YOU HAVE SOWED

Thyatira, located between Pergamos and Sardis, was well-known for its purple cloth industry. Lydia was probably the first convert and the leader of the church (Acts 16:14-15). Today the city is known as Ak-Hissar. Jesus identified Himself as *"the Son of God,"* invoking His eternal deity which controls the human race, the destiny of the world and its history. Described as having *"eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass,"* it speaks of His anger with their worship of other gods and His firm judgment on them.

Jesus commended the work of the church: their acts of charity, service, faith and patience. Their later works were more and/or better than the earlier ones. However, Jesus had also words of condemnation. The first one pin-pointed their tolerance of Jezebel's sinful acts (a reference to 1 Kings 16:31; 21:25). She had led the Christians in the city *"to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols."* Fornication here does not necessarily mean sexual immorality although it could be so, but more likely it means spiritual adultery because they worshipped other gods as encouraged by Jezebel. In addition, they threw away their stand of not defiling themselves and separating from all things that would displease God, for example, the eating of things sacrificed to idols. Jesus gave them a chance to repent and have their fellowship with Him restored. But they would not. Judgment would be meted out against them; *"I will cast* (them) *into a bed"* is an expression for giving them over to their sins. They became reprobates. The Lord would destroy them.

Jesus encouraged those who were faithful to Him *"to hold fast"* the things that they had been taught. He promised them *"power over the nations"* and they would be given the *"morning star."* Our Lord is called the morning star (Rev 22:16) and this promise could mean that these faithful ones would be with Him and reign over the nations with Him in the Millennium. How good and wonderful is our Lord!

THOUGHT: Beware whom we fellowship with and the work we do**.**
PRAYER: O Lord, may I always worship Thee and not riches.

YOU LIVE BUT YOU ARE DEAD

Sardis was located 80 km east of Smyrna. In A.D. 17 it was destroyed by an earthquake, but Tiberius rebuilt it. It was a large and prosperous city when John wrote this letter to the Christians there. It also had a large and prosperous Jewish community.

Jesus identified Himself as *"he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars."* The title indicates that our Lord had complete wisdom and control of the church. Christ mentioned that He knew their works, that they were reputable as having a name, but were actually dead. In other words, they had doctrines but no life. They had learned the Word but they were not doers of the Word. Christ called them to remember and remain faithful to what they had been taught and received and to repent and do the will of God. An encouraging note is that there were *"a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments."* These faithful Christians kept themselves stainless and free from contamination with the worldly practices and philosophy of the world. Our Lord declared that they *"shall walk with* (Him) *in white: for they are worthy."*

The Lord also said that *"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."* This is a great assurance to all those who are true disciples of Christ – not hearers only but also doers of the Word. They called Christ Lord and they also practised His Lordship in their life.

Let us check ourselves whether we are truly born-again children of God. Do we practise what we believe? If not, our profession of faith in Christ is merely conditional, superficial and hypocritical. If we are truly born-again, our names will always be in the Book of life.

THOUGHT: Let God be true and every man a liar.
PRAYER: O Lord, help me to honestly judge my profession of faith.

THE CHURCH OF THE OPEN DOOR

Philadelphia was a city in Asia Minor (modern Turkey) located 45 km southeast of Sardis. An earthquake in A.D. 17 heavily damaged the city and the Roman emperor Tiberius granted funds for its rebuilding. The city, founded in 140 B.C. by Attalus II (a Greek), became a centre for spreading Greek culture throughout the region.

Jesus identified Himself as *"he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth."* He had the power to admit any person into the Messianic kingdom as promised to King David (2 Sam 7:12). He also opened doors of opportunity to believers to serve Him. The Lord commended them for their works. Even when they had *"little strength,"* they had been obedient to the Lord and had not denied His name. The Lord had no word of condemnation for them.

To encourage them, the Lord revealed that He would subdue a small number of Jews who were not true Jews, having rejected Him as the Christ (Messiah) before them. They should not fear these Jews. The Lord would show His endearing love for them. Furthermore, because of their faithfulness in keeping *"the word of my patience"* (ie they exercised patience in waiting for Christ to fulfil His promises), the Lord promised them that they would be *"kept from the hour of temptation* (ie trial)*, which shall come upon all the world."* Many understand this hour of temptation as the period of Tribulation (re: Rev 6-19). Christ promised that He will come quickly because the trial and tribulation in those days will be very great and for the saints' sake it will be shortened. Christ exhorted the Christians to remain firmly faithful.

This message is also for us today. With the church falling away and the many temptations, let us be faithful and true to our profession of faith in Christ.

THOUGHT: What doors have my Lord Jesus opened for me?
PRAYER: Lord, be gracious and merciful to me in keeping Thy truth.

LUKEWARM, NEITHER COLD NOR HOT

Laodicea was situated between Ephesus and Colossae. Due to its strategic position, it became a major centre for merchants. Although the city was small, it grew rapidly under the Romans and became very wealthy. In A.D. 60, it was destroyed by an earthquake and it proudly refused Roman financial help in its rebuilding.

The Lord Jesus introduced Himself as *"the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God."* He showed that He was the finality of all things physical and spiritual; His claims, promises and testimonies were true; and that He was everlasting and almighty. These four characteristics of Him are most appropriate to His evaluation of the spiritual state of the Christians in Laodicea.

Our Lord's evaluation of this church puts it as the worst of the seven churches. The church was *"neither cold nor hot."* It was *"lukewarm"* and so revolting that Christ said He will *"spue thee out of my mouth."* Our Lord gave the reasons too. The church was proud of its riches and material possessions. They were *"wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind and naked."* These descriptive words are self-explanatory. Can one slide farther down? Yes! The Lord counselled them to acquire from Him pure gold, white garments and apply cosmetic make-up to their eyes. Of course, our Lord was using things we know to teach spiritual lessons which are precious—truth, holiness and character, spiritual eyes anointed by the Holy Spirit that one might see wonderful truths.

Then Christ revealed that *"as many as I love, I rebuke and chasten."* God loves His people and it is His will that they repent and return to Him. How many times have we read the Word calling us to repent or have been counselled by His servants to repent, but we fail to respond zealously or appropriately?

THOUGHT: Christians are the salt and light of the world.
PRAYER: O Lord, set my heart on fire that I may keep burning for Thee.

CHRIST ASKING TO BE INVITED

The Holy Spirit speaks not only to the believers of the seven churches, but also to every reader who listens to His prompting in his heart. The Lord Jesus stands knocking at the door of everyone's heart. So if anyone hears His voice, he should open the door for He desires to come in to establish a bonding relationship and fellowship with him (v 20). It is an invitation, which no one in his right mind should ignore or refuse.

Jesus, the only begotten Son of God, came into this world about two thousand years ago to bear the sins of the world and died by shedding His blood for the cleansing of the sins of the world. He suffered and endured to the very end so as to reconcile all people to the one living and true God, who is holy and righteous. And God who loves the world, spared not His only begotten Son and whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but is delivered from the condemnation of being cast into the Lake of Fire (Rev 20:14). On the third day after His crucifixion, God raised Him from the dead. Those who believe in Him will also be resurrected like Jesus!

"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne" (v 21). All have sinned and there is none righteous. A person must repent of his sins before God, and open his heart's door to receive Jesus as his Saviour and Lord. If he sincerely does that, he instantly becomes a child of God for God gives him the *"power to become the sons of God"* (John 1:12).

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" and to him personally. Overcome any hindrance that is preventing your hand of faith from opening the door of your heart to welcome Christ into your life, and be immeasurably blessed by God your Creator.

THOUGHT: Now is the accepted time, behold the day of salvation.
PRAYER: O Lord, give me courage to overcome every obstacle.

COME UP HITHER

The phrase *"After this I looked, and, behold ..."* plainly suggests that John's vision of events follows sequentially after the seven messages to the churches. In other words, the vision of events which John would receive was prophetic, indicating the beginning of the prophetic part of the book (Rev 1:19).

This *"first voice"* which John heard asking him to *"come up hither"* leads us to connect it with the identity of *"a great voice"* in Revelation 1:10. The speaker was none other than Jesus. He spoke with authority as the voice was spoken *"as it were of a trumpet,"* loud and authoritative. Some equate this calling up of John to heaven with the passage in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 where it is revealed that the church will be *"caught up"* to meet the Lord in the clouds. Another observation they made was that there was no reference to the church between Revelation 4:1 and 22:16. Others view this call to John to come up simply to mean that John might have a better vantage view of the future events which were about to be revealed.

If the first view is taken, then it means that the church, which will be caught up or "raptured," will be saved from the great tribulation that will befall planet earth until the visible and bodily return of the Lord Jesus! The time of the great tribulation is a time when God will pour His wrath or anger upon the people of the world who have rejected Him and persecuted His saints, and who repent not of their sin as if there is no God. The fear of God is not in them. This period of time will be seven years. Those who do not believe in God must repent of their sins and accept Christ now. Otherwise, once they are in the tribulation period, they must believe unto death, as the Antichrist and all his cohorts will persecute and kill Christians. The church is saved from this period of tribulation because she has believed although she has not seen Christ. It is by faith.

THOUGHT: Share this truth with unbelievers to warn and to save.
PRAYER: O LORD, be with me that I might be Thy faithful witness.

THE THRONE OF THE LORD GOD

John was *"immediately"* translated from Patmos into heaven *"in the spirit,"* in a "prophetic trance," but all his faculties of sight and hearing, understanding and feelings, were functionally intact. In heaven he saw *"a throne ... and one sat on the throne."* A throne is not like our chair, even if it is big. A throne is for a king. The one who sat on it as John saw is none other than God the Father. Although he does not identify Him, we know that He is God the Father, who is a spirit, and therefore it is not possible to describe His visible appearance. But John described Him as he saw Him in terms of precious stones. The *"jasper"* that shines as crystal is perhaps like a diamond; and a *"sardine"* (sardius, possibly a carnelian), a fiery-red stone; and *"a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald,"* which is green. And *"out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices"* (the sound of thunders); and *"seven lamps of fire burnings before the throne"* (not the lampstand but torches of fire). This sight, depicting the glory of God seated on the throne, is awesome and gloriously majestic.

John further wrote, *"I saw four and twenty elders sitting"* on the twenty-four seats *"clothed in white raiment."* There are some disagreements as to who these twenty-four elders are. One group says that they are elders representing all the Old Testament and New Testament saints. The other group says they are special angels. Since John used the word *"elders"* (Greek *presbuteros*), we can safely understand them as elders of the people of God, representing all the chosen people of God. All of God's people will gather round God's throne to worship Him, giving Him all the praise and glory.

This is the only place in the New Testament where God's throne is described in such detail. We see God sitting in sovereign majesty to judge the world at the end of time. As Christians, we are comforted and confident that God will carry out what He has promised. In the meantime, we must continue to serve Him.

THOUGHT: Every tongue shall confess that Jesus is Lord!
PRAYER: O LORD my God, hear my cry and help me to walk aright.

WORSHIP THE LORD IN THE BEAUTY OF HIS HOLINESS

"Round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind" (v 6b). Each of the four beasts has six wings. The beasts are covered with eyes. One beast looks like a lion, another like a calf, the third as the face of man, and the fourth like an eagle flying. These beasts can be safely interpreted as special angels who surround the Throne of God. They speak to us of nobility, strength, wisdom and majesty. They give glory, honour and thanks to God continually by saying, *"Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come"* (vv 8- 9). Joining these four special angels are the twenty-four elders prostrating and worshipping God, saying, *"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created"* (v 11).

The Lord our God is indeed worthy of our praise. The most important assurance in our short life in this world is to be at peace with God or to be reconciled with Him. All have sinned against our Creator God who is holy. God must punish every sinner. No one can say that he has no sin or has not sinned, for we are judged by the moral standard of God, of whom Christ is the perfect example. And because God so loved us, He provided the way to be at peace with Him and be reconciled with Him. He paid the penalty of sin for us through the Lord Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, who died on the cross and resurrected on the third day and is now in heaven, soon to return to take all of us who belong to Him to be with Him forever in heaven.

Heaven is an actual place where God is. It is spiritually beneficial and healthy for us to bear this truth in our thoughts and hearts, to comfort and strengthen us in times of tribulations and troubles. We also experience peace of mind when we think of our Lord God and His presence in heaven. How wonderful it is to be born-again, a child of God!

THOUGHT: Heaven is a wonderful place. Will I be there?
PRAYER: O Lord, help me to trust and believe in Christ.

CHRIST WORTHY TO OPEN THE SEVEN-SEALED BOOK

The scene was still in heaven. John, standing there, saw a book which had seven seals and had writings in it. Being sealed indicates that the contents were very important. Its importance is again emphasized when no one in heaven was worthy to open it. This would mean that the seals could not be broken and its contents could not be released. Interestingly, because of this, John wept. He must have sensed the ominous nature of the contents of the book.

One of the twenty-four elders told him not to weep and declared, *"behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof."* The *"Lion"* is a symbol of royalty, power and strength. He is from the tribe of Judah, one of the twelve tribes of Israel. He is *"the Root of David,"* meaning He is a descendant of king David. He is *"a Lamb as it had been slain."* This symbol of the Lamb reminds us of "*the Lamb of God which taketh the sin of the world"* (John 1:29). This Person is none other than our Lord Jesus, who died not only for our sins but for the sins of the world, and who rose from the dead so that our faith in Him for salvation is not in vain (1 Cor 15:20-23). The Lamb that had *"seven horns* and *seven eyes"* revealed His complete and perfect omnipotence and omniscience. The seven-fold Spirit of God that was upon Him revealed the fullness of the Spirit of God which was characterized by wisdom, life-giving power, counsel, might, knowledge, reverence and understanding (Isa 11:2-3).

What a glorious time it will be! But the Tribulation will come upon the world prior to Christ's return. Are you ready to face Him?

THOUGHT: It is most blessed to know that I am truly saved.
PRAYER: O Lord**,** I praise Thee for Thy power and perfection!

WORTHY IS THE LAMB

When Jesus took the book from God the Father, it was a sign that God gave Christ the authority to open and release its contents which would affect the world. The four special angels and the twenty-four elders prostrated and worshipped Him with the sound of harps and with golden bowls (*"vials"*) filled with incense, which were the prayers of the saints rising as a sweet-smelling fragrance to God.

They all sang a new song, expressing the worthiness of Christ to take and open the seals of the book. They also acknowledged Christ's redemptive work reconciling them to God by His blood, making them kings and priests unto God; and they would reign on earth. These saints would come from every kindred, and tongue, and people and nation (vv 10-11).

And John heard the voice of a multitude of angels, numbering *"ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands and thousands"* saying with a loud voice: *"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing"* (v 12). This will be a stupendous and breath-taking sight!

The immediate response after hearing this praise of Christ was even more awe-inspiring. Every living being in heaven and on the earth, and under the earth praised God and Christ, saying, *"Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever!"* (v 13b). And the four special angels proclaimed *"Amen!"* (v 14). And the twenty-four elders prostrated and worshipped Christ who lived forever and ever.

Surely we earnestly long to be in heaven when all these happen. Indeed, we shall be there if we are His blood-bought, born-again children. What a glorious gathering it will be!

THOUGHT: Lord, remember me when Thou comest.
PRAYER: O Lord, I want to have the assurance of being with Thee.

BEHOLD A WHITE HORSE

The Lamb whose identity we have found to be none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, who had taken the book from the hand of God who sat on the throne, now opened the first seal. One of the four special angels invited John to witness what was about to be revealed.

We see clearly that John used symbols to describe what he saw. He saw a person riding on a white horse. He had a bow but no mention of arrows. A crown was given to him: *"and he went forth conquering, and to conquer"* (v 2). The rider on this white horse must not be confused with another rider also riding on a white horse, whom we will read later in Revelation 19:11-13, 19. This latter rider would be the Lord Jesus Christ, who was the *"KING OF KINGS AND THE LORD OF LORDS."*

The horse, unlike the donkey and camel which are beasts of burden, symbolizes military power. The rider in this chapter was a counterfeit of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was the Antichrist, who wanted to rule the inhabited world. This crowning of him as a ruler of the world was, in reality, given to him by God's permissive will. Hence, he went about winning one nation after another to his side. It was all done without terrible wars and bloodshed. In other words, he conquered the inhabited world by peaceful means.

Today, the nations of the world are looking for a super-intelligent-charismatic leader who can help to solve the political, economic, financial and cultural problems of the world. When the time is ripe in God's permissive will, Satan will present this man to the world. The people of the world will accept, approve and applaud him. Looking at events happening now in the world, such a time is not too far away. As Christians, we must beware of this strong delusion that can draw us away from our faith and loyalty to Christ.

THOUGHT: A strong delusion will mislead many.
PRAYER: O Lord, let me not be deceived but be ever faithful to Thee.

THE SECOND IS A RED HORSE

Another one of the four special angels invited John to come and see the revelation of the second seal. The scene was about *"another horse that was red."* The colour red often depicts negative things. It is the colour of blood and since the horse symbolizes military might, it speaks of war, bloodshed, violence, killings and unrest in the world. It is a grim picture. Next, it is revealed that *"power was given to him* (the rider, the Antichrist) ... *to take peace from the earth."* Paul prophesied in 1 Thessalonians 5:3, *"For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them ..."* The first promise of peace by the rider on the white horse was a false peace. But we can be comforted that God is in control of the wars and rumours of war and violence that these will happen in accordance with His plan. Then it is revealed that *"there was given unto him a great* (huge) *sword."* This could symbolize the use of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), which are not unfamiliar in modern day warfare.

The world is heading towards this scenario painted by the opening of the second seal. It shows us the conditions in which the world will be moving towards. These predictions correspond with what our Lord Jesus Christ had described in Matthew 24:6-8. At its highest intensity all these terrible troubles and tribulations will happen during the seven-year Tribulation. But the Church before her rapture will be able to see the trend of events leading to this climax.

THOUGHT: In view of all these things happening, how shall I live?
PRAYER: Lord, let me live for Thee while awaiting Thy soon return.

LO, A BLACK HORSE

When Christ opened the third seal, another one of the four special angels invited John to come and see. There appeared a third horseman riding on *"a black horse,"* with *"a pair of balances in his hand."* Then a voice declared that *"a measure of wheat"* or *"three measures of barley"* would cost each a penny (a denarius) and that *"the oil and the wine"* would not be hurt.

The colour black often symbolizes grief and mourning or some kind of experience which is depressing. The horseman had a scale of balances in his hand depicting that some kind of judgment, evaluation or assessment was made. The scale revealed that there was inflation in the world. Wheat and barley were the bare necessities of food for people. One had to pay one denarius (a day's wages at that time) for a measure of wheat or for three measures of barley in order to feed himself and his family. In contrast to wheat and barley (being the bare necessities), the oil and wine were food items which gave more comfort and luxury. The latter represents the rich and well-to-do and they would not be hurt in spite of inflation. These paint a picture of an imbalance in the distribution of wealth and produce of the world and injustice in the world at a time approaching the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Since the third horseman followed after the time of wars revealed by the second red horseman, it revealed a time of famine, a natural consequence of wars and conflicts among nations.

Today, we who are living on this side of history nearing to the second coming of Christ can see the trend of materialism, that is, making money and more money in every field of human activity—industry, commerce, finance, society and even government. This spiralling inflation and injustice will not go away because man will not look at the underlying cause of the moral issue by going to Jesus Christ. As Christians, we must be aware of this trend and not be caught in it.

THOUGHT: Give what I cannot keep, to gain what I cannot lose.
PRAYER: O Lord, grant me wisdom and discernment to do right.

BEHOLD A PALE HORSE

The fourth special angel announced the breaking of the fourth seal and invited John to come and see. It opened with a vision of a pale horse and the name of the rider was Death. By God's sovereign will, this rider was given power resulting in carnage. This was manifested in four ways, namely, *"to kill with the sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth"* over a quarter of the earth!

The *"sword"* symbolizes violence, wars and conflicts and many people would be killed. As a result of wars and conflicts there would be scarcity of food and many people would die of hunger. The phenomenon of death strongly suggests the outbreak of plagues on earth causing many people to die. And finally death caused by *"the beasts of the earth."* These beasts could be the animals of the earth which had turned ferocious because of displacement from their natural habitats; but more plausible would be the fact that rats, man's greatest enemy, would cause the outbreak of deadly plagues. A quarter of the world's population would be affected. It would be about 1.5 billion people (assuming the population of the world is about six billion). Hence, the name of this rider was Death.

Today, God is restraining man from doing his worst through His Church and through the Holy Spirit. The day is coming when He will remove these restraining influences, giving man the freedom he has always craved for. He whose *"heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it"* will destroy himself because of his greed, wickedness and pride. God unveils these things to man so that he will take heed and repent of his sins and receive Christ into his heart as his Lord and Saviour, so that he can be delivered from this judgment. Now is the day of salvation. Believe now and do not procrastinate. You may not have another chance.

THOUGHT: Only Christians have the good news of salvation. Use it.
PRAYER: O Lord, give me a burden for lost souls.

HOW LONG, O LORD

The Lord Jesus opened the fifth seal. Here, there is no invitation to come and see, no rider and no horse. In heaven, John saw *"under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held."* These souls were martyrs who were killed because of their faithfulness to the Word of God and their testimony for Jesus Christ.

Now who are these martyred souls? They are the raptured and resurrected saints, having the glorified body. These include those who will believe in Jesus Christ during the Tribulation. Many thousands would turn to Christ when they find that their believing loved ones and friends are missing. They would remember that they had been told of this event that would happen to them. And so they repent and believe in Christ. But one great difference is that they will be persecuted by the Antichrist and many of them will have to pay the ultimate sacrifice of their life. It is mentioned that they are given white robes. This means that they are truly born-again Christians.

They cried to the Lord with a loud voice to judge and avenge the killing of God's children. God heard their cries but told them that they had to wait a little longer because there were many more to be saved. This means that when the number is complete, and only God knows it, God's wrath and anger would be poured upon the inhabitants of the world, who had been rebelling against God and Christ.

THOUGHT: Do not procrastinate, repent and believe in Christ now.
PRAYER: O Lord, save my unbelieving loved ones and friends.

THE DAY OF THE LORD

The *"day of the LORD"* is a phrase used in Scriptures to refer to the end of time when God will judge the world and pour down His wrath. The fact that this prophecy by the prophet Joel in the Old Testament was also prophesied by John in Revelation confirms the truth of God's Word, and the events described will take place. It will be a terrible and terrifying day for all!

The Lord Jesus would open the sixth seal. A great earthquake would occur causing a blanket of darkness to cover the sun and moon. Then meteors would rain upon the earth. The heavens would seem to have rolled away, and every mountain and island on earth would be shaken and moved from their locations. These disasters and destructions will be of a cosmic and catastrophic magnitude!

Kings and great men, rich and powerful men, and leaders of the world, and every free man and slave would hide themselves in the caves and call on the mountains to fall on them to cover themselves from God and from *"the wrath of the Lamb"* who is none other than the Lord Jesus. All men great and small would rather choose death than to be alive on *"the great day of his wrath."* But they would not be able to die. God would mete out His judgment and justice upon man.

Would God do these terrible things? Is He not Love? Yes, He is. But He is also Holy and Righteous. His holiness and righteousness demand that He acts in accordance with His nature and will. So, it is not a question of whether He will do so, but *when*. In view of the events that are happening in the world today, the change of weather patterns, the frequency of earthquakes in diverse places, the conflicts and violence, homosexuality and moral decadence, the Day of the Lord is not too far away. Are you ready to meet your Creator God? Read the Bible and call on the Lord Jesus Christ.

THOUGHT: How then should I live my life?
PRAYER: O Lord, have mercy on me and hear my cry.

THE HUNDRED AND FORTY-FOUR THOUSAND!

After the opening of the sixth seal, this chapter is an interlude before the opening the seventh seal (Rev 8:1). God reveals some important information here during the first part of the Tribulation. First, there were four angels, each standing on the four compass points of the earth—north, south, east and west. They were given the power to impose God's judgment of plagues to be carried by the wind upon the people of the earth. But another angel appeared from the east having *"the seal of the living God"* commanding the four angels not to hurt His servants numbering 144,000 who were marked with a seal on their foreheads. These special servants were Jews from the twelve tribes of Israel; 12,000 from each tribe. Interestingly, two of the original tribes, namely Ephraim and Dan are not mentioned. Instead, the tribes of Levi and Joseph (previously not mentioned) were named. While the reason for excluding the former two tribes is not given, one may assume that their exclusion was because they were guilty of idolatry and had not repented.

God is always merciful, giving the people many opportunities and time to repent and to believe in the redemptive work of Christ and His resurrection in order to be saved from eternal separation from God. And so God sealed these special Jews to show that they belonged to Him. They were His true servants and they would be protected from His judgments upon the earth so that they could carry out their mission. Their mission, although not mentioned, we can safely say was to preach the gospel message of salvation in Christ Jesus to the entire world (Matt 24:14). In the Tribulation period, there would be a multitude of believers who would be severely persecuted by the Antichrist. Those who did not fear the threat of death would be killed. But God would protect His 144,000 evangelists so that the gospel would be preached in the entire world. Christ's Twelve Jewish Apostles turned the world upside down. Imagine what more these 144,000 evangelists can do! Repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ now!

THOUGHT: Every born-again believer is sealed by the Holy Spirit.
PRAYER: O Lord, help me to believe and to repent.

A GREAT MULTITUDE

The phrase *"After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude"* in verse 9 is significant for it connects this great multitude (which is now identified as Tribulation saints) with the 144,000 Jews. This strongly implies that the Tribulation saints having heard the gospel preached by the 144,000 Jews were convicted in their hearts of their need of Christ, believed in Him, and were sealed with the Holy Spirit.

This period would be the last of the last days, the final days for those who had not heard the gospel to be saved. They were from *"all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues"* (v 9). In other words, everyone in the world. Jesus had said: *"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come"* (Matt 24:14). How merciful is the LORD our God!

These Tribulation saints readily recognized that salvation was of God. God sent a great spiritual revival in the Tribulation when a multitude of people were saved! And all the angels and the twenty-four elders representing the Church-age Christians, who were already there, worshipped God saying, *"Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen"* (v 12).

These Tribulation saints would be in the presence of God, who would wipe away all tears. They would not be hungry anymore, for the Antichrist had tried to deprive them of the essential necessities of life when they were on earth, because they believed in Christ. They would be in heaven serving God forever. They had been persecuted and even killed for Christ's sake. But not all of them would be killed because there would be others, who would escape the persecution of the Antichrist. Those who escaped would populate the earth in the millennial reign of Christ!

THOUGHT: Christians should make a joyful noise unto the LORD**.**
PRAYER: O Lord, let me be ever believing and faithful unto Thee.

SILENCE IN HEAVEN

In chapter 6, the seven seals of divine judgments were announced. They consisted of two sets of four and three. But the seventh seal, the last seal, announced another seven divine trumpet judgments. These seven trumpet judgments like the seal judgments, also have sets of four and three — the first four which can be called the "one-third" judgments followed by the three "woes."

When the Lord Jesus opened the seventh seal, there was an half-hour silence in heaven. The four beasts stopped their praises of the holiness of the Lord God Almighty. The four and twenty elders' praises of God's glory, honour and power, and the prayers and singing of thousands of thousands also ceased. Apostle John must have timed it in human terms. There is no explicit explanation for this dramatic silence in heaven. Many of us think that this silence is like "the calm before a storm."

Seven chosen angels stood before the Throne of God ready to sound the trumpets pronouncing more divine judgments upon the inhabitants of the earth. But another angel appeared with a golden censer. He had much incense and offered it upon the golden altar with the prayers of the saints. The smoke of the incense with the prayers of the saints ascended up before God. What were the prayers of the saints? Revelation 6:10: *"How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?"* At that time, they were told to be patient and wait *"yet for a little season."* Now the time has come for the judgment of the world. Enough preaching, teaching and warning had been given to the world but they chose to rebel and be disobedient. There will be no more delay.

The angel with the censer then filled it *"with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth."* Voices, thunderings, lightnings and an earthquake occurred. This was God's answer to the people's prayers.

THOUGHT: 2 Corinthians 6:2b: *"... now is the day of salvation."*
PRAYER: Father, save my unsaved loved ones.

THE ONE-THIRD JUDGMENTS

The seventh seal opened to seven trumpet judgments of God upon the earth. As we have noted, this series of judgment is divided into two sets — the "one third" judgments and the three "woes." The world will experience catastrophic calamities never seen before.

The first trumpet judgment of God is the raining of *"hail and fire mingled with blood"* upon the earth. This will result in one-third of trees and green grass being burnt up. We should not think that the burnt up area will be in one extensive localized area. This one-third devastation of vegetation will be widespread in different parts of the earth. The second trumpet judgment will look like a *"mountain burning with fire"* cast into the sea. Some think that it might be nuclear missiles falling on the earth. The result is a *"third part of the sea became blood,"* causing a third part of marine life to die; and a third part of ships plying the oceans will be destroyed. We have already seen the extent and power of tsunamis. The third divine trumpet judgment reveals a great burning star falling from heaven. As it falls, it is possible that it can break into pieces affecting a *"third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters* (springs)*."* This falling star is called Wormwood, which is bitter and poisonous. Many will drink the water and die. The fourth trumpet judgment reveals that the third part of the sun, moon and stars will be smitten, so that the third part of them will be darkened. These will affect a third part of the day and night. In other words, there will be reduced daylight and a corresponding increase of the adverse effects at night.

All these may seem incredulously impossible. But if we read the ten plagues which God sent upon idolatrous Egypt, these happenings in the end times are not impossible. This is the wrath or anger of God upon the people of the earth who have rebelled, blasphemed and killed His servants who had preached and taught the word of truth.

THOUGHT: Existentialism is a lie; but God's plan and purpose is true.
PRAYER: Lord, teach me to number the days of my life on earth**.**

WOE, WOE, WOE

The four trumpet judgments have been revealed. Then an angel flying through the midst of heaven loudly called out *"Woe, woe, woe"* (Rev 8:13). This call announced the second set of the seven trumpet judgments upon the earth. Each of the remaining three is called *"woe."* This passage reveals to us the beginning of the first *"woe"* judgment.

The fifth angel sounded his trumpet and *"a star fall from heaven unto the earth"* (Rev 5:1). This star should not be understood as a meteor that fell from heaven. Observe the use of the personal pronoun *"him"* (v 1) and *"he"* (v 2). The *"star"* refers to an angel sent by God.

This angel was given the *"key of the bottomless pit."* He opened it and a thick smoke darkened the sky. Then out of the pit came *"locusts,"* to which were given power. They were told not to hurt the grass and the greenery, but people who did not have *"the seal of God in their foreheads"* (v 4). These locusts can be safely understood as demonic locusts (like demons which entered into the herd of pigs in the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ). The people who have been hurt by these demonic locusts will suffer for five months. These suffering people will rather die than suffer alive, but they cannot. The torment is like the sting of a scorpion.

How terrible it will be in the Tribulation, a time prior to the glorious return of the Lord Jesus Christ. The sins of the world against God are full and the time has come for God's wrath and judgment upon all unbelievers. How blessed it is to be a blood-bought child of God!

THOUGHT: The fear of the LORD God is the beginning of wisdom**.**
PRAYER: O Lord, have mercy, I will repent and believe in Christ.

THE DEMONIC LOCUSTS

From the description of these locusts (let out of the bottomless pit), they are not like the long-legged and big-headed creatures we are familiar with. Therefore, they should not be understood as actual locusts but as demonic locusts. In one of the instances during the earthly ministry of our Lord Jesus, He sent a legion of demons (a Roman legion of soldiers numbered 3,000 to 6,000) into a herd of swine, as requested by the demons. Once the demons possessed the herd, the pigs ran wildly and plunged from a cliff into the sea and drowned. So in the Tribulation, these demonic locusts will be released, having given the authority by God to torment and torture the unbelievers.

The detailed description of these demonic locusts defies interpretation and understanding (vv 7-10). However, observe the use of the words *"like"* and *"as"* in their description. One thing for sure is that they are powerful because they are able to strike and sting men. They are indestructible and men cannot overpower them. They are also intelligent beings described as having *"faces of men"* (v 7). The *"sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle"* shows that they are swift.

It is also revealed that these locusts have a leader. His name in the Hebrew tongue is *"Abaddon,"* which means "destruction;" and in Greek is "Apollyon," which means "destroyer." This leader is none other than Satan himself. These demonic forces will inflict great pain and suffering upon unbelievers only. Christians will not be hurt. We see that God is in control. He is still sovereign and no man or demon can do anything without His approval. The unendurable pain and suffering will last only for five months. Interestingly, the life-span of locusts is five months. For five months, there will be no deaths. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ! Do not procrastinate! Do not delay!

THOUGHT: Unbelievers would be there during this terrible time**.**
PRAYER: O Lord, help me to have faith and trust in Thee.

TWO HUNDRED MILLIONS

One woe-judgment has finished and *"behold there come two woes more hereafter"* (v 12). Then the sixth angel sounded his trumpet. A voice was heard *"from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God"* (v 13). This is the altar of incense in heaven, where the prayers of the saints rise up to God (Rev 8:3-4). The voice was clearly one of God's special angels having great authority for he commanded the sixth angel, *"Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates."* The fact that these *"four angels"* were bound means that they are fallen angels who are very wicked. They *"were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year"* (v 15). This reveals the precise timing of releasing the four wicked angels. Observe that the actual hour, month and year are not given, for God knows the exact timing and He chooses to keep it secret and not to reveal to us. The wicked angels were released *"to slay the third part of men*." Already a quarter of the people have been killed (Rev 6:8). Now, one-third of the remaining people will die. This is indeed frightening.

How will these people die? A monstrous army of two hundred million horsemen were assembled. The description of their horses is difficult to understand or interpret.Some interpret them as modern war machines. They are described here in picturesque language. But one thing we know for certain is that one-third of the world's population will die! This will happen because God predicted it.

Who ever thought that the World Trade Centre twin towers in New York would be brought down? Yet it happened. Man's continual rejection of Christ and denial of his Creator do not negate the vicarious redemptive work of Christ. Neither do they disprove the truth that there is a living and true God. All who persist in their own beliefs do it at that their own suffering and loss.

THOUGHT: Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved**.**
PRAYER: Lord, be merciful to me a sinner.

HARDNESS OF HEART

The rest of the people who were not yet killed by the plagues did not repent of their sins of idolatry, wickedness and immorality. In other words, they hardened their hearts and rebelled against God in spite of the preaching of the servants of God during this time. Thinking that they were more intellectual, they became fools to worship idols (made of gold, silver, brass, stone and wood) that could not see, hear or walk. In truth, they were worshipping the devil. Satan had deceived them and they had fallen into his trap. In addition, the imagination of their thoughts and hearts were only evil. They committed murders. They practised witchcraft and used magic potions. They wilfully engaged in pornography and sexual immorality. They deceptively stole from individuals and business companies.

The fact that the text states *"yet repented not of the works of their hands"* suggests that they had every chance to repent of their sins and to respond sincerely by faith to the Word of truth, the Gospel of salvation in Christ Jesus. Whosoever repents and believes in Christ shall be saved from eternal condemnation. They may have to pay with their lives because the devil and his agents will hunt and kill them for choosing Christ Jesus instead of him. But if they repent and believe, they need not fear, for the Gospel of salvation in Christ Jesus promises them eternal life and the hope of resurrection. Just as Christ Jesus resurrected from the dead and is now clothed with an immortal and glorious body, they will also have a glorious body. And when Christ Jesus comes again, it will be the end of this present world system. There will be a separation of believers and unbelievers. The unbelievers will be removed to Hades. But the believers will enter into a new world system which will be ruled by Christ Jesus, the King of kings and the Lord of lords. Whose side are you on? The side of the Lord Jesus Christ? Or the side of the devil?

THOUGHT: Better late than never, believe on Christ Jesus now.
PRAYER: Lord, help me to overcome all the obstacles hindering me.

NO MORE DELAY!

A mighty angel came down from heaven. Although he is described with such majestic terms — *"clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire"* — he was not Jesus Christ. He cannot be for one simple reason shown in this passage: he swore by the Almighty God, the Creator of the heaven and earth and all that are therein. Christ does not swear by the name of God for He is God. If He swears, He would swear by His own name. In addition, we accept the plain meaning of the word that he is another angel, although a mighty angel. God has many angels and the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God is never called an angel in the New Testament.

The angel had an open little book. It is not the little book in Revelation 5. His right foot was on the sea, and his left foot was on the earth, indicating that he had control over them. When he cried with his loud voice, like the roar of a lion, seven thunders uttered their prophetic voices. When John wanted to write these utterances, a voice from heaven forbade him from recording them. Then the angel, looking up to heaven, swore in the name of the Creator God that *"there should be time no longer."* We have been living as if time is on our side and that it will go on and on forever, never ending. But that is a grave error. God's plan and purpose for all human kind, as now announced, will happen without further delay. The seventh trumpet call will soon be sounded. The day of God's judgment will draw nearer and when it happens, the present world system built by men will crumble. There will be no escape other than to repent, confess one's sin against God and humbly and sincerely accept the atoning work of Christ on the cross, believing that God had raised Him from the dead on the third day. Do not procrastinate. Now is the day of acceptance and salvation.

THOUGHT: Better late than never; think of the import of this saying.
PRAYER: Lord, give me the courage to do what I need to do.

BITTER AND SWEET

We have learned of the judgments portrayed by six angels, who each sounded the trumpets (Rev 8-9). The sounding of the seventh trumpet will finish *"the mystery of God."* This mystery of God was kept a secret, to be revealed at a later time. Now before the sounding of the seventh trumpet which will finish the mystery of God, it was interrupted by the voice which John had heard earlier from heaven, commissioning him to do something.

John was told to take the little open scroll (book) from the hand of the *"mighty angel"* (v 1-2). John took it and was told to eat it up – *"it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey"* (v 9). John obeyed and he experienced just as he had been told. John testified that *"it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter"* (v 10). The little scroll had the Word of God written on it. The Word of God is not just to be read but to be internalized, that means, we are not to be just hearers of the Word but also doers of the Word. Had not our Lord Jesus said: *"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God"* (Matt 4:4)? What it means is that when the Word of God is first received it is sweet and exciting, but when it is further understood it can be bitter and despairing.

John was then commanded to continue to *"prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings"* (v 11). Observe that the preposition is *"before"* and not *"to"* the many peoples. The Word of God has been preached and proclaimed to many people already for the past thousands of years, yea, even now. But the time is coming soon when the Word of God will be fulfilled before the eyes of the whole world.

THOUGHT: Having known all these things, how shall I live?
PRAYER: Lord, give me courage and faith to believe in Thy Word.

THE TEMPLE OF GOD

The angel, after giving John a reed (a measuring instrument), instructed him to measure *"the temple of God,"* and *"the altar"* and *"them that worship therein,"* that means, to count the worshippers. The act of measuring is a sign of ownership. God is claiming and making clear that He is still in control. It includes the idea of protection against the coming judgment which are now ready to be meted out. *"But the court which is without the temple"* is not measured, *"for it is given to the Gentiles."* The Jews are allowed to worship in the Temple but the Gentiles are restricted to the outer court. This means that God, who is in control, allows the Gentiles to occupy the outer court of the Temple. John continued that *"the holy city shall"* the Gentiles *"tread under foot."* The Gentiles shall be given control of *"the holy city,"* i.e. Jerusalem. And it is only for forty-two months (using the Jewish 30-day month, it is three-and-a-half years). Then, God's judgment will be poured out upon the inhabitants of the earth.

The prediction of this future event is in Daniel 9:27: *"And he* [the Antichrist] *shall confirm the covenant with many for one week* [i.e. one week of years]: *and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease ..."* Christians know that just before the seven-year Tribulation, after the church has been snatched up to be with the Lord Jesus, the Antichrist will lead the nations of the world to make a peace treaty with Israel. But in the middle of the seven-year period, he will break the treaty and exalt himself above God, taking the place of God and causing all to worship him and not to worship the LORD God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

For the remaining three-and-a-half years, he will lead the other nations to persecute the Jews and all people who profess allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ. The present world stage is not far from this eventuality. How should we live in view of this truth?

THOUGHT: Christians, worship the One Living and True God now.
PRAYER: O Lord, strengthen my faith and love for Thee.

THE TWO WITNESSES

When *"the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein"* have been measured and counted, God shall raise *"two witnesses"* and they shall preach for 1,260 days (or forty-two months) in the second half of the Tribulation period. These two witnesses shall testify of the Word of God and the Lord Jesus Christ. The fact that they are *"clothed in sackcloth"* strongly indicates the presence of sorrow and wretchedness of God's judgment upon the inhabitants in the world.

Many Bible scholars identify these two witnesses as Elijah and Moses because of the powerful and stupendous deeds which they are able to perform against their enemies, who try to hurt them. Fire shall proceed from out of their mouths and devour their enemies. In addition, they have *"power to shut heaven, that it rain not"* during the period they are prophesying, and have *"power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will."* These awesome and stupendous acts have been performed in the past by Moses (Exo 7:17ff) and Elijah (2 Kgs 1:12).

Now, when they have finished their mission of preaching the Word of God and testifying of the Lord Jesus Christ, *"the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit,"* shall oppose and fight them, overcoming and eventually killing them (v 7). The *"beast"* is none other than the Antichrist (13:1; 17:8). Satan is usually identified as the dragon (Rev 20:2). Note that the enemies may not overcome and kill them until the two witnesses have completed their missions. God is in sovereign control over events happening on earth.

God's mercy endures forever, giving men many opportunities in the eleventh-hour of human history to repent and receive Christ Jesus as their Lord and Saviour, so that they shall not perish but be delivered from eternal damnation. Will you not believe now?

THOUGHT: No other time is a better time than now.
PRAYER: O Lord, give me the courage and faith to believe in Christ.

THE SPIRIT OF LIFE ENTERS INTO THEM

The Two Witnesses, who have finished their mission after three-and-a-half years, are now killed by the Antichrist. Their bodies are put on public display and telecast to the whole world. This is the most degrading act to dishonour a person. People of all races, languages and nations come to Jerusalem to celebrate and have a big party. They even exchange gifts. They are rejoicing because for three-and-a-half years they have been tormented by the preaching and messages of the Two Witnesses together with the 144, 000 Jewish evangelists (Rev 7:3-4). Their messages from the Word of God are about God's judgment and the impending end of the age, and about Christ Jesus.

They think they have the last word on God's two servants, but after three days of rejoicing and celebrating, God breathes the Spirit of life into His two servants and they are resurrected. Life and death are not in the hands of the Antichrist or even Satan, but in the hand of the LORD God Almighty. When the Two Witnesses stand up from where they have been laid for all to see, suddenly *"great fear"* falls upon all that see them. There is silence, and a loud voice from heaven calls on the Two Witnesses, *"Come up hither*. These faithful servants of God are then transported to heaven in a cloud. All their enemies can only look at them horrified as the two are taken up.

At the same time, *"a great earthquake"* occurs. We are quite familiar with the devastation of earthquakes. *"... the tenth part of the city* (Jerusalem)*"* is destroyed with a loss of seven thousand people. The remnant who are God's people are naturally frightened, but they give glory to Him.

We read this special revelation with a sobering and sad heart. So many still stubbornly refuse to repent and receive Jesus as their Saviour.

THOUGHT: No sinner can escape the judgment of God.
PRAYER: Lord, take away the stubbornness of my rebellious heart.

MONDAY, MAY 13
REVELATION 11:15-19
PSALM 2:1-6

"I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion."

THE KINGDOMS OF THE WORLD BECOME THE KINGDOMS OF CHRIST

The translation of the Two Witnesses to heaven and the great earthquake constitute the second woe (cf Rev 8:13; 9:12). Then the seventh angel blew the last trumpet and declared that *"the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever."* This last trumpet is not the trumpet call for the rapture of the Church because this trumpet call announces the judgment of the inhabitants of the world, whereas the trumpet call of 1 Corinthians 15:52 signals the snatching up of the Church to be with the Lord. They are two different trumpet calls for different purposes. Do not be confused.

The twenty-four elders, who were seated before God, fell down on their faces and worshipped God. Our response having read the book thus far should be the same – kneel in submission, worshipping the Lord our God. The elders thanked the Lord God Almighty, acknowledging His eternality – is, was and is to come – and His great power and reign.

The nations of the world responded with anger because the time of the outpouring of God's wrath was at hand. All the evil and wickedness committed by men in the past and present will be recounted and judged according to the Word of God. God will judge the wicked and rebellious who have destroyed the earth which He had made.

But God will reward His servants, the prophets and all His saints. The saints are those who have been born-again, cleansed and washed by the Blood of Christ including all those who fear His Name. All those who fear Him will revere, honour, glorify and worship Him. In the final analysis, all born-again Christians will have the ultimate vindication and victory in the Lord Jesus Christ.

THOUGHT: Do I know where I will be after my death?
PRAYER: O Lord, let me be a part of Thy glorious Second Coming.

A WOMAN CLOTHED WITH THE SUN

John saw a vision of a great wonder in heaven in which *"a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars."* This woman is the nation Israel. Joseph dreamt that *"the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance"* to him (Gen 37:9-11). The sun is Jacob and the stars the twelve sons of Jacob, who are the twelve patriarchs of the nation Israel. The nation Israel on many occasions is referred to as a woman travailed with a male-child in the Old Testament (Isa 54:6; 66:7; Jer 4:31). She was in the pangs of birth-pains and eventually gave birth to a male-child. The male-child is none other than Jesus Christ, who emerged from the nation Israel.

Then another wonder appeared – *"a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads."* This *"great red dragon"* is Satan, the Devil. The seven heads are a reference to six world powers in the past, namely, Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medes-Persia, Greece, and Rome, which is the present, and it will culminate in the *"ten horns and seven crowns,"* the emergence of the One World Government led and ruled by the Antichrist. His greatness is seen as one who controls a third of the angels in heaven. They are the fallen angels who are cast down to earth indicating their domain of activity in the world. Satan is readily poised before the woman *"to devour her child"* when he is born. Indeed, the woman gives birth to a child who will *"rule all nations with a rod of iron."*

But the woman fled into the wilderness. God will protect her, the nation Israel, for *"a thousand two hundred and threescore days,"* a period of three-and-a-half years of the latter part of the seven-year tribulation. At the end of the seven-year tribulation, the final curtain of world history dominated by man will drop to usher a new Millennium reign of the Lord Jesus Christ, a period of peace, progress and prosperity.

THOUGHT: Surely, the world we live in is not going to exist forever!
PRAYER: O Lord, help me to realise where I am and to be wise.

WAR IN HEAVEN

There was a spiritual warfare in heaven. Michael, an angelic prince, battled against the *"dragon"* (Satan) and his fallen angels. Satan and his fallen angels were defeated resulting in them being cast out of their place in heaven. They were privileged and allowed to be in heaven, but in the period of the tribulation, God will cast them out. For this reason, Satan is very angry because he knows that *"he hath but a short time,"* that is, his days are truly numbered. It will be a very sad and woeful time for the inhabitants of the world. Satan is and has been a deceiver since the dawn of Creation. Did he not deceive Eve to eat *"of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil"* by just adding one simple word "no," thus changing the commandment of God? Adam and Eve were deceived and lost their eternal life and fellowship with God. But by the grace and mercy of God they were saved.

When Satan and his angels are cast out of heaven, there is rejoicing in heaven. The salvation and strength of God's people and *"the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ"* will be evident. It is also revealed to us that Satan has been accusing Christians before God *"day and night."* When Job lived a perfect and upright life, fearing God, Satan accused him that he would curse God if He did not shield him. Satan is now doing the same thing. Many Christians who fear and love God, walking in His ways, are accused by Satan that if God had not blessed them they would reject and forsake Him. Are you being deceived by Satan's accusations against God? How can we overcome Satan? We can prevail over him by the testimony of *"the blood of the Lamb"* and the Word of God. Acknowledge that the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for all our sin and resurrected on the third day, is our personal Advocate before God according to the Word of God. In addition, at the threat of sufferings and even death, we shall not be moved. God's promises according to His Word of our eternal life and bodily resurrection in Christ Jesus shall comfort and encourage us

THOUGHT: Be not deceived for now is the day of salvation.
PRAYER: Lord, teach me to fear Thee that I may know and be wise.

PERSECUTION OF THE JEWS

The devil knows that very soon God will remove him and his demons once and for all. First, God has cast him into earth. He reacts by persecuting the offspring of the woman. This will be the final holocaust that will come upon the Jews. This anti-Semitism will be spearheaded by the Antichrist, who will be inspired by Satan. As the persecution gets more intense and widespread, the Jews will be led by God into the desert *"for a time, and times, and half a time"* (three-and-a-half years). In addition, the devil will cause a great flood to carry the suffering Jews away. But once again God interrupted by opening the ground to swallow the swirling water. It is futile for Satan to make war against the Jews and Christians. God allows Satan to do his worst against the Jews and Christians but we know that God is still in control. As the flood water moves in its destructive path, *"the earth helped the woman"* by the splitting of the ground, swallowing the floodwaters.

One can imagine the extent of the devastation and destruction to nature, trees and vegetation and the deaths of many people. There will definitely be a shortage of food. Rescue and relief work will be greatly hampered and difficult. However, the target is primarily against the Jews. God will miraculously preserve and protect the remnant of the Jews, who keep His commandments and the testimony of Jesus Christ.

We learn from this passage that Satan and his demons are real. They have been deceiving people by drawing them away from God and the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ so that they will not believe and be saved. Another lesson is that their evil and wicked work will come to an end in God's own timing. For the moment, God is extending this period of grace and opportunity for men to repent and receive Christ. When the time is up, there will be no more second chance. So be wise and reject the wiles of the devil.

THOUGHT: Only the armour of God can stand against the devil.
PRAYER: O Lord, I will keep on trusting and obeying Thee.

THE ANTICHRIST

John saw *"a beast rise up out of the sea."* This man who rose up out of the sea was characterized as a beast. This beast has *"seven heads and ten horns"* with *"ten crowns."* While a composite picture of the beast is indescribable, the heads, horns and crown speak of the power and influence of this man, who is actually the Antichrist. He holds upon his head the spirit of godlessness of the past world powers. The sources of his power and influence are drawn from ten nations and their heads of states during the Tribulation. He is further described as akin to *"a leopard,"* suggesting his swiftness and agility in all his actions, and as *"the feet of a bear,"* suggesting his sturdiness and strength, and his mouth *"as the mouth of a lion"* suggesting his pride, ferocity and articulation. In addition, Satan gives him power, position and authority. He is a brilliant and powerful figure in the world during the Tribulation. He is Satan's prodigy and puppet.

One of his heads will be wounded almost to the point of death but will be healed miraculously. In other words, the world power over which he has great influence suffers to the point of total economic and financial collapse but the seemingly hopeless situation is saved. It may be through the ingenuity of the Antichrist whom the entire world now worships. The Antichrist, inspired by Satan, prides himself and blasphemes the name of God, the Temple of God and the saints in heaven for three-and-a-half years. These things will happen in the near future according to the Holy Scripture, as the signs of Jesus' return will show.

Those who profess Jesus as their Lord and give Him their undivided loyalty and worship will experience a time of great persecution and suffering, particularly the Jews. The Antichrist will *"make war with the saints, and to overcome them."* Satan will give him power *"over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations."* God's prophecy has never failed. We must prepare our mind, heart, and soul for this eventuality.

THOUGHT: To be forewarned is to be forearmed**.**
PRAYER: O Lord, preserve my life from fear of the enemy.

THE BOOK OF LIFE

The Antichrist is a very charismatic and powerful figure in the political leadership of the world as revealed in the preceding section. He is so powerful that *"all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him."* A further revelation is that the names of all those who worship him are not written in the Book of Life of the Lamb. The Antichrist, by means of miracles, deception and falsehood, causes the inhabitants of the world to worship him as God. Man ought to worship God instead of a man. To fear and worship a man instead of God is to break the first commandment of God. It is the sin of idolatry. As a result, the names of these people are not written in the Book of Life of the Lamb. The Lamb is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, whom John pointed out (John 1:29): *"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."* The effect of Christ's redemptive work on the cross, which happened two thousand years before, is effectively viewed retrospectively *"from the foundation of the world"*! So, all the saints in the past and the present and future believers are all saved by the Blood of the Lamb. All those whose names are not found in the Book of Life will have no part and place in Heaven where God and the Lord Jesus Christ are.

John called all who have ears to hear. He meant that all who have ears to hear the words spoken should take heed of the meaning of those words, and not merely hear the words. Another significant prediction is that Satan, who leads many to be taken captive deceptively into eternal damnation, will himself be taken captive with the same end. Those who kill with the sword forcing people to follow them will themselves be killed in like manner. In this regard, the saints have been patient. While the saints cry daily, *"How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth,"* they wait patiently on God's timing. God will judge and avenge the death of His people. This is the truth. We must be patient.

THOUGHT: Every prophecy of God will in no wise pass away.
PRAYER: Lord, teach me to wait upon Thee, no matter what happens.

THE FALSE PROPHET

The first beast is the Antichrist. Now another beast emerged from the earth. He is the False Prophet (Rev 16:13). He has *"two horns like a lamb."* He presented himself as a gentle, harmless and innocent person having the characteristics of a lamb. His two horns with no crown show that he has authority but not politically. But when he spoke, he spoke *"as a dragon."* He showed off his true colours. Again, God sees these two persons as beasts – wild, ruthless and cruel. This second beast has all the powers of the Antichrist and he caused the inhabitants of the world *"to worship the first beast"* – the Antichrist. Interestingly, he was able to perform miracles even making *"fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men."* In this way, he was a great deceiver and he called upon the people to make an image of the Antichrist, *"which had the wound by a sword, and did live."* He even has the power to give breath to the image so that it can speak, causing *"as many as would not worship the image of the beast"* to be put to death.

This is terrible. There will be no freedom of speech, no religious freedom, human rights will be thrown to the wind, and anyone who wants to live must submit to the rule of the government of the Antichrist who is fully supported by his religious crony, the False Prophet. We see a counterfeit Holy Trinity in the last days. Satan inspires and energizes the Antichrist, and the False Prophet summons the people to worship the Antichrist. Satan will place himself as God; and his protégé, the Antichrist, as a false Christ; and the False Prophet counterfeits the Holy Spirit.

This is the pinnacle of deception characterized by the raw power of wickedness and tyranny upon the inhabitants of the earth. No one will be able to oppose them for all fear death. But Christians do not fear death because of the Lord Jesus Christ, who has the power to raise the dead and to clothe them with a glorified body.

THOUGHT: Keep eternity's values in view**.**
PRAYER: Lord, let me always remain steadfast and true to Thee.

THE NUMBER 666

The Divine Author revealed how the Antichrist controls the world once he has assumed leadership of the government. He initiates a system in which he causes everyone (lowly and insignificant, or high and important, rich or poor, high-flyer or the ordinary citizen) to receive a mark or the name of the Antichrist in his right hand or in his forehead. The mark may be a tattoo, or it can be the insertion of a micro-chip. This second suggestion is more plausible given the advancement of modern technology. This system is already being used and experimented in a few countries on some people. It is no more strange or improbable. As it is, the world is turning more and more into a cashless community.

The reason for this is now explained. Those who do not receive this mark of the Antichrist will not be allowed to buy and sell. In practical terms, it means that a housewife cannot buy her groceries, and businessmen cannot conduct their transactions. In other words, the economic, financial, social and cultural activities in the world cannot be conducted without the mark or the name of the Antichrist or the number of his name.

And what is the number of his name? It is 666. A lot of discussion and speculation have been written about this. The Greek alphabet has a numerical value for each of its twenty-four letters. Enter into the Google search service and there will be numerous hits. But to date there is no certainty as to what it means. One needs godly wisdom and insight to decipher its meaning. Until the Antichrist appears on the scene, we cannot know for sure what the number 666 means. At the moment, all other attempts to know the meaning are only speculations. Should Christians receive the mark of the Antichrist? The answer is "No." Hence, the Tribulation saints will suffer greatly.

THOUGHT: Do I want to live in the days of the Antichrist?
PRAYER: O Lord, let the days of the Tribulation be shortened.

THE 144,000 WITH THE NAME OF GOD WRITTEN ON THEIR FOREHEADS

The Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, stood on Mount Zion, which is in Jerusalem. The name Zion is first mentioned in 2 Samuel 5:7: *"Nevertheless David took the stronghold of Zion: the same is the city of David."* When Solomon built the Temple on Mount Moriah, it was on a hill that was distinct and separate from Zion but it was not far from it. With the passage of time, the word *"Zion"* is used as a name to include the city of David, the Temple Mount and the city of Jerusalem. Eventually, *"Zion"* has come to mean the entire nation of Israel.

Standing with the Lord Jesus were the 144,000 Jews who were mentioned in Revelation 7: 3-8. They comprised twelve thousand men from each of the twelve tribes of Israel. They were sealed with the name of the living God, the Heavenly Father of the Lamb. The mention that the Lord Jesus stood with the 144,000 does not mean that He has bodily and gloriously returned and set His feet on Mount Zion. But it means that He is still actively involved with His servants. The 144,000 have a global mission, and the Lord Jesus will be with them.

A great loud voice of many harps thundered from Heaven harping a new song before the throne, the four beasts and the twenty-four elders. These men are the redeemed. They are able to sing the new song: *"the voice of harpers harping with their harps: and they sung as it were a new song."* The theme of the song definitely is on the wonderful redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ. That *"they are virgins"* should be understood as their undivided loyalty and faithfulness to the Lord Jesus Christ. They do not involve or participate in unbelievers' idolatrous and religious activities to the extent that they are faultless in their conversations. They follow the Lord Jesus Christ wherever He goes. As the redeemed, they are *"the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb."* As firstfruits, they are among the first to be clothed with the glorified body of the resurrected Jesus Christ.

THOUGHT: Who will be on the LORD's side, undefiled and true?
PRAYER: Lord, teach me to number the days of my life to serve Thee.

THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL

John saw *"another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth."* The everlasting Gospel is none other than the Word of truth and salvation to everyone who believes in the finished work of Christ on the cross, where He shed His blood and died for the sins of the world. He was buried and on the third day He resurrected from the dead. This gospel message will be preached to people in every nation, of every clan and language. It is a global evangelization of the world in the last days, for after this there will be no more opportunity. The angel from heaven is not personally flying around to preach the everlasting Gospel. But as the context strongly suggests, it will be undertaken by the 144,000 of God's servants, who will bring the message of the everlasting Gospel to the ends of the world to every nation, kindred and tongue. It is in fulfilment of Christ's declaration (Matt 24:14): *"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come."* In other words, these 144,000 Jewish evangelists will be scattered over all corners of the earth preaching the Gospel of truth and salvation to whoever will hear them, believe and be saved.

They will boldly preach to the people in the world who fear God, and give glory to Him. By that time, even as it is now, men have turned their backs to God. They have exalted themselves to be the arbiter of truth. But they have another chance. They must now fear *"the living and true God"* and glorify Him. This is the first commandment God requires and expects from men, whom He created. They are called to worship Him and acknowledge that He is their Creator who made *"heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters."* They should not worship the Antichrist or money. The reason is because *"the hour of his judgment is come."* This is the Day of the Lord when He will judge the inhabitants of the world for their rebellion, wickedness and disobedience.

THOUGHT: Believe in Jesus Christ today.
PRAYER: O Lord, may I not be guilty of the sin of procrastination.

BABYLON IS FALLEN, IS FALLEN

Another angel announced the fall of Babylon. He doubly emphasized the downfall of the great city: *"Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city."* This Babylon is not the ancient literal city of Babylon that had long ago been destroyed. But the name *"Babylon"* mentioned here is a reference to the Babylon of the Old Testament (today's Iraq) symbolizing the political, cultural and religious rule of the Antichrist. It is here predicted that the rule of the Antichrist will be defeated completely. The reason God will judge and bring the downfall of the government of the Antichrist together with the False Prophet, his strong supporter, is *"because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication."* The False Prophet has caused all to drunkenly commit spiritual adultery, resulting in God's displeasure and indignation.

Another angel followed by saying loudly and clearly that *"if any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand,"* he shall suffer the full measure of God's wrath. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone before the holy angels and *"the Lamb."* This means the person's ultimate destiny will be the Lake of fire and brimstone where the beast (Antichrist) and the False Prophet are (Rev 20:10). The condemnation is not for a short time but eternal. *"The Lamb,"* as previously understood, is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is so named because He is meek and lowly.

God is drawing the curtain of prophecy of world history that all might believe and turn to the Lord Jesus and be saved. For us as born-again Christians, our redemption is at our very doorstep. We should be rejoicing together with all the other saints who are in heaven. For those who have yet to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, they should seriously consider their ultimate destiny, repent of their sin against God, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ by pleading for His mercy and rest on His redemptive work.

THOUGHT: Satan and the Lake of fire and brimstone are for real.
PRAYER: Lord, let me trust only Thee.

BLESSED ARE THE DEAD IN THE LORD

"The patience of the saints" is reiterated here (also: Rev 13:10). God has His timing in vindicating His servants and saints who have been persecuted, tortured and even killed by doing His will in accordance with His Word and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. And through the centuries, the faithful in Christ who have kept *"the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus,"* wait patiently for the return of the Lord Jesus. This reiteration comes immediately after the preceding passage that reveals the last things, ie Satan and the False Prophet will be joined by all those who have heard of the Gospel of salvation but rejected Jesus.

Then a voice from heaven declared one of the most comforting words in the Bible: *"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth."* The blessedness here is divine blessing. We are reminded of what Paul said to the Christians in Philippi (Phil 1:21-23): *"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better."* Those who die in the Lord will experience this divine truth. Contrast those who reject and refuse to repent and those who receive Christ as their Saviour and Lord and are saved from Hell fire and brimstone!

"Yea, saith the Spirit" is an affirmation of the aforesaid. Indeed, the voice from heaven is none other than the voice of the Spirit. Those who die in the Lord *"may rest from their labours."* They have worked for the Lord Jesus. They have been faithful to the end. They have been undaunted in the face of adversities. They now rest in heaven in the very presence of God and the Lord Jesus Christ in blissful happiness. *"Their works do follow them."* Their labour of faith and hope will not be erased but will be rewarded. God will reward all who have served Him and given Him the honour and glory.

THOUGHT: Heaven or hell? Which will I choose?
PRAYER: O Lord, we bless Thy Name for Thy goodness towards us.

HARVEST TIME

Two harvests are predicted here. The first harvest is for believers and the second harvest is for unbelievers. In the first harvest there was *"a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man."* The *"Son of man"* is unmistakably the Lord Jesus for this name has been used many times in the four Gospels to refer to Jesus, emphasizing His humanity. The fact that He sat on a white cloud indicates His purity and the scene of a throne. Moreover, on His head was a *"golden crown,"* a sign of His victory and sovereignty. Then in His hand was *"a sharp sickle,"* which stands metaphorically for the finality and power of the judgment of God.

Then *"another angel came out of the temple."* The Temple is where God the Father is, and the angel cries out loudly to Jesus to thrust in His sickle and reap. It is not strange that an angel commanded the Lord Jesus instead of the other way round. It is not strange because the angel is only a messenger bearing the command from God the Father. Here the Lord Jesus submitted to God. *"The time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe."* This imagery of the farmer and harvest time pictures the sowing of the gospel seeds to the world, and the seeds have grown and are now ready for harvest. The Lord Jesus thrusted His *"sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped."* Observe that the absence of any mention of the burning of tares and chaff strongly suggests that this is a harvest of believers.

This harvest separates the wheat from the tares. It is a separation of believers from unbelievers. Believers will be separated first from the unbelieving world. Christians will then be judged at the Judgment Seat of Christ where they have to give an account of their lives and work on earth. Every Christian will receive the things *"according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad"* (2 Cor 5:10). Are you ready to give an account of your life lived on this earth?

THOUGHT: Judgment day is sooner than I think.
PRAYER: O Lord, teach me not to procrastinate but to act promptly.

THE GREAT WINEPRESS

"And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven." This is an angel who has a sickle that is used for harvesting. The imagery of farming and harvesting continues. Yet another angel *"came out of the altar."* There are two altars in the Temple: the altar of burnt offering which is outside at the entrance to the Temple proper, and the altar of incense inside the Temple where the saints cried in prayer to God to avenge the blood of the martyrs (Rev 6:10). This second angel was given authority over fire. Fire is a symbol of judgment and this angel has the authority to carry out God's judgment on earth. The judgment is the casting of unbelievers into the Lake of fire and brimstone. This latter angel cried loudly to the first angel who had the sickle to thrust his sickle *"and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe."*

The angel thrusted his sickle into the vine (ie the earth). The grapes were gathered and cast into *"the great winepress of the wrath of God."* The winepress was trodden outside Jerusalem and blood came out of the winepress. Many were killed in this carnage. Blood covered the length and breadth of the land of Israel.

Man has done his worst against God. The period of grace is now over. Judgment follows. All who rebel and reject God will face His wrath. The awful judgment of unbelievers is revealed here. No one can escape. God has been gracious and merciful all along, desiring that none should perish but all should come to repentance. But the hardness of man's heart refuses to submit to God. Will all these happen? As it is, everything seems alright and men have shown that they can tackle the political, economic, social and financial problems and troubles of the world. They do not need God or wonder whether there is a God. There is God because Jesus Christ, the Son of God, while He was on earth taught and declared that there is God. All these prophecies will come true. The question is: Are you prepared?

THOUGHT: Sow a thought and reap a destiny. (Spanish proverb)
PRAYER: Lord, may I sow a good thought to secure the right destiny.

GOD'S JUDGMENTS MANIFESTED

The cries of the saints, *"How long, O Lord ... dost thou not judge and avenge"* (Rev 6:10), are finally answered. The saints have waited patiently for many years because of man's pride, arrogance, greed and murder. God has been merciful and gracious, but the time has come for God to call a halt to the horrible cruelties and wickedness of man's sin.

Revelation 15 opens with John seeing a *"great and marvellous"* sign in which *"seven angels having the seven last plagues"* which are *"filled up the wrath of God."* These plagues remind us of the ten plagues which God poured upon Pharaoh and the Egyptians (Exo 5-12). In the last days prior to the glorious return of Jesus Christ, God will pour seven plagues upon sinners. John saw *"a sea of glass mingled with fire"* and standing on it are the saints. These saints have victory over the Antichrist. They have not worshipped the image of the Antichrist nor did they receive his mark or the number of his name. These saints are actually standing before the throne of God (Rev 4:6) having harps and singing the song of Moses and of the Lamb.

They praise God in His full name as Lord God Almighty (Hebrew, YAHWEH EL SHADDAI). YAHWEH is His covenant name to His people and EL SHADDAI is His Creator and All-Powerful God. They praise Him that He is *"just and true"* in all His ways and the *"King of saints."* They rhetorically declare: *"Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name?"* The answer is obvious for only God is holy. All nations shall come and worship Him for He will show His judgments. Those unbelievers who did not fear Him will fear Him now when they experience the judgments of the wrath of God. There is an end to God's patience and His mercy. His plan for the end of human history and the beginning of a new era in the millennial reign of Christ on earth will take place. The right response of every reader to this end-time prophecy is to be still and know that God is God and the Lord Jesus Christ, His Son, is his Saviour.

THOUGHT: The only way to believe is to disclaim all merit**.**
PRAYER: O Lord, give me a burden for lost souls.

THE FINAL CALL

John saw *"the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened."* Then *"seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues."* The series of judgments of these seven angels having seven plagues comes from God. The time has come in God's sovereign plan to reveal His severe final judgments upon the earth. These seven angels will carry out the plagues. These plagues remind us of the ten plagues which God brought upon Pharaoh and Egypt in order to cause Pharaoh to release God's chosen people to worship Him. These angels, who were *"clothed in pure and white linen"* showing that they were holy and their *"breasts girded with golden girdles"* across their waists, presented a glorious and majestic spectacle.

One of the four beasts (Rev 4:6ff) gave seven golden vials (bowls) which were filled with the wrath of God to the seven angels. It is interesting that God is declared as one who lives for ever and ever. Man has always rejected the existence of God and proclaimed that God is dead. In these final hours of man's history, God shall demonstrate that He is very much alive and around. Then the Temple is filled with smoke symbolizing the glory, majesty and power of God. That smoke also symbolizes the wrath of God. No one can or may enter the Temple. The smoke showing the presence of God will remain in the Temple until the seven bowl judgments are finished.

God is holy. He hates sin. Sinners must be punished. When Jesus Christ, His sinless Son, was made sin for all mankind, He had to take the penalty of sin which was death on the cross. On the third day, God raised Him from the dead and now whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life. God's patience as revealed here will end someday. So, today is the day of salvation. Repent and receive Christ Jesus as your Lord and Saviour.

THOUGHT: 99% of failures come from making excuses.
PRAYER: Lord, be merciful to save my loved ones.

GOD'S JUDGMENTS ARE TRUE AND RIGHTEOUS

This chapter reveals the final series of God's judgments upon an evil and rebellious world. Man has received the knowledge of the truth and now these are the last days. God's plan and purpose will wind to a halt very shortly and there is no more mercy but terrible judgment. A great voice proceeded out of the Temple calling on the seven angels to *"pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth."* The first plague was a grievous sore which afflicted those who have the mark of the Antichrist, and upon those who worship the image of the Antichrist. The second angel poured his vial of the wrath of God upon the sea, and it became blood and all marine life died. This is a global supernatural phenomenon. What God has spoken, He has the power to carry out and He will do it. The third angel poured out his vial and the rivers and fountains of water also became as blood.

Then the angel of the waters declared that the Lord is righteous because God has so judged. The wicked and rebellious men have killed the saints and God's servants, making them to drink blood. For this they deserve the judgment. Then another voice came out of the altar saying: *"Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments."*

The evil and wickedness that men do against their fellowmen are also considered as sins against God. The oft repeated question of when will evil and wicked men be brought to justice, in other words, the matter of theodicy, is now revealed. There is no escape for men. God's full name is used and it speaks of His absolute sovereignty and omnipotence. His judgments upon all the inhabitants of the earth who do not repent but rebel and sin against Him are righteous.

There are another four more vial judgments to come. It will be an awful and terrifying experience.

THOUGHT: Do I fear God? Why?
PRAYER: O Lord, teach me to acknowledge and fear Thee.

ARMAGEDDON!

"And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun." The sun became more powerful so that the heat scorched the inhabitants of the earth. The people did not curse the sun but they blasphemed God's name showing that they knew the source of the scorching heat but did not repent. The fifth angel then poured his vial upon the centre of Satan's kingdom and darkness filled it and the people will not be able to see and will gnaw their tongues in pain. Again they too blasphemed God and repented not. The fact that they still suffer the effects of the first plague of sores strongly suggests that the vial judgments are poured out one after another in rapid succession.

"And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates." The Euphrates is the longest river in western Asia, flowing 2,720 kilometres through central Turkey, Syria and Iraq and finally to the Persian Gulf. The river was then dried up, and it allowed *"the kings of the east"* (east of Jerusalem) to move their armies across the river to Israel. Then John saw three unclean spirits, which are wicked demons, proceeding from their source of influence – Satan, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet. The metaphor of frogs describes their cold, slimy and wicked nature. They possess power to perform miracles and to gather *"the kings of the earth and of the whole world"* to battle against God's people, in particular, the Jews.

Verse 15 is an interlude to comfort the people of God. The Lord Jesus promised to come unexpectedly. He called His followers to be watchful, and *"keepeth his garments,"* meaning to maintain their robe of righteousness lest they be found not walking in the ways of God and be ashamed. The enemy will gather all the nations to a place called in the Hebrew tongue *"Armageddon."* The word is a compound of two words – *"Har"* and *"Mageddon"* – to mean "Mount Megiddo." It is a valley 80 km north of Jerusalem and the plain 38 km by 20 km.

THOUGHT: There will be another war, indeed the war of all wars!
PRAYER: Lord, let me be found watchful and righteous in Thy sight.

IT IS DONE

When the seventh angel poured out the contents of his bowl into the air, a great voice out of the Temple of Heaven declared: *"It is done"* (v 17). This is the seventh and final judgment of God upon the unrepentant and rebellious inhabitants on earth. Instantly, there were thunders, lightnings and an earthquake. The emphasis on the earthquake is noteworthy: *"a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great."*

The earthquake caused the great city Jerusalem to split into three parts. A detailed description of this phenomenon was predicted in Zechariah 14:4-10. The devastations will conclude when the Lord Jesus returns and sets His feet on the Mount of Olives. All the nations which have gathered in Jerusalem including the capital of the Antichrist's kingdom, *"great Babylon,"* will collapse by the fierceness of God's wrath. Every island will be submerged; mountains will be flattened. Exceedingly great hailstones (each about 100 pounds) will rain on earth. Many will be killed, particularly those who blasphemed the name of God.

The days of grace have ended. There is now no mercy. God pours out the judgment of His wrath upon the inhabitants of the earth for their blasphemy in rejecting Him and Jesus Christ His Son; and for the evil, violence and wickedness towards their fellowmen, particularly, those who are the children of God and the Jews. Anti-Semitism and Anti-Israel do not pay. As Christians see these things happening before their eyes, they know that the end of the world is very near. They can rejoice because they have accepted the grace of God and His offer of salvation in Christ Jesus. They have rejected Satan, sin and the world. The Christian faith is not in vain because the God they believe in is indeed the living and true God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. All that have been prophesied are true.

THOUGHT: Avail myself of the grace of God in Christ Jesus now.
PRAYER: Lord, may my heart be teachable to learn from Thy Word.

THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS

One of the seven angels which had the seven vials came and spoke to John: *"Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters"* (v 1). The identity of this *"great whore"* (harlot) is given in the verses that follow. The *"many waters"* upon which *"the great whore"* sits are *"peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues"* (v 15). Harlot is a metaphor used here for religious apostasy and idolatry. This great harlot can be identified as the False Prophet who sits upon *"a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns"* (v 3). This latter figure is none other than the Antichrist (13:1).

The great harlot is clothed *"in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls*, *having a golden cup in her hand…"* (v 4). The colours of her clothes symbolize luxury, splendour and royalty. The golden cup is filled with the wine of all kinds of idolatry. The fact that she sits on the scarlet coloured beast, which is the Antichrist, shows that she is borne up by the Antichrist who gives her power. She is named *"MYSTERY, BABYLON, THE GREAT"* indicating that this Babylon is not the literal geographical Babylon (Iraq) but a symbol of world-wide rebellion against God and the Lord Jesus Christ as depicted by the name: *"THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH"* (v 5). She leads the people of the earth to resist God and worship the Antichrist.

This great harlot strikes a stunning figure that even John *"wondered with great admiration"* (v 6). But she is blood-thirsty, killing the followers of Jesus. The pouring out of God's judgment by the seventh angel (16:17) actually continues chronologically with the return of Jesus to end the great battle of Armageddon (16:16; 19:11). Chapters 17 and 18 are inserted to give more details of what and who will be judged.

THOUGHT: People still seek to worship something other than God.
PRAYER: O Lord, let me not be guilty of idolatrous worship.

WHY DO YOU MARVEL?

John wondered with great admiration at the great whore. The same angel continued to reveal to John *"the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns"* (v 7). The beast is the Antichrist, having seven heads and ten horns. The beast *"that was, and is not, and yet is"* (v 8) is a reference to the Antichrist who was wounded but is alive. Although the Antichrist may seem to be supreme and in control, he shall go into perdition (eternal damnation). When the unbelievers see what happens to the Antichrist, they shall be confounded.

The angel next talked about the *"seven heads...seven mountains...seven kings"* (vv 9-10). There is no need for any speculation to discern the meaning of the *"seven heads"* and *"seven mountains"* for the text plainly indicates that they represent *"seven kings."* The word *"mountains"* is used figuratively to mean dominion or empire and power, hence the *"seven kings."* Five of the seven kings have fallen, one is still ruling, and the other is not yet come (v 10). Five world empires had fallen by the time of John's vision: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia and Greece. The one that was still ruling at that time was Rome. The seventh that is yet to be is the final one-world rule of the Antichrist. Verse 11 explains that the Antichrist is actually the eighth (of the seven and he will be assigned to perdition).

This is not an easy text to understand fully. Bible scholars have worked over it and offered a range of interpretations. Although there is no consensus to the details, the main thrust of the text is clear. The Antichrist, the next world ruler, will emerge and lead many unbelievers to follow him. But his ultimate end will be eternal destruction with all his followers. This present godless World Order will also come to an end and be destroyed. This is a call to Christians to be sober, vigilant, discerning and wise.

THOUGHT: Hope deferred makes the heart sick.
PRAYER: O Lord, help me, by faith, to take the next step.

CALLED, CHOSEN AND FAITHFUL

The angel further explained to John about the ten horns of the beast (v 7). The *"ten horns"* are *"ten kings"* who each has yet to receive a kingdom. But they receive power and authority with the *"beast,"* who is the Antichrist for *"one hour."* The seven heads of the beast are kingdoms, but the ten kings are without kingdoms. These ten kings, who have not received a kingdom at that time, will receive one at a later time. They will be of one mind and then offer their power and authority to the Antichrist. By that time, the Antichrist will have formed the last and final world power.

The Antichrist, now supported by the ten kings, will make war *"with the Lamb,"* the Lord Jesus. This war is mentioned earlier (16:14, 16). The outcome of the war is that *"the Lamb shall overcome them"* (v 14). Jesus, the Son of God, is the *"Lord of lords, and King of kings"* (v 14). These two titles show that Jesus stands sovereign and supreme over all the other kings of the world. He will be triumphant. Christ will overcome the Antichrist and the kings of the world. They that are with Him are *"called, and chosen, and faithful"* (v 14). This is the only text where Christians are described thus. Believers are first called and chosen by God because none will seek Him. These called and chosen ones are faithful to Him. This third characteristic is significant. Indeed, the called and chosen believers will remain faithful to God and the Lord Jesus. They will never deny God and Christ. They will bear a good witness of Jesus Christ. They shall return with Christ in His great and glorious second coming (Greek: *parousia;* Jude 14-15).

Christians should be thrilled at the prospect of being with Jesus at His *parousia*. How exciting it will be! Christians will not only see Jesus Christ bodily, but will also come back to earth with Him! God has revealed here in His infallible and inerrant Word the destiny of man and the world. Are you prepared for this Day of the Lord?

THOUGHT: With Christ, endless hope. Without Him, hopeless end.
PRAYER: Lord, give me a desire to know Thee and to believe.

ONE-WORLD RELIGION DESTROYED

The angel then explained the meaning of the word *"waters,"* that is *"peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues"* (v 15). *"Peoples"* and *"multitudes"* are terms meaning the masses of the inhabitants of the earth. But the term *"nations"* is ethnicities (ie races) and the term *"tongues"* does not mean literal tongues but languages. In other words, what the angel was going to reveal will affect the entire world irrespective of race or language. And the ten kings (*"the ten horns"*) together with the Antichrist forming the One-World Government will then hate the adulterous *"whore"* or the One-World Church. This is actually the spiritually adulterous apostate church. For three-and-a-half years during the first half of the seven-year Tribulation, this One-World Church will be supporting the One-World Government of the Antichrist. Consequently, the Antichrist will increase his wealth, power, authority and the subjugation of the masses.

But in the beginning of the second half of the seven-year Tribulation, the Antichrist together with the ten kings shall hate the One-World Church. The Antichrist will exalt himself and demand to be worshipped by all the nations. He and the ten kings will destroy the One-World Church. The Antichrist will sever his relationship with the apostate church, leaving her to suffer alone. He will strip her *"naked"* by exposing her moral corruption and shall *"eat her flesh"* by causing her to deceive and destroy her churches and finally *"burn her with fire,"* bringing utter destruction. All these things happen because God has put in the hearts of the ten kings to give their kingdoms to the Antichrist so that His plan and purpose shall be fulfilled. The angel explained that *"the woman,"* that is the adulterous whore, is *"that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth."* The woman and *"that great city"* is Rome. It may seem incredibly absurd to some but it will happen as it is God's revelation.

THOUGHT: Know about the apostate church from God's Word.
PRAYER: O Lord, help me to be prepared for such an eventuality.

THE HABITATION OF DEVILS

"And after these things I saw" (18:1) shows what comes next is in sequence to the previous visions John has received. Therefore it is related to what have been predicted in chapter 17. It introduces more information regarding *"BABYLON THE GREAT"* (17:5). Another angel appeared, coming down from heaven. God's angels are His messengers and do His bidding. This angel is described as *"having great power."* God's angels are all powerful (even the fallen angels). But they are all under God, who alone is almighty and sovereign.

This angel, who came down from heaven, brightened the earth with his glory. He announced emphatically and affirmatively that *"Babylon the great is fallen."* It will be finished. *"Babylon"* in Revelation 18 is the kingdom of the Antichrist, who shall dominate the political, economic, financial and cultural sphere of the world. It is described here as *"the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird"* (v 2). The inhabitants of the earth will be under demonic influences and unclean and hateful spirits. The imagery of *"a cage"* suggests isolation and desolation for God's judgment will soon be upon them. All nations led by their kings (leaders) have colluded with the Antichrist in worshipping him and rebelling against God. The Antichrist is not an atheist. He will lead the unbelieving inhabitants of the world to be drunk with his spiritual fornication. The merchants are another category of people, who have a special relationship with the Antichrist. They will become fabulously rich through the Antichrist's power which will aid them.

The people of the world will not believe this grim and dismal picture of the future. It seems ridiculous and insane. Man has advanced technologically. However, for the past several decades, man has not become better in their respect towards and relationship with one another. Materialism, greed, pride, self-exaltation, wealth, wantonness, violence, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God are clear marks of the world today.

THOUGHT: Will we let the world get better of us Christians?
PRAYER: Lord, help me to be strong and steadfast in Thee.

COME OUT OF HER, MY PEOPLE

John heard another voice from heaven saying: *"Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."* God calls believers *"my people"* (see also 21:3), showing that God has a special relationship with all believers. His command to them to *"come out"* of Babylon, that is the world, shows His love, care and concern for His blood-bought people. The command does not only mean to separate physically, but also spiritually. They have to remove themselves physically from the wickedness of the world because God is going to pour out His anger and judgment on them. God cares for His people. But it should also be understood spiritually for His people are saints or the holy ones, and they should separate themselves from ungodly practices and philosophies.

God gave the reason: *"ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."* The word *"partakers"* is significant. It does not only mean to be physically present with sinners. It also includes the idea of uniting, clinging to and sharing. We remember Lot and his family who lived in Sodom. God sent His angels to tell them to get out of Sodom, and the moment they went out, the city was destroyed. Lot's wife, while fleeing from the city, looked back when she was told not to do so, and she suffered the same judgment. She was turned into a pillar of salt (Gen 19:26). The reason God told them to come out of the world into which God is pouring His judgment of plagues, is that they will escape the judgment.

A valid question is: why are God's people with the sinful people of the world? It can only mean that in the last days there are many of God's people who are clinging and sharing with the people of the world. They are *"partakers"* and God's command is that they should not. God is merciful, calling His people to come out of these sinful, rebellious and unrepentant people of the world. If God's people refuse to heed God's warning, they will suffer the same judgment.

THOUGHT: Christian, is the world getting the best of you?
PRAYER: Lord, may Christ's strength enable me to do all things.

GOD REMEMBERS

The sins of Babylon and her followers have reached heaven. God remembers her iniquities. God has been merciful but His patience will be for a while and the time will come when sinners will be judged and punished accordingly. When God remembers, it is not just mental academic recognition, He acts on it. It is revealed that God will reward His enemies according to what they have done to His people; *"double according to her works."* The word *"double"* does not mean twice numerically but rather that the punishment will be meted out in full. The judgment will be complete and total, none can escape.

What are the charges against her? She has indulged in glorifying herself rather than God. God created man to honour and glorify Him and not self. Another charge is that she has *"lived deliciously."* The term means sensual and luxurious living. She is guilty of immoral and opulent living, disregarding the existence and presence of God. God is not in her mind. She arrogantly boasts that *"I sit a queen,"* meaning that she is in control, she is no poor widow and she experiences no sorrow. There is nothing for her to be sorrowful about.

But God's judgment will be just and equitable. The Old Testament justice is an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. This is fair and equal retribution for all the wicked deeds of the Antichrist and his people against the people of God. Torment for torment, sorrow for sorrow. The judgment of plagues will *"come in one day,"* meaning quick and sudden resulting in death, mourning and famine. Ultimately, the world will be utterly destroyed with fire. God had once destroyed the earth with water in the Great Flood. He has promised that He will never destroy the earth with water again. In these last days, He will destroy the earth with fire. There will be no escape, *"for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her."*

THOUGHT: Judgment is not on what might be, but on what has been.
PRAYER: Lord, in Thee do I trust and each day live for Thy glory.

GOD'S JUDGMENT IN ONE HOUR

"For in one hour so great riches is come to nought" (vv 17, 10). This declaration may seem shockingly unbelievable, but it will come to pass. The time is almost towards the end of the seven-year Tribulation, and God is vindicating His people and bringing judgments upon the leaders and inhabitants of the world, who have rebelled and persecuted God's people. There are three groups of people: *"the kings of the earth"* (v 9), *"the merchants of the earth"* (v 11), and *"all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea"* (v 17).

The kings mentioned here are different from the ten kings who reign and support the Antichrist. The kings here are generally the political leaders of the world. They have submitted to the government of the Antichrist and participated in his corrupt spiritual and religious practices, and have increased their wealth and lived in opulent luxuries. But at this time they shall be weeping and wailing because the seat of the government of the Antichrist in his great city will be burnt and destroyed. This destruction shall happen suddenly.

The second group of the earth's inhabitants is the merchants. An examination of the list of the commodities they trade in shows what they covet and indulge in. They are precious metals and stones like gold and silver, and pearls; cloths of fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet; fragrant and precious wood, vessels of ivory, brass, iron and marble; spices and perfumes; food of fine flour and wheat; meat of animals and sheep, and trading in horses and chariots; and finally, in slaves and the souls of men. Interestingly, the present trend in the world is heading towards all these things. Exploitation of things and men will intensify. The rich become richer and the poor poorer. Men and women will be exploited and enslaved. Enough is enough. God will intervene and bring to a halt the Antichrist's absolute rule.

THOUGHT: It is better to have a good name than great riches.
PRAYER: Lord, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

NO MORE AT ALL

While the followers and supporters of the Antichrist are mourning because of the destruction in the world, there is rejoicing in heaven by the holy apostles and prophets (v 20). At first glance, it might seem inappropriate. But they are rejoicing because of God's judgment upon the workers of iniquities and their blasphemies against God and all His apostles and prophets, of whom many are being persecuted, burned and killed. God has been longsuffering in pronouncing His righteous judgments upon their unbelief, idolatry and rebellion. It is the time appointed by God to judge the world and to vindicate His faithful followers.

A mighty angel took *"a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea"* (v 21). This is a figure of speech to illustrate the downfall of Babylon, the godless world system. They have indulged themselves in unbridled pleasures, prideful confidence, *"marrying and giving in marriage,"* sorcery, deceiving all nations, and killing the prophets and saints of God. There is no fear of God. They are totally out of their minds and hearts. They have forgotten their creator God, whom they ought to honour and glorify. The judgment upon them will cause them and their activities to be *"no more at all."* This phrase is repeated five times in the last five verses of the chapter. It means that the godless world system and all that are therein shall be destroyed, never to be revived again.

Now it is understandable why the apostles, prophets and saints in heaven will be rejoicing. Christians should take special heed to this prophetic revelation. Although the destruction prophesied does not affect us directly, this revelation should sound a sobering note in our hearts. How should one live to honour and glorify God? Are there still loved ones, relatives and friends who are in the world and not in Christ Jesus? The message here must be shared with them.

THOUGHT: There are only two days in the calendar: "today" and "that day."
PRAYER: Lord, help me do aright today; that day will surely come.

THE LORD GOD OMNIPOTENT REIGNS!

The opening phrase *"And after these things"* points to the preceding events that are described in chapter 18. Satan's and the Antichrist's deception and oppression of the people on earth, especially Christians, have now ended. The time is the end of the seven-year Tribulation and the visible, bodily, glorious and triumphant return of Jesus. His return will usher in a new millennial era, when Jesus will reign as the only Potentate, the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

A great voice of many people in heaven, including saints who had been persecuted and killed by the Antichrist during the Tribulation, shouts in unison (v 1). *"Salvation"* is the deliverance from the oppression of Satan and his agent the Antichrist. *"Glory"* is for His true and righteous judgment upon *"the great whore"* and all those who have followed him. *"Honour"* is for His avenging of the blood of His servants, and *"power"* for His omnipotence.

And all of them shout *"Alleluia,"* a Hebrew word used often in the Book of Psalms. It means "Praise Yahweh" or "Praise the LORD." Another group in heaven, that is the four and twenty elders and the four beasts (who are magnificent angels), falls down and worships God (v 4). *"Amen"* simply means "may it be so" (according to what has been said). This group bursts out in response to the *"Alleluia"* of the first group in heaven. Then *"a voice came out of the throne"* calls upon all God's servants who fear Him, both small and great, to *"praise our God."* In response, the voice of a great multitude – the sea of many nations of believers – in a thunderous voice shouts: *"Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth"* (v 6).

What a beautiful, wonderful and joyous scene in heaven at the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to earth with all His saints! Christians today must learn to practise saying *"Alleluia"* and *"Amen."*

THOUGHT: Praising God must always precede praying to God.
PRAYER: Lord, fill my heart with thankfulness, gratitude and praise.

MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB

The *"Alleluia"* chorus by God's blood-bought people calling on all, including themselves, to *"be glad and rejoice,"* and to *"honour"* the Lord Jesus because of *"the marriage of the Lamb,"* is about to begin (v 7). The *"wife"* of Christ has made herself ready. The occasion is the marriage of the Lamb, Christ being the Lamb. His bride is the Church consisting of all believers. In the Old Testament, Israel is pictured as the wife of God. The Greek for *"bride"* and *"wife"* is the same word (see Rev 21:9). Although Israel had been unfaithful and adulterous, God promised to pardon her and to betroth Himself to her again forever at a price He Himself would pay: *"And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD"* (Hosea 2:19-20). The Lord Jesus has paid the price for the redemption of believers of both Testaments. The Church will be together with Christ at the rapture and thence will come back with Him in His triumphant and glorious second coming in Jerusalem to vindicate and deliver Israel from all nations. Then the marriage supper of the Lamb will take place.

The saints of the Old Testament and New Testament will be clothed with *"fine linen, clean and white,"* for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints. Clean and white symbolize purity. This righteousness is not earned by the merits of the saints but *"by grace ... through faith ... the gift of God"* in the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb are blessed. They are the saints themselves. In other words, the saints are the bride, or wife, of the Lamb. This is in fulfilment of the promises of God to both Israel and the Church. What a blessed gathering it will be! Believe in Jesus Christ, and make sure that you are there too. Why should you not be there?

THOUGHT: *"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."*
PRAYER: Lord, give me knowledge, understanding and wisdom.

LORD OF LORDS

Heaven opens and He who sits on a white horse is none other than the Lord Jesus. He is called Faithful and True and His name is The Word of God. The Lord Jesus is the living Word and the Holy Scripture is the inspired, preserved and written Word. The living Word is perfect and therefore the written Word must also be perfect – infallible and inerrant! The armies in heaven washed by the blood of the Lamb and clothed in *"fine linen, clean and white"* are none other than all the believers (v 8). They come together with the Lord Jesus in His second coming to earth. He comes in righteousness to judge and make war. He shall conquer the nations of the world by the word of His mouth. He shall smite and rule them with *"a rod of iron,"* uncompromisingly.

Contrary to the popular idea that the Lord Jesus is just meek, lowly and loving, and indeed He is, the other true side of Him is that He is also equally righteous, just and holy. The vivid picture of Him treading on *"the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God"* portrays a sobering truth of His judgment upon all the unrepentant and rebellious at the end of the age. He returns, setting His feet on the Mount of Olives as the *"KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS"* (v 16). In the final days of His ministry on earth, He entered Jerusalem, the Holy City, riding on *"the foal of an ass"* (Matt 21:5). Now at the end of the age, He shall descend triumphant and glorious as the Supreme Potentate over all the kings and queens, presidents and prime ministers, the pope and archbishops, mullahs and high priests!

This paramount event signals the end of the present world system. The Lord Jesus Christ will have the last word and prepare the earth for His millennial (1,000 years) reign. All believers who have been faithful to Him shall live on in the millennial kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.

THOUGHT: This divine prophecy can be joyous or mournful.
PRAYER: Lord, teach me to think about my life and be truly wise.

THE LAKE OF FIRE AND BRIMSTONE

An angel stood conspicuously in the sun calling all the birds of the world to come to the *"supper of the great God"* (v 17). This feast is diametrically opposite of the marriage supper of the Lamb (v 9). The birds are called to "feast" on the flesh of the nations who stage a battle against Jesus. This is the battle of Armageddon (Rev 16:16). The prophet Zechariah predicted how Christ will subdue His enemies: *"their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth"* (Zech 14:12). The birds will have a great feast and at the same time dispose of the dead bodies.

But the beast (the Antichrist) and the False Prophet (who have performed miracles, deceiving the people who have received the mark of the beast and who worshipped the image of the Antichrist) shall be cast *"alive"* into the Lake of Fire burning with brimstone (like sulphur). Christ will destroy the rest of them by the breath of His mouth (v 21)! This is in response to the prayers of the saints: *"How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?"* (6:10). Those who remain are the saints who survive the seven-year Tribulation. They shall be ushered into the millennial kingdom of the Lord Jesus.

This revelation of the future gives much comfort and encouragement to all true believers of the Lord Jesus Christ, for this is the fulfilment of the promises of God. It is also the consummation of the plan of God, and the beginning of an era that will lead to God's final plan and purpose for His creation. Everyone who acknowledges and obeys Him will have a part in this. Is it not sad that many today are still procrastinating and resisting the call to confess and repent of their sins against God, and to believe and receive Christ as their Saviour?

THOUGHT: Tomorrow's life is too late. Live today.
PRAYER: Lord, have mercy on me and help me to live daily for Thee.

"And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light."

DECEIVING PEOPLE NO MORE

The angel whom John saw coming down from heaven can be identified as the *"star fall from heaven,"* who has *"the key of the bottomless pit"* (9:1). What is different is that earlier, the angel unlocks the bottomless pit or the abyss (Greek: *abussou*), letting out *"locusts upon the earth."* Whereas here, the angel locks and seals Satan for a thousand years (v 2). He carries *"a great chain"* in his hand which he uses to bind Satan. The *"dragon"* is another name accorded to Satan who is *"that old serpent."* This is a reference to the Garden of Eden where Satan as the serpent tempted and deceived Adam and Eve, causing them to sin against God (Gen 3:1-4). He is also called the Devil, while Peter described him as our *"adversary ... seeking whom he may devour"* (1 Pet 5:8). The angel binds and casts Satan together with the fallen angels into the abyss, shutting and sealing him up for a thousand years or a "millennium" (Latin: *mille* meaning "one thousand" and *annum* meaning "year"). In other words, Satan and his cohorts will be locked up for a thousand years so that he may not deceive the nations any more. And after the thousand years are over, Satan will be released for a short season.

This is the second time Satan has been defeated; the first time he was cast out into the earth and his angels with him (Rev 12:9). Now, he and his angels will be cast out and sealed in the abyss for a thousand years. From a human perspective, one thousand years seem a long time. But from God's view, they are but as yesterday, and when they are past, they are like *"a watch in the night"* (Ps 90:4). Since the dawn of creation, Satan and his agents have deceived the people of the world. Many have been deceived by him, just as Adam and Eve had been. His deception is so subtle that we must *"be sober, be vigilant."*

THOUGHT: Men are prone to be deceived, take care.
PRAYER: Lord, give me understanding and wisdom to know Satan's deception.

LIVE AND REIGN WITH CHRIST!

John saw thrones and *"the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God"* sat on the thrones. These souls are given the power and authority to judge the unbelievers. It also specifically mentions that they are the ones who *"had not worshipped the beast"* (ie Antichrist) and *"his image, neither had received his mark"* on their foreheads and hands. We can rightly say that they represent all the saints of the Old Testament and the New Testament, who have witnessed and some were even martyred for the sake of Christ. God has promised in His Word that His saints will one day judge the unbelievers (Dan 7:22; 1 Cor 6:2).

All the saints of God shall be resurrected when Jesus visibly, bodily, and gloriously returns to earth, and will live and reign with Him in His kingdom on earth for a thousand years! This is the First Resurrection. Blessed are those who have a part in this first resurrection, *"on such the second death hath no power."* Our first death is the physical death in which our mortal and corrupt bodies are buried under the earth. If a person is a Christian, his soul is ushered into the presence of God. But if he is an unbeliever, his soul will be interned in Hades awaiting judgment day, which will take place after the one-thousand-year reign of Christ on earth.

This is the wonderful hope of everyone who has called on the name of Jesus, believes in the redemptive work of His death and resurrection, and has received Him into his heart. Indeed, he is most blessed. The alternative is to reject the good message of Jesus, spend one's life on earth making money, enjoy the pleasures and the limelight of the world, and have a name that is above others. But a person's life is only threescore and ten years. By virtue of strength, he may add another ten or fifteen years. After that one must die as God has already said in Hebrews 9:27.

THOUGHT: Everything passes, everything perishes.
PRAYER: Lord, help me in my unbelief that I may accept Thy Word.

SATAN'S FINAL DESTINY

Christ's millennial reign has taken its full course. Satan who has been locked and sealed in the abyss shall be *"loosed out of his prison"* (v 7). This freedom given to him is for *"a little season"* (v 3). Satan loses no time to carry on with his previous work of deception. He has not changed even after a thousand years. He knows that soon he will be removed forever, never to appear again. He now makes his last attempt to rally the masses of people who have lived under very favourable conditions in the reign of Christ Jesus.

The Millennial Kingdom of Christ is initially peopled by born-again Christians who survive the seven-year Tribulation while Satan and his fallen angels are locked up for one thousand years. All crimes committed will be instantly dealt with. However, the children of these initial born-again Christians who populate the earth then will marry and have children, and their children will be like the present-day children of Christian parents. They still have the sinful nature in them. In the Millennial Kingdom, people will live to a very old age, and the population although small in the beginning will increase greatly. At the end of the millennium, Satan and his cohorts will gather *"the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth*, *Gog and Magog"* to battle against Jesus Christ, the LORD of Lords and the KING of Kings. Gog is the general name of the protagonists who are anti-God and Magog is the masses of people rebelling against God.

This revelation shows that the depraved nature of men is totally corrupt in spite of the perfect conditions of the millennial kingdom in which they live. But there will be no battle because *"fire came down from God out of heaven"* to consume all the rebels. Satan will meet his third and final casting down into the Lake of Fire alive to join both the Antichrist and the False Prophet who are already there. They shall all be tormented day and night forever. The idea of annihilation after death is therefore not according to Scripture.

THOUGHT: Beware of new and strange ideas and doctrines of hell.
PRAYER: Lord, may I believe that there is a hell.

JUDGMENT AT THE GREAT WHITE THRONE

Satan and all the fallen angels are cast into the Lake of Fire to be tormented day and night for ever and ever for their evil work of deceiving people since the dawn of creation. John saw *"a great white throne"* and God was sitting on it. Satan and sinners (who have died without Jesus) have no place "with" God. Satan has already been separated and cast into the Lake of Fire which is his final abode. And now, all unbelieving sinners will stand "before" God.

The moment has arrived for all unbelievers both small and great to be judged by the almighty and holy God at the Great White Throne. They will also be resurrected (from wherever they have been buried) for this inescapable judgment day. Books having the records of the works of all unbelievers will be opened. Another book is also opened – the Book of Life.

The unbelievers will be judged according to their works. They boast of their innocence and good works. They claim the right to have a place in heaven. God will judge them righteously according to their works. God has already said, *"But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags ..."* (Isa 64:6). No one can save himself with his good works from this judgment of God. Again God has said, *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast"* (Eph 2:8-9). Unbelievers have rejected God's Word and warning. However, God will judge them righteously so that they will be convinced that they deserve the punishment given to them. The period of grace is over and no one can escape the judgment of God.

This revelation is still future, but signs today show that this day is coming soon. Today, there is time still to be delivered from this awful judgment by believing in Jesus, and Jesus alone.

THOUGHT: One cannot be filled with grace if one is full of self.
PRAYER: Lord, I pray Thee to free me from the shackles of pride.

THE SECOND DEATH

All the unbelievers are judged by God at the Judgment of the Great White Throne. They will all be convinced that they deserve God's judgment upon them because of their sins. God has already said, *"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord"* (Rom 6:23). They have all sinned against God. After the judgment before God, they will realize the awesomeness of His holiness and justice. Another sobering reality is that there is no more second chance, they cannot repent and believe in Jesus and be saved at that time. God's patience has come to an end.

All these unbelievers will be cast into the Lake of fire. *"This is the second death"* (v 14). The first death is the physical death which every person (except those raptured) will experience. The *"second death"* is spiritual death. Because of sin, a person is separated from God. His only access to God while on earth is to repent of his sins and call upon Jesus, believing in His atoning work on the cross (about 2,000 years ago) and believing in his heart that God has raised Him from the dead. Then he shall be saved and be reconciled to God. If not, he will face what God's Word here calls *"the second death."* He will be thrown into the Lake of Fire to be tormented forever and ever. He will join Satan, the Antichrist and the False Prophet who are already there.

While on earth, Jesus said, *"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"* (Mark 8:36). God's revelation here regarding the ultimate end of man should awaken man to the realization that his soul is worth more than the world's material wealth and glory. But Satan has deceived man that it is alright to have all the wealth and glory of this world, and even helped man to gain them, provided man does not believe in Jesus.

THOUGHT: Knowledge of the truth is better than gold.
PRAYER: Lord, be merciful to me a sinner.

NEW HEAVEN AND NEW EARTH

After Christ's one-thousand-year reign, *"the first heaven and the first earth"* will pass away. This present heaven and earth which God made in the beginning was *"very good."* But it was corrupted by sin. Now, God will create *"a new heaven and a new earth"* for all people who have been born-again and redeemed by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. This new heaven and new earth will also be very good because God creates it. If people love this earth and heaven because they have been thrilled and excited by the great opportunities and challenges which whet their intellectual and emotional appetites, how much more shall it be in the new heaven and new earth! One of the first things revealed about the new earth is that there shall be *"no more sea"* (v 1). It should be understood literally. We are so used to the sea. The sea supplies us with seafood. We can travel on the sea to interesting places and enjoy beautiful sceneries. But at the same time, the sea is also a symbol of unrest, turmoil and turbulence in the world. In the new heaven and the new earth, these shall be no more and there will be more wonderful sceneries. The citizens of heaven will have the glorified body and they do not need to eat seafood to live. They will have a different and far more astounding mode of travel from place to place covering thousands and millions of kilometres in a split second!

Heaven is where God is. The Lord Jesus Christ had preached and taught *"where your treasure is, there will your heart be also"* (Matt 6:21). He was teaching His disciples to have their treasure in heaven so that their hearts will be in heaven. Paul exhorted that Christians should set their *"affection on things above, not on things on the earth"* (Col 3:2). To the Christians in Philippi, he said that Christians have their citizenship in heaven (Phil 3:20). The disciples and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ should have their hearts and minds thinking and focusing on heaven where God is and where it is eternal.

THOUGHT: Treasures in heaven are eternal.
PRAYER: Lord, let me go to heaven where Thou art and not to hell.

GOD WITH BELIEVERS ETERNALLY

The next vision John saw was the holy city, new Jerusalem. It originates from God and comes down from heaven. This new Jerusalem is not the present old city of Jerusalem in Israel. They are different in many ways. The dimensions of the old city differ from those of the new. The people who live in them are different—the Jews and the Palestinians in the old city, but only the redeemed of all nationalities in the new city. The bride is the Church, all the redeemed (both Jews and Gentiles) now adorned with the glorified body prepared for her husband, the everlasting Lord Jesus, the Son of God, the second person of the Triune God.

And a great voice out of heaven directed John that *"the tabernacle of God is with men"* (v 3). These men are all the faithful believers and disciples of Jesus Christ throughout all the ages. God shall dwell with them and they shall be His people, and He shall be their God. This means that they shall be able to see God as He is in His shekinah glory. This glory is His brilliant shining presence of light. The Lord Jesus Christ said, *"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God"* (Matt 5:8). The redeemed are the pure in heart having been imputed with the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. The next wonderful experience is that they can have unbroken fellowship with God. They will constantly worship Him in spirit and in truth. It will be perfect because they will be in a perfect state. They will know and see Him as He is and will honour, glorify and praise Him. And they will gladly and readily serve Him, for it is a privilege and an honour to serve the almighty and holy God.

For the unbelievers, they will be eternally separated from Him, for they have rejected Him when they had the chance to believe in Him. But the believers (who have believed in Him by faith) shall now and forever be with Him. It is a great blessing forever.

THOUGHT: If there is no God, there is no man. But there is a God!
PRAYER: Lord, may I love Thee with all my heart.

NO MORE DEATH

God has revealed that after the Great White Throne judgment and the final casting of all who have rebelled against and rejected Jesus into the Lake of Fire, this present heaven and earth will be destroyed. God will create a new heaven and a new earth. All His people since Adam and Eve (who have repented and confessed their sins against Him, and have believed and received Christ Jesus into their hearts) shall dwell in this brand new world where *"God himself shall be with them, and be their God"* (v 3)! There will be no more crying for all tears will be wiped away (v 4). There will be no more sorrow because there will be no more death. Everyone in the brand new world will have the glorified body which is immortal and incorruptible for all eternity. And because the body is incorruptible, there will no more sickness and no more pain. From then onwards, the former things are passed away. No more tears, no more death, no more sorrow, no more crying and no more pain! Good-bye to all these.

God who sits on the throne said, *"Behold, I make all things new"* (v 5). God told John to write and record His words for they are *"true and faithful."* All these predictions come from God and they are true. It will happen in God's timing which is very soon. Do not listen or be attracted to false preaching and teachings. Only God knows the future because He is the Lord of history and He knows the end from the beginning. Who else can boast that they know the end from the beginning? No one, not even Satan. God is the only One who knows. God is faithful because He is the truth. He is ever faithful to His Word and promises. Just as the predictions about the first advent of the Lord Jesus Christ and His atoning death (to save the world so that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish) have been fulfilled to the letter, so all these future predictions will also come to fruition. It is only a case of "when" and not whether it will be or not. Do you believe?

THOUGHT: Consider honestly the message of God's Word.
PRAYER: Lord, help me to overcome my foolishness and unbelief.

THAT GREAT CITY, THE HOLY JERUSALEM

In the brand new world, *"there was no more sea"* (v 1). *"That great city, the holy Jerusalem"* will descend out of heaven from God (v 10). In this section, the measurements of the holy Jerusalem are described. The wall of the city has twelve foundations and on each of the foundations is inscribed the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, the Lord Jesus being the Lamb. Paul wrote that the Church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. It means that in the great city of the holy Jerusalem, both the saints of the Old Testament and the New Testament including the saints of the Tribulation will be enjoying this great, beautiful and glorious city together. He also shared that Abraham *"by faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God"* (Heb 11:9-10). Remember Abraham did not find the city even till the end of the days of his life on earth. But he will see and enjoy that city when it descends from God at the beginning of the new age which will last forever and ever.

This holy Jerusalem will be cube-shaped: 1,500 miles in length, width and height. It resembles the shape of the Holy of Holies of the Tabernacle in the wilderness. Now in the new Jerusalem, God decorates the foundations with twelve beautiful precious stones – *"jasper"* (crystal clear like the diamond), *"sapphire"* (clear blue), *"chalcedony"* (greenish agate), *"emerald"* (bright green), *"sardonyx"* (reddish white), *"sardius"* (fiery red), *"chrysolite"* (transparent golden yellow), *"beryl"* (sea green lighter than emerald), *"topaz"* (transparent greenish yellow), *"chrysoprasus"* (aquamarine colour), *"jacinth"* (violet) and *"amethyst"* (purple). The twelve gates of the city will each be made from a gigantic pearl. The street will be pure gold. God, infinitely all-powerful and all-knowing, prepares this place for His people.

THOUGHT: Am I living on earth but making my way to heaven?
PRAYER: Lord, give me the faith to believe Thy Word.

NO TEMPLE THEREIN

There will be no physical temple where the Almighty God resides in the new holy city of Jerusalem. This is because the Lord God Almighty and the Lord Jesus are the real temple. We understand temples on earth to be where God is and we sense His presence through the eyes of faith. But in the new Jerusalem, God and the Lord Jesus live with His people, both Jews and Gentiles. God restores His relationship and fellowship with man, just as it was with Adam and Eve before the Fall. God had direct communication and fellowship with them. Did not God one day walking in the Garden call Adam and his wife, *"Where art thou?"* (Gen 3:8-9). And so it will be in the new Jerusalem in the eternal state when all the people of God will have uninterrupted and inseparable fellowship and communion with God and the Lord Jesus!

Another wonderful phenomenon is that the new Jerusalem does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it. The shekinah glory of God will light the whole city, yea, indeed the whole earth, and the Lord Jesus is the light thereof (v 23). In other words, there are no more constraints of space and time. These old things shall pass away. According to some Bible scholars, all the nations, who are saved by the redemptive work of Christ, who survive the millennial kingdom and who do not join Satan's final rebellion, will inhabit the new heaven and the new earth. They shall come to the new Jerusalem to worship God with all the other saints. The gates of the new Jerusalem will never be shut. The nations and the people will come to worship God, giving Him the glory and honour due to His name.

As Christians, this hope gives us great comfort and confidence while we are still on this earth.

THOUGHT: With Christ, there is endless hope. Without Christ, there is a hopeless end.
PRAYER: Lord, deliver me from hopelessness without Christ.

NOTHING IMPURE SHALL ENTER

The new eternal holy city of Jerusalem is for those who have loved the truth concerning the Lord Jesus and who, having been convicted of their sins against God, repented and believed in Christ's redemptive work on the cross and are now saved. Here John identified three categories of sins by men that will exclude them from being a part of the holy city. First, *"any thing that defileth."* Anything that is unclean ethically and morally shall not be allowed into the city. God has given man the Ten Commandments on how to relate to Him and to his fellow men. Anyone who has broken them shall not enter into the eternal city of the future. Second, *"whatsoever worketh abomination."* Works that are abominable to God include practising witchcraft, consulting diviners, idolatry. These provoke God to anger. Third, anything that *"maketh a lie."* There will be no falsehood in the new city. Satan is a liar, the master of deceit. All these things and their perpetrators will not be in the city. Sin and Satan will not be in the new city. It will be pure, holy and eternal!

The names of those who will be allowed to live in the new city are *"written in the Lamb's book of life."* All those who are true and genuine Christians shall enter and live in the new city. They have the righteousness of God not because they are inherently holy and without sin. No, they were sinners, but because they had truly confessed their sins and accepted the atoning work of Christ on their behalf, God has imputed them with His righteousness. In other words, as far as God is concerned, they are holy and without sin. Their sins have been washed by the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

The purpose of this verse is to warn all who profess to be followers of Jesus Christ. If they are not genuine, they shall be excluded and shall not enter the future eternal city of Jerusalem.

THOUGHT: The heart of man is deceitful above all things. Beware!
PRAYER: Lord, help me so that I will not deceive myself.

SERVING AND REIGNING WITH CHRIST

John was shown *"a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal"* (v 1). The source of the river is *"the throne of God and of the Lamb."* There is also a street of gold in the city. On either side of the river, there is *"the tree of life which bare twelve manner of fruits... every month."* The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations (v 2). It is interesting that *"the tree of life"* is mentioned here. It was first mentioned in the Garden of Eden. (Eden means "delight" and so we can call it the Garden of Delight.) Adam and Eve could eat of the fruit of the tree of life and live forever. But instead they fell into sin. God in His mercy drove them out of the garden so that they would not live a longer life of sin and misery. The *"tree of life"* now in the new Jerusalem symbolizes the life eternal of all its inhabitants.

It is also interesting that *"the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."* What is this *"healing"* when there is no more sickness and death? The Greek word for *"healing"* is the English word "therapy" and it provides the idea of "health-giving" power to promote enjoyment of life forever and ever. It strongly suggests that although all believers have everlasting life and have the glorified body, they can take the leaves so that the enjoyment of eternal life will be promoted. Three blessings are given. The first one is that there is *"no more curse,"* that is, nothing in the new Jerusalem is deceitful or evil. Everything is very good as at the beginning of God's creation before the Fall (Gen 1:31). The next one is that all believers *"shall serve him."* The specific nature of this service is not given. So there will be great surprises in future. But, for sure, part of it is the worship of God. The third thing is that believers *"shall reign"* forever and ever. Given the prospect of the new earth and new heaven in which we can all travel with the speed of light, life will be full of excitement, challenges and responsibilities. A reminder: We may not understand everything as yet, not until we are there.

THOUGHT: What is my hope?
PRAYER: Lord, I praise and thank Thee for Thy love and mercy.

THE PROPHECY OF THIS BOOK

"And he said unto me" (v 6a). This was the angel who had been John's guide taking him through the revelation in the book. He pressed the point that all that had been revealed about the seven churches (Rev 2-3), and scenes of heaven and God's throne, and all the prophecies about the end of the age are *"faithful and true."* The source of these revelations is Jesus, *"the Lord God."* Jesus is ever faithful to all His words and promises. Jesus is also true to His Word because He Himself is the Truth. He will never, does not, and cannot lie. We can rest assured that He is reliable and absolutely trustworthy.

The angel also mentioned that *"the things . . . must shortly be done"* (v 6b). The Greek word for *"shortly"* can mean "speedily, quickly, swiftly, and in haste." Simply put: "soon or suddenly." It is revealed that when a certain number of believers (other than Jews) is saved, the Jews will open their eyes and recognize Jesus of Nazareth as their Messiah who will save them from their sins. Only God knows what the number of Gentiles or non-Jews who will be saved is. When the last Gentile is saved, thus fulfilling the number, the rapture and then the visible and glorious return of Christ after the Tribulation will take place!

Accordingly, the Lord Jesus exclaimed: *"Behold, I come quickly*: *blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book."* The prophecy of the book of Revelation (in fact all the sixty-six books of the Bible) is to prompt men to "hear" the Word of God and seriously "consider" its message and to "believe" in the Lord Jesus as their Saviour and be "delivered" from the torment in the Lake of Fire. When a man does that, he will be most blessed! We have only one life in this world and it is temporal and short as compared to the spiritual world which is eternity either in heaven or in hell. Man should not just focus on the things of this world but, more importantly, on the things of the world to come.

THOUGHT: The Creator God cheats no one who loves the truth.
PRAYER: Lord, let me not be deceived, but instead trust in Thee.

WORSHIP GOD

John saw and heard the things that were revealed to him. Overcame with awe, he *"fell down to worship before the feet of the angel"* who had shown him all those things. John literally bowed with his head touching the ground at the feet of the angel. This stance was tantamount to worshipping the angel who perceived it and immediately and directly told him NOT to do it. The angel commanded him to worship God instead. The angel also explained that he was just like John a fellow-servant of God. This also included all the prophets and those who kept the sayings of this book.

Why did the angel straightaway command John not to worship him? It was a sinful and foolish thing that John did. A man must worship God alone. This is the first and greatest commandment of all the commands of God. The Lord Jesus Christ in His earthly ministry said, *"Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve"* (Luke 4:8). God has emphatically warned His people that if they ever forget Him and worship and serve other gods, He will testify against them and they will surely perish (Deut 8:19). All Christians must conscientiously take heed of this commandment and never worship another man, no matter how dignified or how high a rank he holds. In this regard, one must never bow, pray or kneel to a dead person. Such actions are considered worship, not merely respect.

There is a difference between respect and worship. To a living person, it may be alright for us, especially in our Asian culture, to greet him by bowing or putting our hands together as a mark of respect; and that living person can reciprocate accordingly. Such marks of respect to one another are prevalent among Asians. But a note of caution on kneeling, as this stance is akin to worship. Whatever the custom, it must NOT be an act of worship in our heart. Others may not know but we know, and more importantly God knows. Only God is worthy of our worship and service.

THOUGHT: There is God and He knows.
PRAYER: Lord, teach me to worship and serve Thee, and none else.

CARRY ON DOING

John was told to *"seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book"* (v 10). Why not seal the prophecies of the Revelation of Jesus which God gave to Him to show to his servants things which must shortly come to pass (Rev 1:1)? The answer is simply that the time is at hand; the end of all things is happening soon. It also means that God wants every reader to know the prophecies of this special revelation. Many people complain that they do not understand the book of Revelation. This is just an excuse and it might well be that such excuses are inspired by Satan, the deceiver of all men who does not want anyone to read, understand, repent, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved! The book of Revelation is not too difficult to understand. One simple rule to read and understand is to take the plain sense of the words of the sayings and seek no other sense. God desires that everyone reads and responds appropriately.

The time is soon coming when the opportunity to change and repent will be taken away as verse 11 reads: *"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."* There will be no time to change. Things will happen so fast and so quickly that there will be no time to do other things. Take for example the second coming of Jesus Christ. It will happen suddenly, *"in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye"* and Christians, who have died in this world before Christ's return will be raised from the dead and be changed having incorruptible bodies!

Paul wrote that God had heard the cries of sinners in an accepted time and had come to save them. Paul continued and said: *". . . behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation"* (2 Cor 6:2). Do not procrastinate. Now is the time to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus. He came and died, paying the penalty of sin for every sinner who accepts Him.

THOUGHT: Do not put off what I can do today.
PRAYER: Lord, help me to trust Thee and do what I must do today.

MY REWARD TO EVERY MAN

This is the second time in this last chapter of the Bible that the Lord Jesus promised that He will come quickly to the world to receive all His disciples. This time He also announced that His reward is with Him. He will reward every disciple *"according as his work shall be."* Actually, we believers do not deserve a reward for we are His servants. As His servants, what we do for the Master is our duty and we should not expect a reward. Indeed, the Master, the Lord Jesus, has given His life for His servants so that they are delivered from the Lake of Fire and transported to the gateway of paradise in heaven to be with Him forever and ever! Yet how wonderful the Lord Jesus is to reward His servants according to the work which they performed by faith and with sincerity. The criterion He assesses His servants shall not be according to the quantity of things done but according to the quality. In other words, His servants should perform their work for His honour and glory rather than for their own self-gratification and glory. The latter shall not receive any reward at all.

Jesus added three significant names to Himself. The first is: *"I am Alpha and Omega."* The *"Alpha"* and the *"Omega"* are two ends of the Greek alphabet. It means that Jesus is the creator and the consummator of everything. He reiterated it with the second name: *"the beginning and the end."* This means that everything begins with Him and will come to an end with Him. And the third is: *"the first and the last."* These names emphasize that He is the primal cause and the ultimate effect of all things. As Paul declares, *"For by him* (Christ) *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"* (Col 1:16). And to the Corinthians, Paul says, *"For all the promises of God in him* (Christ) *are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us"* (2 Cor 1:20).

THOUGHT: Where my treasure is, there will my heart be also.
PRAYER: Lord, create in me a clean heart, and a right spirit in me.

WITHIN AND WITHOUT

There are seven beatitudes in Jesus' message in Revelation (1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6). The remaining two are in this final chapter (vv 7, 14) and they are almost similar – those who keep the sayings of the prophecy of the book and those who do God's commandments are blessed. Take note that it is "doing" God's commandments, not just "saying," that they are blessed. The blessing for those who do God's commandments is twofold. Firstly, the right to *"the tree of life"* gives the recipient life everlasting and secondly, the right to *"enter in through the gates into the city,"* ie he will be in God's presence, among His people forever. They are "within."

Then there are those who are *"without,"* those who reject God and refuse to do His commandments. Jesus gives a list of them. Top on this list are *"dogs,"* a metaphorical expression to refer to the unclean and impure; then *"sorcerers,"* those who delve in divination and the occult; next *"whoremongers,"* those who are sexually immoral; followed by the *"murderers, and idolaters,"* and finally those who *"loveth and maketh a lie"* (v 15). They are not just outside the holy city, but *"without,"* ie they are in the Lake of Fire.

The Lord Jesus then said that He has sent His angel to testify regarding all the things in the seven churches in Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea. These churches represent all the churches scattered throughout the world today. The message of Revelation is for all to read, to consider and to apply in their hearts and daily living until Christ returns.

When Christ says that He is the root and the offspring of David, He means that He is the greater Son of David, who is none other than the Messiah whom the Jews are waiting for to come. As *"the bright and morning star,"* He is the shining star that lights up the whole galaxy.

THOUGHT: Decision made now determines future eternal destiny.
PRAYER: Lord, may I choose to be inside the City, not outside it.

EVEN SO, COME, LORD JESUS

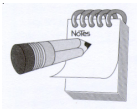
God the Holy Spirit joined by the Church, the bride of Christ, invites the readers to come to the holy city of God. Every individual who has heard the prophecy of the book and who is spiritually athirst is invited to come. When he enters he may take the water of life freely, the water that springs up to everlasting life (John 4:14).

The words of the prophecy of this book are complete and true, infallible and inerrant. No man can add anything to the things that have been written. If any man adds anything to the words of this book, God warns that He *"shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book."* On the other hand, if any man takes away from the words of the book of prophecy, God warns that He will surely take him *"out of the book of life"* and *"out of the holy city."* These warnings are very serious and dreadful. The plagues mentioned in the book are terrible and dreadful.

God's Word is the God-breathed or life-giving Word. Therefore He will preserve His Word as He has said through the ages till the end of time. His Spirit has providentially superintended those human writers and copyists so that they made no mistakes. This Word of God to man involves his eternal destiny and as such it is more important and valuable than anything in the world. Therefore it is understandable that the judgment upon those who corrupt or water down His Word will be dreadful. Satan will inspire his human agents to do just that, so that many people will be deceived and robbed of their salvation.

The Lord Jesus speaks again to us for the third time in this chapter and promises that *"Surely I come quickly."* John responded with *"Amen"* meaning "let it be so," and exclaimed, *"Even so, come, Lord Jesus."* And John, who was the last of Christ's twelve apostles to die, pronounced an apt benediction on his readers: *"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."*

THOUGHT: Grace is God's free and undeserved favour to mankind.
PRAYER: Lord, give me Thy grace that I might believe in Thee.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